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Integrating Literature in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language

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Abbreviations

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

TESL: Teaching English as a Second Language

Preface

Purpose of this dissertation is to present the possibility of integrating alternative authentic material in the teaching of English as a foreign language. Over the last decades, the role of literature in language teaching in an EFL context has been largely disputed. In some cases, literature has been omitted because it was considered irrelevant to language teaching whereas in others it was regarded as hindrance to foreign language teaching and learning. However, lately there has been a remarkable interest in literature as a language teaching resource.

The use of literature as such authentic material is considered a valuable resource in the hands of practising teachers. Literary texts constitute teaching input which is viewed as one of the authentic resources that can be used in the language classroom along with other resources. In recent decades, the role of literature as a basic component and source of authentic texts in the English language curriculum rather than as an ultimate goal of English language teaching has been gaining momentum. Especially during the last two decades, the interest in literature as a valuable tool in language teaching has been considerably raised (Duff & Maley, 1990:3).

Discussing the benefits of integrating literature in the language classroom, scholars draw on the value of literary texts. However, literary texts should be carefully selected and approached in a way promoting interaction between the text and the learner. Under these conditions the integration of literature in the EFL curriculum will prove successful and fruitful. Nevertheless, teaching language through literature calls for the active involvement of both the teachers and learners. Learners should be given space for exploring literary texts in order to provide their own interpretation of the text in question and hence create meaning out of it. Then, the endeavour of integrating literature in English language teaching will be an interesting and enjoying task which produces an offspring for many language activities.

Keywords: English language teaching, literature, value, selection criteria, roles of teachers and learners

Introduction

During the last decades there has been an increased interest on behalf of practising as well as experienced teachers of English who are interested in integrating alternative authentic sources of material to be used in the foreign language classroom. Literature can provide ready-to use teaching material having the trait of authenticity compared to the prefabricated teaching input which may not present real instances of language use. The view adopted is that language and literature can coexist in the EFL curriculum, although literature teaching is by no means welcome in many educational systems. The profound knowledge of the existing situation in the EFL curriculum in addition to the belief that EFL teachers should be thoroughly and methodically informed about the pedagogic and educational potential that literary texts can offer has led to discussing the integration of literary texts as an alternative authentic teaching material. Teachers may use the study of literary texts in order to help students respond to language on the basis of reading and appreciating authentic literary sources. Furthermore, the focus is on the use of literary texts as a language-teaching resource rather than as an object of literary study, therefore pointing out the interaction amongst language, literature and learner education.

The first chapter starts by looking at the issue from a historical perspective, presenting the ways in which literature has been treated over various periods. Chapter 2 shows how literature does indeed have a valuable place in the EFL context through discussing a number of arguments. In Chapter 3, the criteria for the selection of literary material, being a highly important aspect in the blending of language and literature, are discussed. Chapter 4 discusses the issue of the roles that teachers and learners adopt for the successful integration of literature in the teaching and learning process in the EFL context. The overall attempt is to illustrate the interaction between language and literature in learner education.

It will become evident that literature can prove valuable resource in the hands of teachers of English as a foreign language for numerous reasons, as long as it is put into practice in the most efficient and effective ways, so as to meet the needs and expectations of foreign language learners. Literature should not be a compulsory component in the EFL syllabus as such, but a beneficial authentic teaching material contributing to various

aspects of English language teaching. EFL teachers should adopt a different view regarding the study of literary texts, and be less reluctant and more enthusiastic as regards the use of literature considering it a functional component in EFL teaching. Nonetheless, selecting the appropriate literary texts for each group of students is considered of fundamental importance for the successful implementation of integrating literature in EFL teaching. A number of specific criteria should be applied in order for teachers to choose those texts which boost learner motivation thus contributing to upgrading knowledge of the foreign language. It will also be demonstrated how this integration may be acted upon in pedagogic practice through the interactive roles teachers and learners play in this process. This way, students will come to understand and appreciate literature more, and to read it confidently and with insight. Fostering the inclusion of literature in the EFL curriculum will stimulate learners' language development.

Chapter 1

The pedagogic status of literature

The status of literature has undergone various phases over the past 100 years. The function it mainly performed in EFL teaching and learning until fairly recent times was considered to be self-evident, and was based on educational grounds mostly. As Carter & Long (1991:1) put it, “the study of certain classic pieces of English literature is considered a sine qua non for the truly educated person”. It seems, therefore, that literature used to play an eminent role, providing the necessary means for validating an EFL learner as a cultured person. We consider this a rather tricky and non-holistic association of literature with advanced refinement and the intellectual elite who appointed themselves as intelligentsia; such an association placed literature on a highly respectable status. Consequently, the study of literary was considered fruitful and especially the study of the “great” writers of the English language was highly recommended.

However, the place of literature has been seriously questioned in the last three decades or so with a shift of emphasis of the focus of EFL teaching towards more practical and utilitarian goals. Thus, literature started to be considered irrelevant for the EFL learner, since the citizen’s “aim is to acquire some degree of practical command of the language, largely unrelated to the study and appreciation of literature. The objectives of language teaching are to enable the young citizen to use English as a tool: as a vehicle for comprehension and communication; or as a window on the modern trans-national world of science, technology, entertainment, art or ideas, or for quite specific or restricted needs in his occupation” (Hill,1987:11). As a result, a negative attitude was adopted towards the teaching of literature in the EFL classroom. The refined and aesthetic undertone assigned to the teaching of literature did not anymore suit the needs and aims of EFL learners. After all, the metalanguage of literary criticism involved in the teaching of literature was totally irrelevant to the teaching of the foreign language itself. Since the focus was linguistic as well as communicative competence, it was believed that literature itself -alongside the traditional way it was taught – could neither fulfill nor enhance the newly dominating EFL teaching/learning targets; namely, the enhancement of

communicative skills. Hence, “literature was dismissed as irrelevant because it seemed not to be practical, because it seemed not to offer good models for language learners, because it seemed not to be down-to-earth and to relate to the everyday world which language teaching is supposed to prepare people for” (Widdowson, 1983a:34).

The rejection of the teaching of literature stemmed from other reasons as well. The commonest one is the linguistic unsuitability of literary texts in the EFL classroom. Some of the opponents to the teaching of literature in the EFL classroom hold the view that literature cannot contribute much to the learner’s proficiency in the foreign language because of the uncontrolled language and the structural complexity involved, a fact that diminishes its accessibility. Vocabulary is specially selected and syntax is uniquely transformed so as to produce particular literary and stylistic effects. In other words, the linguistic content of literature deviates from the normal uses of the code and requires special interpretative approaches. Therefore, literature taught in EFL contexts not only could not promote, but on the contrary, suspended the learning of the target language because the task of decoding unfamiliar words and structures can be very strenuous and discouraging for learners. In addition, it does not give them the opportunity to be acquainted with and practise the most common forms and uses of the language. Moreover, the study of literature implies some sort of emotional and intellectual involvement and development which learners may either lack in their native language and literature, or wish to ignore when learning the foreign language.

The negative attitude towards the study of literature resulted in a kind of separation between the study of language and that of literature. From the structural point of view, “language teaching was going under a mechanistic phase, reducing itself to formulas, and forgetting its ‘purpose as message’, there was hardly a place for literature” (Brumfit & Carter, 1986:43). Consequently, language and literature were considered to be two distinct subjects, the former being the subject area of teachers or linguists, and the latter that of humanists and refined persons.

Finally, research focusing on the teaching of literature in an EFL situation has been very much ignored until fairly recently. There were only very few comprehensive works published on the role and the teaching of literature in EFL classrooms. As Stern

points out (1987:48), “the lack of interest is reflected in three major areas. First, there is a paucity of resources and materials. While many literary anthologies have also been published few resources exist to aid teachers in presenting the material they contain. Second, there is a lack of preparation in the area of literature in TESL/TEFL. Third is the absence of clear-cut objectives defining the role of literature in ESL/EFL.”

Hence, it appears that the negative attitude towards the teaching of literature in EFL situations was enhanced by the concurrent conviction on the part of researchers and educators that language and literature teaching should not be attempted simultaneously. As a consequence, although the potential did exist, no serious effort was made to promote the teaching of literature.

However, since 1980, after years of disregard, the value of the teaching of literature has been undergoing an extensive reconsideration. Because of the shift of emphasis of TEFL targets and methodology towards the meaningful and communicative use of English not only in the classroom but in real situations as well, involving factors such as authenticity, motivation and practice of all four language skills, it was suggested that literature could and should play a more important role in TEFL. As a result, a number of textbooks appeared in the market suggesting an integrated approach towards the study of language and literature. At the same time, the number of articles published in various ELT journals advocating the use of novels, short stories or poetry in the EFL classroom has increased significantly. Furthermore, EFL teachers started to be less reluctant towards the occasional use of literary texts in their classrooms. Therefore, the status of literature has changed considerably and its integration has become part of the EFL context. “Numerous teachers now believe that the literary heritage, whose study fosters habits of “seeing feelingly on the one hand, and skeptically, rationally, on the other” should not be denied to ESL students who are intellectually and emotionally, if not linguistically and culturally, ready to examine literary works” (Spack, 1985:704).

Be that as it may, the role of literature in EFL remains problematic even today because there is still much uncertainty for the place it should occupy. The opponents of the idea of using literature in EFL classroom still base their arguments on reasons related mainly to the linguistic as well as methodological inappropriateness of literary texts.

Moreover, the fact that the role of literature has not been fully re-examined against the newly established communicative trends in EFL/ESL, in relation to the fact that literature is still used and taught in the traditional teacher-centred way in many cases, reinforces a controversial attitude towards the integration of language and literature teaching.

Thus, the role of literature in TEFL continues to be an issue open to discussion. But how far are the reasons for the exclusion of literature from the TEFL world valid? Are the arguments against the use of literature in the EFL classroom well-considered? Should literature be banished from TEFL for the reasons the opponents of the idea of the integration of literature in the English language classroom have claimed in the past and still claim today? After all, the objection to literature teaching on linguistic or methodological grounds, such as those of lexical inappropriateness and lack of extra time available respectively seems to have some validity.

In fact, all these questions are inevitably linked to a more general and crucial issue that of the value of literature. This issue will be discussed in the next chapter in an attempt to provide some answers to the skepticism expressed of integrating literature in TEFL, since considering the value of literature in the EFL classroom can dissolve the dispute to a certain degree.

