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PhD DISSERTATION

**FROM MEANING-LESS TO MEANING-NEST**

**USING LITERARY TEXTS TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILLS**

**AT B1 LEVEL**

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TITULO: *From meaning-less to meaning-nest: using literary texts to improve writing skills at B1 level*

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**TÍTULO DE LA TESIS:** *From meaning-less to mening-nest. Using liteary texts to improve writing skills at B1 Level.*

**DOCTORANDO/A:** Adriana Maria Francesca Iacono

**INFORME RAZONADO DEL/DE LOS DIRECTOR/ES DE LA TESIS**

(se hará mención a la evolución y desarrollo de la tesis, así como a trabajos y publicaciones derivados de la misma).

El presente trabajo constituye una investigación que se encuadra en el campo de la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera pero que trata una temática novedosa y frecuentemente ignorada, como es como es la utilización de la literatura para estimular la adquisición de la competencia multicultural del alumnado y su rentabilización en términos generales como elemento favorecedor del aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa. Esta tesis se encuadra asimismo dentro del contexto general de investigar cómo se debe articular la adquisición de competencias en contraposición a la enseñanza tradicional basada en la adquisición contenidos y destrezas. Por lo que respecta a la definición del problema al que pretende acercarse este trabajo, se trata de abordar, además, la adquisición de la competencia multicultural mediante el trabajo específico con materiales literarios con el fin de potenciar el alcance de esta propuesta.

Como base teórica de este presupuesto, se ha realizado un análisis exhaustivo de los factores individuales, psico-sociales, los relacionados con la instrucción formal en el aula, y los derivados de las políticas educativas que se suelen manejar en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras. Así mismo, se presenta una fundada revisión crítica de los modelos teóricos y metodológicos que a través de la historia y en la actualidad se han venido utilizando como referentes en el ámbito de la enseñanza del inglés, y en particular en la enseñanza de la competencia multicultural a través de la utilización de la literatura en el aula. Una vez establecidas estas premisas teóricas iniciales, se ha procedido a elegir un aparataje práctico basado en la elaboración de secuencias didácticas en las que los textos literarios ocupan un papel predominante.

El trabajo de investigación realizado ha dado como resultado varias actividades de difusión en forma de comunicaciones presentadas en congresos nacionales e internacionales para expertos y educadores en enseñanza bilingüe, así como una publicación hasta la fecha en una revista científica internacional.


Finalmente, los resultados obtenidos han permitido desarrollar una serie de implicaciones y recomendaciones pedagógicas de calado en lo referente a la inclusión de la literatura como medio para fomentar la adquisición de la competencia multicultural en la enseñanza de una lengua extranjera. Por todo ello, entendemos que la tesis doctoral cumple con los requisitos exigidos para un trabajo de estas características, por lo que se autoriza su presentación.

Córdoba, a 1 de septiembre de 2022

Firmas del  
director

Víctor Pavón Vázquez

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“... a fascinating picture of what the language classroom could look like. It could be a place in which teachers have explored their own consciousness, personal histories and cultural positionings and enter into an active process of writing, dialogue and discussion with their language learning students. It could be a place in which meaningful, emotive writing and evocative, significant conversations take place and in which students are fully engaged with their understanding of how language and culture help formulate who they are. Finally, it could be a place in which humanity meets humanity and language is learnt and used as a meaningful resource for developing personal expressive abilities.”

David Ian Hanauer

“It is clear that the end of literary teaching is not simply the admiration of literature; it’s something more like the transfer of imaginative energy from literature to the students.”

Northrop Frye

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## **Abbreviations and acronyms**

- EFL - ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE
- ESL - ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
- L2 - SECOND LANGUAGE
- M1 - MODULE 1
- M2 - MODULE 2
- M3 - MODULE 3
- L - LESSON
- T - ENTRY TEST
- MIUR - ITALIAN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
- CLIL - CONTENT AND LANGUAGE INTEGRATED LEARNING
- CLT – COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING
- TALO - TEXT AS A LINGUISTIC OBJECT
- TAVI - TEXT AS A VEHICLE FOR INFORMATION
- TASP - TEXT AS A SPRINGBOARD FOR PRODUCTION
- TAM - TEXT AS A MODEL
- TAPS - TEXT AS A TOOL FOR PROBLEM SOLVING
- TEC - TEXT FOR CREATIVITY
- TACT - TEXT FOR CRITICAL THINKING
- TAG – TEXT FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