Chapter 2

The value of literature

According to Carter & Long (1991:4), “literature is a legitimate and valuable resource for language teaching.” This implies that its integration in the foreign language classroom is worthy and that the reasons for its use in EFL are universal transcending the specific teaching conditions it may be determined by. The fact that it can make a significant contribution to the study of language, provided that an integrated approach to the teaching of language and literature is adopted, is based on numerous arguments which represent two general perspectives: the pedagogic and the educational one.

In other words, literature serves a double function when used in EFL contexts. From the pedagogic point of view, it enhances the learners’ command of the language, whereas from the educational perspective, it contributes to their cultural, social, intellectual, and personal development. In this sense, the teaching of literature matches the general roles that teaching and learning should have. More specifically, the pedagogic arguments put forward for including literature in EFL contexts are mainly linguistically grounded, while the educational ones are mainly culturally and aesthetically grounded.

With reference to the reasons why integrate literature in the teaching of English as a foreign language, in particular Stern advocates (1987:47) that:

“Literature offers potential benefits of a high order for English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL). Linguistically, literature can help students master the vocabulary and grammar of the language as well as the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. (...) Culturally, literature provides exposure to the culture of its speakers by examining universal experience within the context of a particular setting and the consciousness of a particular people. Aesthetically, benefits include the teaching of literature for its own sake, for the perceptive insight it provides into man’s existence within the artistic and intellectual boundaries of a literary framework.”

Lazar (1993:15-19) asserts that there are a number of reasons for integrating literature in EFL teaching since “it motivates, offers access to cultural background, encourages language acquisition, expands language awareness, develops students’ interpretative abilities and educates the whole person in so far as it enhances our imaginative and affective capacities”. According to Widdowson literature can develop “a sharper awareness of the communicative resources of the language being learned” (1975:83). Additionally, Spack (1985:703) claims that in recent years literature teaching conduces “to academic, intellectual, cultural, and linguistic benefits” of the learners in language classrooms. Furthermore, literature “can create opportunities for personal expression as well as reinforce learners’ knowledge of lexical and grammatical structure” (Savvidou, 2004). Likewise, Collie & Slater (1990: 5-7) claim that literature constitutes valuable authentic material contributing to the learners cultural and linguistic enrichment in addition to fostering personal involvement.

Before discussing each of the aforementioned reasons in detail, i.e., the linguistic, the cultural, and the aesthetic, we would like to point out that it is not possible to draw clear-cut distinctions, in view of the fact that they are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the pedagogic and the educational functions of literature in the foreign language classroom actually have a dynamic relationship. Thus, while they are discussed separately, it will become obvious that in practice they very often operate simultaneously.

2.1 The pedagogic perspective

Literature is made up of language, and according to Carter (1986:6) it is “impossible to isolate any single or special property of language which is exclusive to a literary work” adding that “there is no such thing as literary language”. Undoubtedly, this does not mean that language is not used in a ‘literary’ way. It could be more appropriate to talk about literary discourse; one discourse type among the varieties of discourses, which exhibits the particularities created by its very nature as Babiniotis (1984) points out. “It is in this sense that we can talk about the literariness of language in a literary text, the persuasive language of an advertisement, the informative language of a brochure, etc. But we cannot possibly claim that the language used in a literary text is some sort of special language which deviates from the norm and is not ‘everyday’ language and should therefore be

excluded from the EFL class (Dendrinos, 1986:156). Brumfit & Carter (ibid:15) state that “a literary text is authentic text, real language in context, to which we can respond directly.” However, according to Widdowson (1985:187), what is distinctive about the language of literature is that it is not required “to confirm an existing order of reality which can be recognised as conventional but to create an alternative order of reality within its own self-generated context”.

Literary discourse, thus, might as well be seen as part of a broader social discourse and vice-versa. Readers take short cuts by means of schematic knowledge while reading texts other than literary ones. However, in reading literature the language cannot be treated in this way, because language “is not just a collection of clues; it is the only evidence we have” (Widdowson: ibid).

Based on these assumptions, we will now refer to the specific linguistic benefits the integration of literature in the EFL classroom entails.

2.1.1 Language skills

The advocates of using literature in the EFL classroom claim that literature involves learners in the practice of all four language skills, since it provides instances of language structures in use. Povey (1972 in Spack, 1985:705) claims that literature “can expand all language skills” hence extending linguistic knowledge. Additionally, according to Widdowson (1975:83), literature “can help the acquisition of essential skills of communication by extending the study of system to the practice of putting it to use in both the comprehension and production of different kinds of discourse.” The approach he proposes is based on Stylistics, which enhances the achievement and improvement of the teaching of the four communicative skills thus developing a sharper awareness of the communicative resources of the language being used.

Consequently, the integration of literature in the teaching of English is examined in terms of all language skills. Firstly, it provides an effective way of understanding the complex subtle elements that go into creation of what we call “good writing” (Gwin, 1990:10). Teachers often find it very difficult to initiate their students into the qualities of “good writing” in the most explicit and effective way, and literature could be used to

overcome this difficulty to a certain extent, since it provides a whole range of texts that expose learners to various forms of writing, such as narrative, dialogue, or description. Secondly, a literary work can serve as an excellent prompt for listening and speaking tasks, taking for granted that it provides the meaningful context for various types of oral and listening activities. This way, the learner not only “can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes” but “can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of proficient meaning even in more complex situations” (Common European Framework of Reference:24).

Last but not least, literature is a rich source of reading material, thus enhancing the learners’ ability in reading comprehension. Besides, according to the CEFR for Languages, learners need to be able “to read and understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning” (ibid) if they aim to be proficient in the foreign language. Essentially, it is reading that literature is basically related to. This is due to the fact that “reading is the most autonomous and individualisable ability in language work and literature is a rich and widely-appealing source of material for reading” (Brumfit, 1986:185). Basturkmen (1990:180) claims that while reading literature readers have to negotiate meaning thus contributing to the overall process of learning hence language development. McKay (1985:530) points out that “reading necessitates the ability to interact with a text by decoding the language and comprehending the concepts presented”. It follows, then, that reading is not just a process of understanding the meaning of each word or sentence on a page; on the contrary, it is an interactive process between the reader and the text, in which the reader has to use the information in the text together with his/her schematic knowledge in order to comprehend it and draw meaning from it. Carrell & Eisterhold (1983:553) claim that “according to schema theory, reading comprehension is an interactive process between the text and the reader’s prior background knowledge. Reading comprehension involves one’s knowledge of the world, which may be culturally based and culturally biased”.

When reading a text, be it literary or non-literary, one has to employ both systemic and schematic knowledge. The former refers to the phonological,

morphological, syntactic and semantic knowledge whereas the latter actually refers to socially acquired knowledge Widdowson (1990:102-103). While reading literary texts, then, learners have to employ knowledge of the language code and the world around them respectively. In order to infer meaning they have got “to employ interpretative procedures in a way which is not required in the normal reading process” (Widdowson, 1983a:31). This way “literary schemata are created internally, within the literature itself” (Widdowson 1983a:30).

It follows, therefore, that the reading of literature requires learners to have the ability of inferring because of the internal schemata it creates. This way learners focus intently on the text and make more intensive use of interpretative procedures when deciphering meaning. During this process they make extensive use of the linguistic tools they possess or those the text provides them with. Hence, the linguistic knowledge they have is either consolidated in their minds or enriched acquiring at the same time a ‘meaning potential’ which operates as a resource for making sense (Widdowson, 1983b). For these reasons, the use of literature does indeed have a place in the EFL classroom, in the sense that it can promote the ability of learners to decode the message of literary discourse employing both their systemic and schematic knowledge.

It is, however, very often assumed that literature would preferably or should solely be used in relation to reading and writing. Nevertheless, listening and speaking can serve an equally notable and substantial function. In any case, the integration of literature in the EFL context results in mastering all four language-learning skills, because the language used in literature “leads to discourse which represents language as essentially a matter of creating meaning by procedures for making sense. This is its central relevance to language teaching: it calls for an intensive use and a heightened awareness of just those procedures which have to be engaged whenever people are involved in the learning and using of natural language” (Widdowson 1984:171). Thus, the reader has to make considerable and intensive use of language skills in order to create meaning based on the literary text.

Therefore, by promoting the development of the four language skills, be them either receptive or productive, literature stimulates language learning and, most

importantly, the improvement of linguistic and communicative competence. Thus the students' awareness of the communicative potential of the foreign language is increased. Furthermore, literature keys learners into the processes involved for the creation and negotiation of content and meaning. Nonetheless, this can only be achieved through the engagement of learners in a number of various language tasks and activities, an issue to which we now turn.

2.1.2 Language activities

Literary texts can form the basis for numerous language activities of a communicative nature, which can furthermore enhance the learners' command of the language, since language is the medium of literature. Consequently, structures and vocabulary studied are reinforced, while new structures and lexis are registered subconsciously. As Brumfit (1986:190) points out, "literary texts, if used in relation to a serious view of extending literary competence, will provide a particularly suitable base from which motivated language activities can develop." Thus, he proposes an integrated approach to the study of language and literature aiming at the attainment of linguistic as well as literary competence. Tasks and activities based on a range of literary works are of a primarily pedagogic nature, and aim at providing "good potential for a variety of language activities" (Collie & Slater, 1987:12) Widdowson (1983a:32) suggests that language activities related to literature should be viewed as problem-solving activities. This type of tasks requires the use of language for the solution of the problems set, thus putting the internal cognitive process of acquisition into motion. After all, since there is no right solution, such activities lend themselves to plenty of scope for discussion. At the same time, the nature of the problems set can promote literary awareness. Carter (1986:111-115) also suggests various types of language-based activities in the form of prediction, summary, gap-filling, guided re-writing, and "forum: debating opposing viewpoints". All these activities foster the development of language skills and can lead to higher order skills - such as interpretation, evaluation and literary awareness. Additionally, Stern (1987:50-54) suggests using various kinds of language tasks that can be based on literature, ranging from writing "out of" literature or drama-inspired writing to dramatization and improvisation or role playing, from small- group work to panel

discussions and literature-based debates. Carter & Long (1991) propose using several language activities such as jigsaw reading, matching, or even stylistic analysis activities.

Judging from the aforementioned plethora of language activities, it follows that literature can be used to meet the objective of developing numerous tasks that foster the students' language awareness and knowledge. This is due to the nature of literary discourse, which differs from most forms of discourse because of "the range and quantity of linguistic devices it uses to achieve its aims" (Hirvela, 1990). Besides, literary discourse offers plenty of opportunities for language activities putting more emphasis on linguistic content and input, which can be accomplished by means of a wide range of communicative tasks. The latter may require the linguistic engagement of the learners with the literary text to varying degrees, thus assisting the development of the learners' accuracy and fluency in the foreign language they learn. Furthermore, as Brumfit & Carter (1986:15) put it, "literary texts provide examples of language resources being used to the full, and the reader is placed in an active interactional role in working with and making sense of this language".

In other words, literature lessons can sensitise and engage learners in actively interacting with literary texts encouraging in students an ability to infer meanings through this interaction, according to Widdowson (1983 in Brumfit & Carter, 1986:14). Integrating literature in EFL fosters the creation of meaning through authentic texts, which by definition literary sources represent. It is this last point, which in fact is related to the authenticity-argument in favour of literature integration in EFL teaching and learning process, we consider now more closely.

2.1.3 Authenticity of literature

Another argument in favour of integrating literature "as a language teaching resource rather than as an object of literary study as such" (Duff & Maley,1990:3) in the EFL classroom is that literature represents valuable authentic material. According to Wallace (1992:145), authentic texts are defined as "real-life texts, not written for pedagogic purposes" whereas Nunan (1989:54) defines them as "any material which has not been specifically produced for the purposes of language teaching". "A literary text is authentic text, real language in context, to which the reader can respond directly It offers

a context in which exploration and discussion of content (which if appropriately selected can be an important motivation for study) leads on naturally to examination of language” (Brumfit & Carter 1986:15). As Widdowson (1978:80) points out “authenticity is a characteristic of the relationship between the passage and the reader and it has to do with appropriate response.” “Authentic texts can be motivating because they are proof that the language is used for real-life purposes by real people.” (Nuttall1996:172). Additionally, Basturkmen (1990:18) asserts that “literature represents language in use, i.e., language in a social setting, in a meaningful context, and being used for a purpose”.

Hence, it follows that genuine literary sources prove to be motivating material boosting the learner interest as well as interaction both with their classmates and the text itself. The creation of an authentic context for language teaching in the class is one of the major challenges faced by teachers. Littlewood (1986:179) claims that “a language classroom, especially one outside the community of native speakers, is isolated from the context of events and situations which produce natural language. In the case of literature, language creates its own context”. The events presented through language create a specific context which transcends the artificial classroom situation. And he goes on supporting that “the world created in the work of literature is the foreign world, and literature is thus a way of assimilating knowledge of this foreign world, and of the view of the reality which its native speakers take for granted when communicating with each other.” (ibid:179-180). As a result, literary texts – along with the other authentic texts used in class, such as travel timetables, newspaper or magazine articles, cartoons, and advertisements – can provide the necessary authentic material that is required in every foreign language classroom. Obviously, literary texts can create a context in which exploration and discussion of content leads on naturally to assimilating the type of language used, as well as genuine opportunities for open-ended conversation. Consequently, literature is authentic in terms of input materials and output performance, since it exposes learners to real instances of language use activating their performance accordingly.

Be that as it may, a counter argument would be that, since there is a plethora of authentic materials apart from the literary ones, which are also suitable for language

teaching, there is no need for literary texts. The question raised, therefore, is “What is distinctive about authentic literature?” First of all, literary texts create their own time and space (Widdowson 1984:164), and learners basically have to refer to the internal, authentic context of the text and its peculiarities in order to understand and appreciate it. Furthermore, “in reading literary texts, language learners encounter the target language in nearly every guise or manner in which it can be used, from the most pedestrian to the most enchanting. It is for this reason that literature is especially being examined in the light of communicative language methodologies. Because literature imitates life, and therefore the discourse of life, students in language classes can likewise imitate the real-life situations they are expected to be able to converse in by interacting with literary texts” (Hirvela, 1990).

It becomes quite obvious, then, that it is the in-built real-life connection that literature entails thus contributing to its authenticity value. These genuine, real-life situations, however, call for the ability of having a rich vocabulary in relevant contexts demanding the use of particular lexis. Only then, will learners be able to use rich language in order to meet everyday needs and requirements in a communicatively appropriate way, an issue we now turn to.

2.1.4 Vocabulary enrichment

While proficiency in oral or written expression is highly reliable on grammar and the structures used, vocabulary has an equally significant role. “No matter how well the student learns grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in an L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way” (McCarthy, 1990:viii). In fact, the more refined and upgraded vocabulary learners have, the more competent and efficient they are considered to be. According to Schmitt (2000:55), rich vocabulary knowledge seems to be an asset for learners in view of the fact that “lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language”.

Van (2009:2) holds that “structuring lessons around the reading of literature introduces a profound range of vocabulary, dialogues, and prose”. Additionally, Povey (1972:187) argues that “literature will increase all language skills because literature will

extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax”.

As Spack (1985:721) points out, exploring literature learners benefit from “an extraordinary growth in vocabulary”. It is assumed, then, that lexical choices on the part of the writer/poet are most essential for the conveyance of meaning and the creation of the atmosphere and mood of the literary texts in general. Besides, due to the fact that the language of literature ranges from everyday to elevated words, it is clear that literature is a valuable and legitimate source of vocabulary enrichment, and “provides students with a rich linguistic storehouse to explore” (Brock,1990:22).

Therefore, the impact the study of literary texts may have on building the learner’s vocabulary will prove valuable. Thus, learners will benefit from the elaborate vocabulary literature uses. When, for example, a teacher selects a short story in order to teach new vocabulary during this process learners are involved in a range of communicative tasks, be them oral or written. Learners need to depend heavily on the lexical choices they should make, which are actually initiated by the new vocabulary of the literary work. However, in case the literary work has a large amount of unknown words, learners may face difficulties in comprehending it, and therefore understanding and appreciating it. Following the above it is worth mentioning that “a text which is extremely difficult on either a linguistic or cultural level will have few benefits” (McKay,1982:531).

There are, however, various ways for overcoming difficulties caused by the lexical density of the literary text itself, i.e., the use of a dictionary or a glossary, which can facilitate learners and make their task less complicated. Still, it is advisable that the vocabulary density of a literary text should match the learners’ level if the integration of literature is to boost -among other linguistic benefits- vocabulary enrichment, as well. After all, Lazar (1993:15-9), points out that the latter encourages language acquisition and expands language awareness. Additionally, literature boosts learner’s motivation in interacting with the text thus raising their interest in being educated and refined as a whole person fostering at the same time the enhancement of their imaginative and affective capacities. At this point, it is meaningful to examine the extent to which using

literary resources contributes to spurring learner motivation in the process of studying literary discourse.

2.1.5 Motivating and meaningful context

As Duff & Maley (1990:6) put it, “literary texts are non-trivial in the sense that they deal with matters which concerned the writer enough to make him or her write about them”. The characteristic of non-triviality constitutes one of the reasons Maley (1989:12) lists for using literary texts as a valuable resource in the language classroom. In particular, he claims that literature is a teaching input where personal experiences are not considered being trivial or of minor importance. Duff & Maley (ibid) further on support their opinion claiming that “literary texts is a powerful motivator, especially when allied to the fact that literary texts so often touch on themes to which learners can bring a personal response from their own experience”. This last point seems to be in concordance with another reason Maley (1989) presents of importance for integrating literature in EFL classes. It regards the third characteristic, namely that of personal relevance, on the grounds that literature incorporates ideas, sensations and events which either constitute part of the reader’s experience or which learners can enter into imaginatively, hence being able to relate it to their own personality and life.

Cadorath & Harris point out (1998:188), “the text itself has no meaning; it only provides direction for the reader to construct meaning from the reader's own experience”. Thus, “learning is said to take place when readers are able to interpret text and construct meaning on the basis of their own experience” (Savvidou,2004). With reference to the issue of motivation Carter & Long (1991:19) regard that “pupils will be more motivated to read a literary text if they can relate it to their own experience, that is to their own ideas, feelings, opinions and perceptions; then they should be able to relate it to their own experience of the world, and in particular, of the society in which they live”.

Consequently, the motivation factor seems to be one of the most considerable issues affecting the learning process, and according to Carter & Long (ibid:3), “literature allows many of the most valuable exercises of language learning to be based on material capable of stimulating greater interest and involvement than can be the case with many language teaching texts”. Hill (1987:9) shares the same opinion quoting Widdowson

(1983a), “It’s not easy to see how learners at any level can get interested in and therefore motivated by a dialogue about buying stamps at a post-office. There is no plot, there is no mystery, there is no character; everything proceeds as if communication never created a problem. There’s no misunderstanding and there’s no possibility of any kind of interaction”. Moreover, according to Widdowson (ibid), “skilful material writers will try and build fictional element(s) into their language-teaching texts. And many learners know perfectly well that the reading passage in the textbook is there to get them to practise language items, and they don’t feel that they must read on.”

Literary texts, however, because of their intrinsically motivating nature, constitute interesting and enjoyable input. Duran (1993:161) claims that “literary texts are inherently motivating and interesting, because they are written in genres specifically directed towards giving pleasure”. Hence, literature provides the necessary stimuli to motivate learners to study and learn the foreign language and its varieties.

2.1.6 Literature and language varieties

Taking for granted that the medium of literature is language, literary texts can be used to uncover to learners the traits of various language varieties. As Short & Candlin (1986:91-92) point out, “literary texts often contain within them a number of different varieties of English. They can be thus extremely useful in sensitizing more advanced learners of English to linguistic variation and the values associated with different varieties.” Besides, the foreign language learner has to be acquainted with the several kinds of discourse that the new language is used for. They need “an awareness of the differences between common and rare types of English, and of alternative possibilities of expression, for in the second language s/he has less of an intuitive sense of the linguistically appropriate or the convention of usage” (Holst, 1980:2). In addition, Duff & Maley (1990:6), with reference to the three reasons justifying the use of literary texts in the teaching of English in general, and the linguistic one in particular, assert that “in terms of the language, literary texts offer genuine samples of a very wide range of styles, registers, and text-types at many levels of difficulty. For this reason alone they are worthy of consideration”.

Due to the fact that, on the one hand, literature is written in a wide range of language varieties while, on the other hand, it is a language variety itself, its integration

in the foreign language classroom can contribute to the learners' familiarisation with the diversity of language varieties that every language comprises.

Subsequently, based on the aforementioned assumptions, it has become clear that there are a number of reasons with regard to the pedagogic perspective and the linguistic aspect in particular for the integration of literature in EFL teaching. According to many researchers and linguists, however, literature proves beneficial not only at the linguistic level but serves a number of other functions as well. In view of this fact, we now proceed to examining issues related to the educational perspective presenting how literary texts can benefit learners both from the cultural and the aesthetic aspect.

2.2 The educational perspective

In the preceding part, issues related to the linguistic aspect of the integration of literature were presented. However, apart from the pedagogic perspective already discussed, the value of literature as a highly functional part of the EFL syllabus serves a wider role: the educational one. The starting point of this function harmonises with the view that each individual learner is “an intellectually, emotionally, aesthetically, and socially growing human being who should be assisted towards the actualisation of self, towards the full development of his/her own being” (Dendrinou, 1986:157). It is within such a perspective that literature offers potential benefits of the highest order, not only linguistically, but culturally and aesthetically as well.

2.2.1 The cultural aspect

One of the basic arguments in favour of the teaching of literature in the EFL classroom is that literature provides exposure to the culture of the target language functioning as a doorway to another culture as well as the social traits manifested in the relevant society. Gajdusec (1988:232) asserts that “literature is a highly charged cultural artifact”. According to Stern (1983:191), “we cannot teach a language for long without coming face to face with social context factors...that language and society are in many ways closely linked is not questioned” pointing out that “languages primarily reflect rather than create sociocultural regularities in values and orientations” (ibid:206). Hence, it follows that society, culture, and language are interlinked in such a way that traits and

characteristic of one are reflected on the other. It is an axiomatic fact, then, that language education may be largely affected by sociocultural factors. Consequently, languages, hence the discourses each one comprises, are deeply rooted in the societies they are spoken. In view of the fact that literature is intrinsically a language discourse and that cultures are traits of each society, it follows that the study of literature encompasses the cultural aspect by its very nature.

Therefore, teaching literature enables students “to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space, and to come to perceive traditions of thought, feeling and artistic form within the heritage the literature of such cultures endows” (Carter & Long, 1991:2). Stern (1987:47) asserts that “literature can help students understand, empathize with, and vicariously participate in the target culture” adding that “just as a language is both reflective of and determined by its speakers’ culture, so too is its literature.” Thus, language is deeply embedded in culture and the two are indistinguishable. Rivers (1981:315) emphasises that “any attempt of authentic use of the language to convey messages, any reading of original texts”, as opposed to those fabricated for classroom use, “will introduce cultural elements to the classroom.” Literary texts both being a type of authentic texts that can be used in the EFL classroom and input material closely related to language carry several cultural assumptions. It seems, then, that culture, literature and language are dialectically connected. Brooks (1969:322) claims that “the study of culture is intimately related to both language and literature, to the former for ultimate meaning and to the latter for ultimate significance as a human art”.

Taking for granted the organic relationship among language, literature, and culture, one can view the integration of literature in the EFL classroom as particularly valuable and effective. Consequently, in the case of the EFL teacher it is unavoidable to refer to aspects of the English culture since cultural links in literary texts can inevitably be detected. Moreover, as Marckwardt (1978:185) points out, “knowledge of the deep structure of the target language and of the underlying values, assumptions, beliefs and inter-group attitudes of its culture are now seen to be as important in the real mastery of a language as a facile use of the patterns of everyday speech. And the study of the language

of literature is felt to be the surest way to attain these more elusive qualities that go to make up a total mastery of the language.” In other words, knowledge of the culture of the target language is not only considered essential to a certain extent but it is characterised as a *sine qua non* in the foreign language classroom. In fact, the importance of the role of culture in the foreign language classroom has increased in recent times, and literature is one of the best ways of learning about culture, since it provides the context in which learners can best be initiated in cultural knowledge, in general.

Nevertheless, explicitly teaching the cultural setting associated with the foreign language learned may seem rather demanding and, in some cases, irrelevant to the learner. There are educators who hold the view that the cultural perspective is very often too difficult or complicated for learners to perceive, and, thus, does not enhance the learning process on the whole. . The question, then, that naturally arises is whether there are any benefits when examining the cultural assumptions of a piece of literature.

The answer definitely depends on the teaching/learning goals in the specific classroom. The answer definitely depends on the teaching/learning goals in the specific classroom. If one such goal is clearly the teaching of culture, then literature can be a valuable tool in the hands of the teacher, although literature is only one aspect of culture in general. Thus, culture should not be identified with literature only. In case the teaching of culture is not one of the primary goals, then literature can be used just as a means of access to the foreign culture in the widest sense. Lazar (1993:16) asserts that “literature can provide students access to the culture of the people whose language they are studying”. This means that learner familiarisation with the cultural setting and context each time can be achieved in a subtle manner since literature entails culture by its nature.

However, whatever the goals are, the use of literature in the EFL classroom from the cultural point of view does have positive effects. First of all, it promotes the students’ tolerance for cultural differences and secondly, the evaluation of their own value system. As Rivers (1981:318) puts it, “familiarizing students with another culture is not proselytizing. Students are not expected to surrender or lose confidence in their own cultural ways of thinking and valuing. Instead, they begin to bring these to a level of conscious awareness and examine them as they may never have done before in relation to

those of others. The study of another culture therefore becomes a liberating experience in that students are encouraged to develop tolerance of other viewpoints and other forms of behaviour, while better understanding those of their own society or cultural group.” As a result, literature seems to be ideal for developing empathy in learners, i.e. the ability to understand other people emotions and feelings. When learners are exposed to literary texts, interaction with the text is facilitated allowing them to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own. Since literary texts reflect a wide range of cultural diversity of our world, the language in which the literature is written reflects and reinforces the cultural patterns and value systems of those speaking the language.

The assumption, then, that the cultural perspective literature reflects does not contribute anything to the learning process is not valid. On the contrary, it serves a very important educational function, in the sense that it encourages students to examine, contrast and compare the culture of their native language and that of the target language. This way learners become more aware of the various value systems existing whereas their development as individuals and educated people is promoted. Moreover, students are given the chance to realise that there is a range of ways of perceiving and doing things apart from those they have learned or acquired in their own cultural environment. As McKay (1982:531) put it, “literature may work to promote a greater tolerance for cultural differences for both the teacher and the student”. Therefore, by means of some sort of cross-cultural comparison, learners can break the barriers of their own native cultural knowledge and avoid becoming culture-bound. Instead, they become tolerant and open-minded as regards different cultures and ideologies, and their adaptability in different cultural schemata is promoted. After all, when first dealing with a different set of behaviour patterns and values, the foreign language learner can be particularly discouraged. But literature enables him/her to become systematically acquainted with the foreign culture, and thus avoid a possible “culture shock” when first faced with culturally different facts and ideas. Besides, according to Ibsen, (1990:2) “understanding another point of view does not automatically mean accepting it, but the tolerance aspect should be stressed so that learners can appreciate (apart from accepting) that other people’s feelings and values are as important as their own.” According to the CEFR (2001:43), “The learner of a second or foreign language and culture does not cease to be competent in his

or her mother tongue and the associated culture. Nor is the new competence kept entirely separate from the old. The learner does not simply acquire two distinct, unrelated ways of acting and communicating. The language learner becomes plurilingual and develops interculturality. The linguistic and cultural competences in respect of each language are modified by knowledge of the other and contribute to intercultural awareness, skills and know-how. They enable the individual to develop an enriched, more complex personality and an enhanced capacity for further language learning and greater openness to new cultural experiences.”

The latter seems of great importance when designing educational systems in general and educational programmes in particular. The last decades Greek teachers both in the primary and the secondary education are faced with the challenging new reality of classrooms consisting of students from diverse cultural settings as well as with different language codes. In the present era, Greek teachers are required to be able to deal with an abundance of cultures in each classroom, which may be used actually as a teaching resource rather than as a barrier in everyday teaching and learning process. This profound change in the setting of classrooms and especially in English language classrooms can ultimately prove a valuable asset. It should be added after all that one of the basic principles set down by the Council of Europe in the context of language policy is that “the rich heritage of diverse languages and cultures in Europe is a valuable common resource to be protected and developed, and that a major educational effort is needed to convert that diversity from a barrier to communication into a source of mutual enrichment and understanding.” (ibid:2). While revisiting, then, the aims and objectives of the Greek educational system it is acknowledged that there is a growing interest in improving empathy to Greek students. Particularly, regarding the rules and regulations of Intercultural Education in Chapter B it is clearly stated that “Intercultural Education regards creating relationships amongst various cultural groups with the aim of eliminating social inequality and injustice” (Νόμος 4415/2016, Άρθρο 20,21).

So far, it has become clear that literary discourse with its further links to culture is considered to be an alternative legitimate resource in the EFL teaching classroom which

may result in desegregation and multiculturalism. This attitude can be widely applied in the multicultural classrooms that Greek schools comprise nowadays.

All in all, literature being culture-bound serves the role of familiarising learners with particular historical, ideological and social settings in addition to their development as individuals. Given that “the student is an active agent not a passive recipient” and the activities related to the study of literature adopt an approach in which students “contribute and share their own experiences, perceptions and opinions” by their very nature “literary texts give access to the worlds of personal experience which every student carries within.” (Duff & Maley,1990:6). This implies that the study of literature contributes to learners personal development, hence it falls within the realm of the aesthetic benefit literature offers. It is this last point which will be discussed in more detail in the following part while presenting the various beneficial aspects of integrating literature in EFL teaching.

2.2.2 The aesthetic aspect

Horner (1983) stresses the importance of studying literature as a useful tool in the holistic development of learners. As already mentioned, Stern (1987:47) advocates that the study of literature, among the other potential benefits it offers, it boosts learners aesthetic development fostering their involvement in intellectual processes. Widdowson (1992: 13) claims that the use and “combination of specific words somehow strikes the right key, reverberates with a subtle suggestiveness” actually resulting in “the mystery of varying aesthetic response”. This way learners experience intellectual practices which result in the unveiling of fascinating insights into the learners’ personal development. This literary experience is the extra dimension that literature offers to EFL students. They enter into the state of mind of the author in an effort to recognise and understand human relationships as they are portrayed in literature. After all, it is “the ability of a skillful writer to enter the reader’s life, to induce a sharing of ideas and emotions, a common participation in a significant and heightened moment” (Slager & Marckwardt, 1975:86).

When EFL learners are exposed to various literary works as teaching input, they are given the chance to be involved in the kind of experience Stern (ibid) refers to. A work of literature is usually self-referential and creates a reality of its own. As

Widdowson (1975:54) puts it, literary discourse, being one form of communication, “is a self-contained whole, interpretable internally, as it were, as a self-contained unit of communication, and in suspense from the immediate reality of social life.” The learner in an attempt to decipher what the literary text communicates has to enter the ‘other’ new reality of the literary text and thus escape from the narrow boundaries of his/her individual life.

Therefore, literature can help learners to transcend the limits of their social and intellectual environment opening up new worlds to be explored. In the meantime, this challenging condition for new explorations gives simultaneous rise to the learner’s development as individual. The question might arise as to what this development means and how it is achieved. In fact, it is the actualisation of one’s own self that is embodied in the form of a wider “cognitive and aesthetic maturation” (Gregg & Pacheco, 1981 in Stern, 1991:329). However, at this point, we would like to emphasise that this maturation is attainable only if the educator dispenses with ready-made forms of exegesis to his/her students. Literature should and could serve the educational function aforementioned, provided that the teacher allows learners to enter the world of the literary work as they wish encouraging individual interpretation. Langer (1997:607) claims literature can open “horizons of possibility, allowing students to question, interpret, connect and explore”.

Moreover, being engaged in the interpretation, evaluation and appreciation of a literary text, students are given room for reflection. Being involved in this emotional and personal experience, learners start testing what they know or believe as individuals, and what ideas or beliefs they assume the literary work reflects. As Maley & Duff (1989:10) clarify, this can be achieved through reacting to reading literature in such a way which “makes them react personally to other people’s ways of seeing things. ... This development of a personalised reaction to texts – i.e. one which engages not only the intellect but also the feelings – is we feel a very important part of the language learning process”. Therefore, the text becomes a stimulus for meditation and critical thinking, which subconsciously leads not only to effective learning but inner growth, too. Learners subsequently “will inevitably forge strong connections with the plots, themes, and ideological assumptions of literature and will become active learners that embrace critical

thinking in English” (Van, 2009:8). McKay (1986:194) suggests that Rosenblatt’s distinction between efferent and aesthetic reading be adopted as being critical in studying literature. When referring to this personal and aesthetic interaction between the reader and the text in aesthetic reading “the reader’s primary concern is with what happens during the actual reading”. According to this type of reading, “what is most important to a reader in aesthetic reading is the enjoyment attained by interacting with the text” (ibid). The aforementioned process simultaneously results in critically judging the characters and themes expressed throughout the literary text. Consequently, literature, apart from being a personal growth spur, provides personal delight as well. As Ur (1996:201-202) points out, while questioning whether literature should be included in a course, one of the advantages of literature teaching is that “it involves emotions as well as intellect, which adds to motivation and may contribute to personal development” clearly stating that she is “in favour of including literature in courses, not only as a rich source of language, but also because of its intrinsic educational and aesthetic value”.

Additionally, when studying literature in EFL classes, it is not only natural and unrehearsed communication that is set up, but an authentic setting, too, where different opinions and experiences are exchanged and shared, thus creating more opportunities for the development of the individual learner. Furthermore, literary texts promote literary awareness making students more sensitive to the literary use of the linguistic code. Learners become acquainted with the various stylistic effects language can produce “which are achieved by subtle and complex processes while the author selects the most striking words and phrases” (Slager & Marckwardt (1975:67) and hence appreciate literary texts more. As a result, their interest in literature is peaked, and a positive attitude towards the study of literature can be adopted.

Therefore, “learners develop an awareness of how literature functions as discourse” thus they develop “literary appreciation” (Widdowson, 1975:116). A central problem, however, in the teaching of literature as in the teaching of any subject is “to know how to exert control without stifling initiative ...to know when and to what extent the learner can be allowed to proceed to the appreciation and evaluation of the broader

aesthetic significance of literary works” (ibid:117) without running the risk of confusing learners thus deterring them from the pleasure of reading literature.

Be that as it may, some teachers claim that these aesthetic benefits could be derived either from the native language literature or translated literary works from the foreign language to the native language. Native language has indeed a great and significant role to play in the learner’s personal growth, and it is essential that learners are exposed to the literary heritage of their native language. The EFL classroom can considerably benefit learners in various domains including language, culture and individual maturity. Carter & Long (1991:9) point out that “stimulating students to learn literature is helping them grow as individuals as well as their relationship with the people and students around him”. Besides, the parallel exposure of learners to both native and target language literature will give them more chances for further personal growth.

Thus, it becomes apparent that when students engage in the reading of literary texts they are led to growth as far as emotional awareness and maturity are concerned. “Literary texts encourage a more affective engagement with language and so increase scope for personality involvement.” (Widdowson, 1990:180). So, learners are involved in an experience that can be deeply felt as personal. In addition to this, the study of literature fosters the development of the learner’s critical skill and self-awareness. And this personal growth is highly rewarding and fulfilling in the sense that it helps students not only to read literature more effectively, but “to grow as individuals as well in their relationship with the people and the institutions around them” (Carter & Long, 1991:3).

It then follows that the study of literature, which essentially is a study of language use, “is not a separate activity from language learning but an aspect of the same activity” (Widdowson, 1975:83). Moreover, since language learning - as all types of learning - should serve a pedagogic as well as an educational function, literature can serve both functions, as well, because it entails both pedagogic and educational value. The pedagogic value of literature comprises the linguistic component, while the educational value comprises the cultural and the aesthetic components. According to the aims and the objectives of the course, a primarily linguistic, cultural or aesthetic approach might be adopted. However, these components usually overlap in the actual process of

teaching/learning along with the fact that even in the case of one of these three aspects being particularly stressed, the other two will inevitably occur. Indisputably, they all constitute an organic unity upon which the undoubted pedagogic and educational values of literature in the foreign language class are founded.

Nevertheless, the benefits that literature may offer discussed in this chapter cannot be realised, unless the literary texts chosen for study are the appropriate ones, in the sense that they have to fulfill certain prerequisites. These prerequisites are specific criteria for the selection of the literary material, an issue to be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

Criteria for the selection of literary texts

“The key to success in using literature in the EFL classroom seems to rest in the literary texts selected” (McKay, 1982:531). Accordingly, McRae (1997:49) asserts that “careful text selection is fundamental to the successful use of any kind of representational materials”. Consequently, opting for the right texts seems to be one of the most crucial factors in the demanding endeavour of integrating literature in English language teaching. Clearly, “the appropriacy of the texts selected for a particular class remains a crucial factor in the success of the approach. Texts which tend to be chosen are those that are not too long, not too complex linguistically, not too far removed from the world knowledge of the students, and not too anachronistic. Above everything else, however, the text has to have the capacity to engage the interest of the student” (Maley, 2001:184). It is not enough whether an EFL teacher realises the value of literature in the EFL context and decides to use it in his/her classroom; it is equally important to choose those literary texts which are most suitable for the specific situation teachers are faced with. Widdowson (1990:180) maintains that “careful thought needs to be given to how literary texts should be selected and presented so that they are pedagogically effective” claiming also that “the criteria for selection are pedagogic rather than aesthetic or historical and have to do with whether the works can be used to develop sensitivity to language in the most effective way” (1975:85).

Collie & Slater (1987:6) advocate that issues regarding text selection are related to “each particular group of students, their needs, interests, cultural background and language level”. Carter (1986:216-222, Part 2) provides a number of difficulties, which may arise when selecting literary texts in EFL classrooms such as linguistic structural criteria, marked language, content and response, and authorial position. Vincent (1986:208, Part 1) claims that “works of literature are verbal works of art, distinguished by their sophistication, subtlety, and complexity. For a true appreciation of these ‘verbal artefacts’ the reader must bring to the text linguistic, conceptual, and cultural

understanding of a high order” stressing that “simplicity is hardly a characteristic of literary text”.

Hence, the selection of the appropriate and most useful literary works seems to be the foremost critical decision teachers have to make when using literature as teaching material in their classroom. It follows, then, that in order to make the right decision, they have to take into consideration various parameters, i.e. learners’ needs, interest, motivation, linguistic and cultural background. In fact, literary text appropriacy refers to texts having such features which make them more accessible by students. Then the aims and goals set in advance will be realised in the process of integrating literature in EFL teaching.

A thorough examination, though, of the parameters set reveals that the criteria for text selection fall under the category both of the pedagogic as well as the educational perspective considered earlier on since the aforementioned are dialectically linked. All things considered, however, following this broad examination of criteria for literary text selection, their classification under specific categories seems of importance in order to organise a criteria-based taxonomy, which may be of use by any teacher willing to integrate literature in an EFL classroom, as follows:

- a)** Linguistic criteria
- b)** Stylistic criteria
- c)** Conceptual criteria
- d)** Background knowledge criteria

In case a broad gap exists amongst the aforementioned criteria, learners have to make systematic effort to bridge them in order to overcome this difficulty whenever they confront such a situation. Otherwise, they might lose interest and be demotivated in addition to adopting a negative attitude towards the study of literature generally. Nonetheless, provided that teachers do not want to run the risk of provoking these negative effects but rather create situations whereby the study of literature has a positive impact on learners, then, then these criteria should definitely be taken into consideration.

3.1 Linguistic criteria

Duff & Maley (ibid:7) state “linguistic difficulty” as the first criterion actually referring to “syntactic complexity, lexical density, or discoursal organisation” while Vincent (1986:209) claims that especially “for the foreign reader, literary text will usually be even more linguistically difficult”. In addition, further expanding on the linguistic criteria, Carter (1986:217) identifies phonology at word level adding that “there are difficulties, too, at levels of linguistic organisation which reside beyond the sentence, i.e. absence of intersentential cohesion”.

Duff & Maley (1990:8) assert that “if a text is ‘too difficult’ it should not be chosen. It would be foolish to choose texts which we know our students will not be able to cope with”. When a text is not simple, negotiation of meaning may be hindered and finally the value of the text may not be appreciated to its full extent. Hence, in order for the learners to understand and appreciate literature, not only the language system but also the contextual meaning inherent in the literary text must be explicitly understood.

According to Povey’s (1967 in Spack, ibid:704)) counter-argument, however, “the linguistic difficulty of literature has been overstated; readers do not need to experience total comprehension to gain something from a text. In fact, literature, with its extensive and connotative vocabulary and its complex syntax, can expand all language skills. Additionally, McKay notes that one of the most common arguments against using literature is that it can hardly contribute to teaching the grammar of the language “due to its structural complexity and its unique use of the language” (1982:529).

Having in mind the aforementioned, it could be argued that in fact the linguistic complexity of literary texts may lead to serious problems in the teaching and learning process. In order for this process to be facilitated, this category of criteria could be examined in terms of i) lexical complexity, and ii) syntactic complexity.

3.1.1 Lexical complexity

Certain pieces of literature are marked for their lexical density in the sense that they entail the use of highly complex vocabulary and many unknown words. “Many of the encounters with new words which the average learner experiences are in written texts,

and this raises the question of new-word density in texts.” (McCarthy,1990:117). In view of the fact that literary texts are written authentic texts, however, Gairns & Redman (1986:115) maintain that “they have the great advantage of contextualising new language items for the learner, and an interesting text also serves to make that language more memorable”.

Undoubtedly, there are literary texts having words that are out of date, archaic, over-specialised or technical ones. There are also some which include the use of slang, idioms, and dialects (Hill, 1986:19-20). Despite their usefulness for the creation of some stylistic effect, these lexical items can influence the reading process in a significantly negative way, since students cannot easily create meaning out of them and have to find out the meaning of words that they are unlikely to encounter elsewhere. Moreover, these items can “provide false linguistic models” (ibid:20), and may, thus, hinder the learning process in general.

When students are given as teaching input literary texts that entail the use of such complex vocabulary, one possibility is to resort to the use of a dictionary. This process may “result in laborious word by word deciphering with the aid of a bilingual dictionary. This is neither an efficient approach to reading in a foreign language, nor an appropriate desirable way in which to experience works of literature. It is a painstaking process far removed from genuine reading with response.” (Vincent, 1986:209). As a result, when learners have to use a dictionary during the reading process, they inevitably slow down their reading pace, and very possibly become distracted from the overall meaning, because they have to concentrate on the meaning of each word. “Despite being a valuable source of information, dictionaries are not perfect,...so avoid setting your students a fruitless task” (Gairns &Redman, 1986:125). Another possibility is when students are provided with a large amount of language assistance, i.e. a glossary. This might make their searching task less difficult; it has, however, similar negative effects to those of using a dictionary. The best suggestion, nonetheless, seems to be inferring the meaning of unknown words based on context, that is “making use of the context in which the word appears to derive an idea of its meaning” (Gairns &Redman, ibid:83). Nevertheless, there

are cases when a sentence or a paragraph contains a staggeringly large number of unknown words, thus constituting inference most arduous or even impossible.

Literary texts, then, should be selected within students' language proficiency because otherwise they might feel demotivated in case they are not linguistically ready. Carter & Long (1991:5) suggest "as a general rule, it is better to choose for teaching literary texts which are not too far beyond the students' normal reading comprehension". "One obvious solution is to select texts which are relatively easy according to readability counts." (McKay, 1982:532). In addition, Hill (1992:142) claims that "it is necessary to select literary texts which consist largely of words or expressions sufficiently familiar to the students".

3.1.2 Syntactic complexity

Syntactic complexity is related to the structure as well as the organisation of discourse of literary texts and "can take many forms but the most obvious feature would be sentence length and related dependencies, embeddings, and subordination." (Carter, 1986:216). With reference to discourse organisation, in particular, there are several literary works that are characterised by "deliberate suspension or even absence of intersentential cohesion" (ibid:217). When learners have to read a literary text full of syntactic breakdowns, they will most probably fail to follow the progression of meaning, and in some occasions may even give up reading it. Similarly, difficulties may also arise from text length. For some learners "longer texts will appear more difficult. For others shorter texts present more difficulties simply because they do not offer the extended contextual support and repetition which longer texts do" (Duff & Maley, ibid:7).

If teachers want to avoid such difficulties, then the syntactic level of literary texts selected should match their learners' language level. It is even advisable to select contemporary or recently written literary works, because their syntax is more likely to be similar to that encountered in language textbooks or in nonfiction (Basturkmen, 1990). Hill (1987:21) also suggests that the sentence length variable should be used as a guide for determining the level of difficulty of a particular literary text.

In order to overcome potential linguistic difficulties, a common way is to use “abridged, simplified or totally rewritten texts” (Hill 1986:25). However, simplified texts have certain disadvantages. As Hill (ibid) put it, very often totally rewritten texts are left with “a disarticulated skeleton of character and plot which bears only a slight resemblance to the original work. Honeyfield (1977:434-5 in McKay, ibid:531) points out that “simplification tends to produce a homogenized product in which the information becomes diluted. The additional words in the text tend to spread the information out, rather than localize the information. Furthermore, the simplification of syntax may reduce cohesion and readability. Since proficient readers rely heavily on localized information and cohesive devices, deleting these elements will contribute little to the development of reading skills.” Nonetheless, Vincent (1986:213) advocates “the extensive use of simple texts in the early stages of developing reading skills”.

It seems, then, that teachers should be particularly careful even when selecting simplified texts, which at first sight are supposed to reduce linguistic difficulties, as long as there are some abridged versions of famous novels which retain enough of the original to preserve some of the ‘flavour’ of the work.” (Hill: ibid). Teachers, then, can select a simplified version of a literary work as long as it does not fail to maintain the basic characteristics of the original.

To sum up, while selecting literary texts teachers should take into consideration the difficulties learners might confront on the lexical and syntactic level in order to make the reading task less difficult, and, in turn, more rewarding and enjoyable.

3.2 Stylistic criteria

Learners may also encounter serious difficulties if they cannot cope with the stylistic level of a literary work, too. “The question of style is, in some ways, a vexed one since there is considerable difference of opinion as to what it is and how it should be taught” (Hill, 1987:22). Style refers to “the ways in which [an author] manipulates the rules of the language or even diverges from them”(ibid). This implies that the language an author might employ could deviate from the normal uses of everyday language in an effort to provide a specific stylistic effect. This type of language is characterised as “marked” or “foregrounded”. Carter (ibid:218) elucidates the issue of marked language as another

criterion of difficulty, noting that it regards “language which is marked for period, region or social class; that is language which has historical, geographical, or socio-cultural associations”. Such deviations could take the form of various alternative lexical or structural choices meaning that authors can use words which can be understood only within the context of the specific literary work thus creating anew a connotation associated with it. In other cases, authors may select and use certain lexical items in the most unusual or even inappropriate manner in order to create suspense or irony effects.

As far as the structural level is concerned, it is common amongst writers to avoid employing the usual word order and create their own aiming at best satisfying their stylistic purposes. This is usually the case with poetry where learners encounter peculiar sentence structures. Moreover, there are certain stylistic conventions, such as plot and characters in prose, or rhythm and rhyme in poetry, which may constitute a more strenuous reading task for the learners. For this reason, the teacher not only should acquaint learners with the general conventions that operate in literature in order to facilitate the learners’ task but explain in detail how these examples work.

Presumably, all the instances of deviation from using everyday language exemplified in literature can confuse learners and hinder the learning process of the foreign language. Nonetheless, it should be taken for granted that what is specific about each author or poet is their style. This fact implies that students may encounter a series of problems caused by stylistic diversity when reading a piece of literature. Undoubtedly, there are ways for reducing the burden caused when having to interpret stylistic devices by selecting the works of writers who employ a simple style. Having the stylistic appropriateness criterion in mind, teachers will focus on selecting those texts that employ “a style suitable for providing a link with everyday language” (Littlewood, 1986:181).

In conclusion, it seems that linguistic and stylistic factors play a decisive role in the process of exploring a literary text, and the teacher should select those texts which s/he believes students can best cope with at either the linguistic or stylistic level. As Carter (ibid:218) notes, “while linguistic criteria will always form an important category, analysis of language and structure has clearly to be related to purposes and functions of language in use.” Finally, we would claim that the basic rationale underlying these

selection criteria should be that the literary texts chosen should be challenging for the students, but not overwhelming. As McKay (1982:530) put it, “what is critical in selecting a text is to examine it for both its linguistic and conceptual difficulty”, a criterion of great importance.

3.3 Conceptual criteria

The conceptual criteria refer to the subject-matter and the focal point of the literary text. More specifically, they have to do with what Duff & Maley (1990:7) label “conceptual difficulty” referring to “the difficulty of the ideas the text conveys, even when couched in simple, limpid language”. As Littlewood (1986:181) points out “the criterion provided by subject-matter demands that the world created by the literary work should have interest and relevance for the pupils and also that they should have adequate knowledge of the cultural background to appreciate it.” The same author additionally maintains that “the crucial factor is the extent to which the reader can enter the world as an involved ‘onlooker’ and the experience portrayed in the work must make contact with the pupil’s experience at some point”. Therefore, the teacher has to examine whether the literary text selected is intellectually accessible by the learners in addition to the extent to which literary texts are culturally difficult. This issue is fully explicated by Duff & Maley (ibid) who claim that “it is clearly impossible for the ‘outsider’ to share fully the range the references of an ‘insider’” adding that at the end of the day it is worth using “these opportunities for exploration, rather than refusing to undertake the journey”.

It should be further clarified that the criterion of relevance regards whether or not the subject-matter of the literary text is related to the experiences of the learners Brock (1990:23) suggests using “localized literature”, i.e. texts culturally familiar to foreign language learners with settings, cultural assumptions, situations, characters, language, and historical references recognisable by them. If, for instance, the literary text chosen “deals with a common human situation that many people will be able to easily relate to” (Gwin 1990), then it is more likely to arouse the learners’ interest compared to a literary text which deals with a very specific, and remote theme learners cannot relate with. Besides, the works that have direct relevance to the learners’ concerns are likely to trigger

their motivation, too, and stimulate “personal involvement by arousing learners’ interests and provoking strong, positive reactions from them” (Collie & Slater, 1987:6).

There are literary texts which are characterised as linguistically simple, nevertheless, expressing ideas that may be too complicated and complex for the learners to grasp. These texts may require a great degree of maturity that young EFL learners have not acquired yet. Duff & Maley (ibid) use Blake’s poetry as an example of “deceptively ‘simple’ writing”, implying that although on the linguistic level a lot of Blake’s poems are relatively simple, on the conceptual level they require great interpretative ability in penetrating beneath the sentence level towards the actualisation of meaning. Therefore, the cognitive development of the learner should be taken into account seriously when choosing a literary text for study in the EFL class. Additionally, the underlying theme should be such as to enable learners to respond sensitively to its topic in the process of comprehending the significance of the text they are exposed to. This will result in considering “literature not as an isolated activity but as one to be viewed in relation to the general cognitive development of the student” (Brumfit, 1986:186).

It is also crucial to select texts which can stimulate personal involvement and arouse the learners’ interest. As McKay (ibid:532) put it, “it is important to select themes with which the students can identify”. Selected literary texts, then, should have the characteristic of engaging the interests of the learners (Widdowson 1983:32) so that students will show an increased awareness and respond positively to the teaching input. Only when the assigned literary text is meaningful and enjoyable, will learners try to overcome the linguistic obstacles enthusiastically (Collie & Slater, 1987:6-7). In this case “the possibility of internalising the language and reinforcing points previously learned” (Hill, 1986:7) can be realised. Lazar (1993:23) asserts that learners in the process of analysing literary texts make “meaningful interpretations or informed evaluations of the language” while at the same time they can “increase their general awareness and understanding of English”.

Hence, “the teacher should select the work by seeing it through the eyes of the students” (Basturkmen, 1990). This way, selected literary texts would best relate to the learners’ age and interests, on the one hand, whereas they would not raise conceptual

difficulties, on the other. Under these conditions, teachers can introduce “the task of reading a literary text with enthusiasm and with interactive materials that will reward reader effort with new levels of understanding and experience teaching techniques of personal exploration and involvement with the text” (Gajdusec, 1988:233).

Another factor related to the conceptual difficulty of a literary text is its length. “For some, longer texts will appear more difficult. For others, shorter texts present more difficulties simply because they do not offer the extended contextual support and repetition which longer texts do” (Duff & Maley 1990:7). Accordingly, teachers have to consider how much time they can devote to the literary component of the language course, and decide whether a long or a complete literary work should be used instead of a shorter one or an extract from a complete work. Selecting extracts is the solution to which most often teachers resort. Cook (1986:152) defines extracts “as a part of a text, artificially separated for purposes of quotation or study from the other sentences, with which, to a greater or lesser extent, it coheres” noting also that “provided it does not break sentences, a literary extract is always grammatically intact, but seldom semantically intact” (ibid:153). However, extracts can be very tricky sometimes, and they can be used as long as “they do not encourage the student to create false texture by making interpretations which, though viable within the extract, are demonstrably false in context” (ibid:164). Hence, from one point of view, the conceptual substance of literary extracts may be under question when parts are separated from the original text.

There are counterarguments, nonetheless, with reference to the benefits derived from literary extracts. Teachers, who are actually convinced of the value of literature and still find ways to integrate it in the syllabus providing interesting communicative abilities, can still resort to the solution of extracts. As Collie & Slater (1987:11) point out, “reading a series of passages from different works produces more variety in the classroom, avoiding monotony, while still giving learners a taste at least of an author’s special flavour”. Thus, the advantage of using extracts when properly selected is that the teacher through various activities in the classroom can create an atmosphere which boosts motivation, therefore having a greater chance of avoiding boredom on behalf of learners. Only in this case extracts may be successfully used for pedagogic purposes.

To sum up, it has become obvious that the conceptual criteria the teacher is well advised to consider when choosing a literary text are a. the text's conceptual difficulty in terms of the message it conveys, b. the text's potential appeal, relevance and interest to the learner, c. the length of the text. According to Brumfit & Carter (1986:32), "we need to select texts to which students can respond immediately, without the mediation of the teacher. Only then can we guide the students' response, rather than impose it from outside". In order to achieve this, the literary text chosen should be experientially accessible to learners, i.e. within their capacity to understand it not only in terms of the language used, but also in terms of the slice of life or experience it portrays (Holst, 1980). Nevertheless, the theme and the ideas the text expresses should be as relevant to the learners' needs and interests as possible in order to make the learning process more motivating.

In conclusion, we would claim that teachers should take into consideration the aforementioned criteria for selection so as to encourage learners to concentrate less on language alone, and thus guide them towards, firstly, an understanding below the sentence level and, secondly, the realisation of meaning.

3.4 Background knowledge criteria

This type of criteria refers to the degree to which learners have to make use of their general knowledge of the world when interpreting a literary text. In the process of interpretation, readers have to employ systemic knowledge, i.e., knowledge of the language system as well as schematic knowledge, i.e. knowledge of the world in general, in order to create meaning. According to Carrell & Eisterhold (1983:556-557) in schema theory and the role of background knowledge in language comprehension "comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text. Efficient comprehension requires the ability to relate the textual material to one's own knowledge. The process of interpretation is guided by the principle that every input is mapped against some existing schema and that all aspects of that schema must be compatible with the input information". It follows, therefore, that when a literary text requires that the learner employ schematic knowledge not yet acquired, then meaning-creation breakdown may occur.

It could also be claimed that the schematic knowledge assumed by a literary text entails general background and cultural knowledge in the sense that the cultural element is inherent one's background knowledge. Carrell & Eisterhold (1983:562) note that "in the EFL/ESL classroom, we must be particularly sensitive to reading problems that result from the implicit cultural knowledge presupposed by a text". Consequently, a literary text that involves numerous general, historical, geographical, social or cultural references can make the reading process extremely difficult or frustrating and influence learners negatively towards studying literature in the EFL classroom. They also state that "in achieving our immediate goals in the EFL/ESL reading classroom, we must strive for an optimum balance between the background knowledge presupposed by the texts our students read and the background knowledge our students possess" (ibid). Likewise, the further the distance between the schematic knowledge assumed by the text and that of the learner, the more problematic the reading comprehension could be. That's why "the background knowledge and the cultural assumptions underlying a text should approximate those of the reader if comprehension is to be achieved" (Brock, 1990).

There are, however, those who argue that teachers should avoid using literary texts involving any sort of historical, regional or cultural references if the learners are not familiar with them. In case the text is highly referential and the learners are not acquainted with the references it carries, they will most probably not be able to enjoy and appreciate it. When the literary text has culturally relevant information, the EFL students' prior familiar experiences will be valuable to their reading comprehension. Floyd & Carrell (1987:103) suggest that cultural content schemata are a very powerful way to help readers' foreign language acquisition. However, all language is culture-bound to a certain degree, literature alike. Thus, in many cases a certain amount of additional schematic knowledge is required, and it is the teacher's task to provide learners with any extra necessary information about the literary text in order to facilitate the reading process and make it more enjoyable and fruitful. Therefore, background knowledge about the authors' views or cultural information concerning the setting of the literary work can be of great assistance to learners.

For these reasons, it seems that the literary works which entail excessive historical, cultural or other references should be systematically avoided in the EFL context, in order to minimise the possibilities of burdening learners with a knowledge load that they do not need. However, first of all, literature is by nature marked by various forms of such references, and, secondly, it is these references which constitute its aesthetic and cultural value. Hence, teachers should select those literary texts they judge learners can cope with in terms of general background or cultural knowledge in addition to matching their learners' general knowledge of the world. Additionally, it is their task to facilitate learners bridge the gap whenever they are faced with a general knowledge gap in the reading process. The criteria for selecting which literary text serve these purposes should be pedagogic, and "above all, any prospective text must be scrutinized according to all criteria relevant to the pupils' learning stage and requirements, and not adopted for study unless it passes through this scrutiny without hindrance" (Littlewood, 1986:183); otherwise, the study of literature will not trigger enjoyment but frustration and disappointment.

Within this perspective of selection criteria it follows, therefore, that there is little or nothing to be gained "from subjecting the student to archaic forms of language, obsolescent meanings of words and subject matter that requires historical interpretation" (Marckwardt, 1978:2-3), or carries heavy cultural implications. For that reason, contemporary literature should be preferred to classical pieces. Still, if it is assumed that classic literature fits the needs of a particular teaching situation, then it could be used accordingly. There are abridged versions of classic literary works which reduce the linguistic load caused from lexical or grammatical complexity, nevertheless retaining the literary work's original style, and thus useful for pedagogic and educational exploitation.

Another important point to make is that the selection criteria discussed are not mutually exclusive but complementary to each other. Teachers should balance and consider them all when selecting a literary text. If, for example, a linguistically simple text is chosen, which nevertheless carries a heavy cultural load, the reading process is not enhanced but suspended. In other words, all these criteria discussed should influence the teachers' final choice of texts. Nevertheless, depending on the needs of particular

teaching situations, a fundamentally linguistic, conceptual or background knowledge focus might be adopted.

Having considered the various kinds of criteria for selecting a literary text, the next important issue to be examined is how the texts chosen can be best integrated in the actual teaching process. Depending on the needs and requirements of learners, the teacher should decide on the position of the teaching/learning process on the continuum which relates language and literature. Then, the two of them can operate dynamically and assist learners in increasing language and literary competence. However, the success of this integration is linked organically with the roles of teachers and learners in this process, an issue which is addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

The roles of teachers and learners

From the previous discussion on the criteria for selecting literary texts, it appears that the role of the teacher is a crucial one for the achievement of the teaching/learning process. Be that as it may, the role of the learner is also essential, since any instruction setting comprises a teacher and learners. Besides, it is the learners' needs, aims, interests and predispositions which determine the teacher's decisions to a great extent.

Traditionally, the teaching of literature – not only in general, but in relation to language teaching, too – has been teacher-centred. This, in theory, implies that teachers have a predominant role in the classroom, since they possess knowledge, thus, directing and organising the teaching process; they determine the rules of classroom discourse and the teaching techniques, and learners have to comply with these prescribed routines. In this case, teachers “claim a superior and dominant position by virtue of a role which has been socially ascribed to him/her” (Widdowson, 1990:188). In such a context, the learners' role is entirely passive; their experiences and knowledge outside the class are rejected having to conform to the teacher's authoritarian role. In practice, this role suggests that teachers see themselves as imparting information which is an unquestionable issue. “Learners are somehow expected to take all this in and make it their own” (Collie & Slater, 1987:7). Furthermore, they also claim that (ibid) “often the sheer difficulties of detailed comprehension posed by the intricacy or linguistic subtlety of the language turn the teaching of literature into a massive process explanation by the teacher or even of translation, with the greater proportion of available classroom time devoted to a step by step exegetical exercise led by the teacher.” In other cases, the integration of literature into the language classroom is understood by some teachers as a purely literature-teaching process, and thus resort to the use of literary criticism metalanguage, which can seem extremely alien to learners. Therefore, the focus is searching hidden messages since “the literary critic searches for underlying significance” (Widdowson,1975:6). The results of such an approach are, firstly, to discourage learners from reading literature and to make them view the use of literature as another ‘painful’

component in the foreign language learning process. Secondly, although such an approach may assist learners in grasping a literary text in detail, it fails to establish an active relation between the learner and the text. For these reasons, learners very often adopt a negative attitude towards the study of literature.

In recent times, however, with the shift of language teaching from teacher-centredness to learner-centredness, the learner has come to acquire an eminent role in the foreign language learning process. Accordingly, the learner's position in classroom is no longer a subservient, but a functioning one, since his/her needs and concerns are seriously taken into account in the design of the language-literature syllabus. In addition to this, a learner-centred approach acknowledges the fact that learners bring their own experiences and knowledge of the world in the classroom, and can use them effectively while comprehending and responding to a literary text. In practice, a learner-centred language-literature class is one "which allows more exploration of the literary text by the learners and invites learners to develop their own responses and sensitivities. It leads learners to make their own judgments and to refine and develop their techniques so that they can apply them to a wider range of texts for their own benefit" (Carter & Long, 1991:24-5). In other words, learners are given more "space" in the learning process for personal investment.

However, the changes in the roles of teachers and learners brought about by the recent, influential language teaching trends are often misunderstood and result in misleading assumptions. In this respect, it is deduced that the teacher has no authority to intervene in the learning process, while learners are completely autonomous. Yet, such an assumption is deceptive and equivocal, since all teaching involves some sort of at least minimum authority and control on the part of the teacher; moreover, learners' autonomy is relative. As far as learner autonomy is concerned, Widdowson (1990:189) claims that "the learner really only exercises autonomy within the limits set by teacher authority. The learner is never really independent". That is because, firstly, teachers' authority does not derive by virtue of this specific role gives them an assertion of right, but from knowledge and professional qualifications. As Widdowson (ibid: 188) argues "dominance derives from the claim to be able to teach, to make the transaction successful in respect of its

specified objectives. In this case there is no assertion of right but a claim to knowledge: not “Do this because I am the teacher and I tell you” but “Do this because I am the teacher and I know what’s best for you.” In this sense, the teacher’s role is not domineering and authoritarian but conclusive and authoritative. Secondly, learner autonomy sometimes seems to be a misleading assumption, too, because, as Widdowson (ibid:190) points out, the teaching process is always directed and what is important is “not whether or not it should be subjected to direction, because it always is, but what kind of direction is most ideologically desirable and most pedagogically effective.” In other words, the idea of complete learner autonomy is utopist and the degree to which learners are independent depends on the degree of control the teacher exercises.

It appears, then, that learner-centredness is not easily attainable. Nevertheless, teacher-centredness is not desirable either. However, these arguments are based on another confusion concerning the terms teacher-centredness and learner-centredness and the ways they are perceived by different groups. Such confusion leads to hasty and very often wrong or fallacious judgments depending on the interpersonal factors in each classroom. Wright (1987:45) claims that these factors can be greatly affected by the status and positions teachers and learners have in each learning situation and “a power relationship exists between teachers and learners in which power is not shared equally”. The best solution would be to reconcile teacher-centredness and learner-centredness in a harmonised equilibrium, where both the desirable teacher control and learner autonomy could be achieved in degrees attainable and beneficial.

Based on the aforementioned assumption concerning a balanced approach towards the roles of teacher and learner, the teachers’ role is to stimulate, facilitate and support learners during the teaching and learning process. The teacher has the “responsibility to provide guidance by the careful selection and presentation of literary texts so that their potential as discourse for developing learning can be realized” (Widdowson, 1984:172-3). That means that the teacher is responsible for monitoring and guiding the learning process, but at the same time, s/he has to be creative, flexible and eclectic in making use of a variety of literary materials, methods and techniques, activities and tasks which will aid and stimulate the learning process in the foreign language classroom. It seems, then,

that teachers do not give up their control over the classroom but exercise it in a different way, so as not to hinder but encourage literature reading and language learning. Therefore, the teacher does not provide learners with ready-made literary exegesis which learners have to accept as absolute. Besides, learners need not be provided with interpretations of specific literary texts, but to be able to read, respond to and appreciate literature in general. For this reason, as Brumfit & Carter (1986:33) emphasise, “we need to recognize that we cannot claim to be teaching specific books; rather we are teaching attitudes and abilities which will be relevant to the reading of any major works of literature.” This, in turn, implies that the teacher’s role should be that of “a model towards which the students work -but only in general terms: we are not expecting students to replicate our responses in detail, only to develop their own, to move towards the kinds of responses we would expect of any sympathetic and reasonably knowledgeable adult reader” (ibid:23). Therefore, teachers’ behaviour should act as a model not of imitation but of general attitude towards literary reading.

The role of the learner, on the other hand, is active in the teaching and learning process. With reference to the former, this means that the learner’s knowledge, interests and anticipations should be seriously considered as regards selecting and presenting literary materials. Moreover, in terms of the latter, learners are free to explore and investigate, interpret and respond to the literary texts the way they prefer, without having to conform to the teacher’s point of view concerning the literary work examined. In other words, learners can freely interact with the text they are exposed to following, however, the useful guidance provided by the teacher. Besides, “reading is an active process of meaning-creation by integrating one’s own needs, understanding and expectations with a written text” a process resulting in the creation of various meanings on the part of readers. Similarly, “each student will have different needs, understandings, and expectations, so each student will derive slightly different messages from reading a particular book or poem” (Brumfit & Carter, 1986:23-4). It is exactly this diversity of literary interpretation that the role of the learner allows for in a teaching/learning situation where the roles of teacher and learners form a balanced instruction setting. After all, as Widdowson (1985:186) stresses, “the task for literature teaching is to develop a pedagogy

which will guide learners towards an independent ability to read literature for themselves."

To summarise, the roles of teachers and learners in the language-literature classroom should be flexible enough so as to be practically balanced, and complement each other. This suggests that teachers, on the one hand, should provide the necessary guidance to learners, which will enable them to reach the desirable objectives as smoothly and effectively as possible. As Wright (1987:68) puts it, "teaching style is a complex amalgam of belief, attitude, strategy, technique, motivation, personality, and control. Teaching style lies at the heart of the interpersonal relationship between teacher and learner". Learners, on the other hand, are also allowed to respond to and interact with literary texts independently, so as to create meaning out of them; in this way, it is expected that learners will be influenced by the educational and pedagogic value of literature, and adopt a positive attitude towards the study and reading of literature. Therefore, as long as there is balance between the roles of teachers and learners, they can work together more effectively towards the actualisation of the teaching and learning objectives, that is, firstly, the promotion of language competence, and secondly the enhancement of literary awareness.

Conclusion

The theory we have argued is of an integrated approach to the teaching and study of language and literature, one which combines literature study with language mastery and language skills promotion as well as development in literary awareness. Literature offers an excellent pedagogic and educational potential for the accomplishment of these objectives. In terms of pedagogy, it provides authentic and motivating material for the EFL classroom, which entails plenty of opportunities for vocabulary expansion and language skills amelioration. Reading skills are particularly boosted by the integration of literature in the foreign language classroom, since literature reading provides the means for the purposeful practice of procedures of interpretation which need to be engaged for reading in general (Widdowson, 1985). In terms of general education, literature, on the one hand, supplies the context in which the learners of the foreign language can be best initiated in the target language culture, and furthermore can be led to general cultural awareness, since literature is by nature culture-bound. On the other hand, literature provides aesthetic benefits in the sense that it upgrades the learners' literary awareness and contributes to their personal maturation, as well. However, these benefits cannot be achieved unless the literary texts selected are the proper ones. The more difficult a literary text is in terms of language, meanings conveyed or background knowledge required the more chances there are of not achieving the worthy benefits of literature. Nonetheless, when literary texts are appropriately selected, then they can facilitate the learning process and help learners appreciate the value of literature. Nevertheless, the teaching approaches should engage learners in an active role in language classrooms, where language learning takes place and opinions are openly expressed. With regards to the aesthetic value of literature, it is actualised when the teacher does not simply provide learners with literary interpretations, but provides the necessary guidance for independent exegesis. Consequently, the roles of teachers and learners will be balanced effectively for the actualisation of the targets aimed at.

Put simply, the language teacher is called upon to evaluate the conditions in each classroom and attempt using literature in the foreign language classroom to its full potential. However, as Widdowson (1984:173) argues, "until the case for a reprieve of

literature has been accepted in principle, we cannot make a start on its rehabilitation in practice.” In other words, teachers have, first of all, to believe themselves in the integration of literature in the language classroom, before adopting such an approach. We hope that EFL teachers will be less opposed and cautious towards the amalgamation of language and literature in EFL courses, since “literature is strange and mysterious and an object of reverence, but is also a use of language and so comparable with other uses of language” (Widdowson 1975:124). In this sense, literature “is only one of the strange and mysterious ways in which human beings manage to communicate with each other” (ibid).

It appears, thus, that literature study is closely related to language study. Yet, the primary aim should not be only to boost language knowledge from this merging, since literature can offer great cultural and aesthetic benefits, too. Therefore, it seems that language and literature converge towards a felicitous union. A most welcome approach.

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