## Summary

Can we implement our English courses with literary excerpts? Can we use literary texts in a communicative approach? What is the added value literature in the L2 classroom? High school students in Italy start studying English Literature in the third year of high school, at the age of 16, while their whole past experience in the learning of English has been merely based on the spoken language. Most course books show sample of “real” conversations for the sole purpose of practicing functions and grammar, improving pronunciation and developing vocabulary. However, through literature students may have the opportunity to investigate language at a deeper level including style, register, tone, a more creative use of vocabulary and idioms, metaphors, and a wide use of imagery that they can see in the excerpt which serve as a model, in order to develop their own writing skills. Besides, literature conveys meaning, and through quality literature we can address important issues of today’s world and allow students to develop critical thinking, raise awareness on multiculturalism and enhance their personal growth. **Keywords** Teaching English, Literature, Writing Skills, L2/EFL.

## Resumen

¿Podemos mejorar y desarrollar nuestras clases de inglés a través de la literatura y utilizar los textos literarios de forma comunicativa? ¿Cuál es el valor adicional de utilizar la literatura en las clases de idiomas? Los estudiantes de escuela superior en Italia comienzan a estudiar literatura inglesa en “terza liceo” a la edad de 16 años, sin ninguna experiencia anterior ya que el aprendizaje de inglés se basa principalmente en el estudio de la lengua hablada. La mayoría de los libros muestran ejemplos de conversación “real” para practicar gramática, mejorar pronunciación y desarrollar vocabulario. Sin embargo, por medio de la literatura los estudiantes pueden tener la oportunidad de analizar la lengua de manera más profunda incluyendo el estilo, el registro, el tono, el uso más creativo del vocabulario, los modos de decir, las metáforas y utilizando la imaginación, tal y como aparecen en el texto literario que sirve de modelo para desarrollar su capacidad de escritura. Además, la literatura tiene significado por sí misma, ya que a través de ella es posible hablar del mundo actual y permitir a los alumnos desarrollar el pensamiento crítico, desarrollar la conciencia sobre el multiculturalismo y desarrollarse ellos mismos. **Palabras clave** Enseñanza de Inglés, Literatura, Capacidad de escritura, L2/EFL.

## Introduction

This research aims to fill in the gap between theory and practice in a specific linguistic field, namely the using of literary texts for developing language skills. Infact, as Hanauer (2011) claims, there is little evidence of empirical data on literature, and this is due to fact that both literature and poetry have been marginalized within applied linguistics. The object of this study is not literature per se, but rather the way we can use it to promote language learning. The use of literature in the L2 classroom has always been controversial. As Duff and Maley (2008) point out there are ‘issues of relevance and reverence’ (p.8). The first ones are related to literary language seen as totally different from daily life language, while the second ones are connected to the high value given to literature that seems to be diminished if used for linguistic purposes only. The scholars offer valid reasons against this kind of objections saying that, on one hand, literature exposes learners to a variety of contexts that can support communication skills offering, at the same time, inputs for better understanding themselves and the others; on the other hand, by de-sacralizing literary texts students gain more confidence and lose their inhibitions induced by culture.

If the purpose of everyday language is to achieve results and influence actions and attitudes (Wellek & Warren, 1956), the same can be said about literary language. In fact, as the scholars say, literary language is not just referential, it is expressive and conveys the tone and attitude of the writer to influence and persuade the reader. Lazar (2015) claims that “literary texts are authentic pieces of discourse”, while Duff and Maley (2008) state that literary texts “offer genuine samples of a very wide range of styles, registers and text types at many levels of difficulty” (p. 5). Therefore, is it possible to use literature for didactic purposes? This research investigates the possibility of using literature as a tool to develop both the writing skills and the motivation of the learners of a second language (henceforth, L2). As Hanauer (2013) claims, “through literacy, and in particular L2 writing, personal phenomenological experience can be reflectively inspected, explicated and presented for interpretation by others and as such can be used as an important resource within the language classroom” (p. 4). As explained further below, past approaches have employed literature as a way of teaching

an L2. For example, the grammar translation methodology used it as a means to develop reading and writing skills, so language lessons would usually include analysis of literary passages or translations of particular texts. In this methodology, literary texts are seen as a way to better understand the culture expressed by a specific language and for this reason teachers would provide learners with information about historical, political and cultural background to the text (Lazar, 2015). Using literary texts in the L2 classroom learners are exposed to creative language which is also stimulating for language acquisition. Besides, as Lazar (2015) claims, literature provides not only the language but also to the culture of the target language engaging students at both cognitive and emotional level. In fact, it has been providing stylistic and rhetorical devices able to convey artistic values as well as grammar rules to language students for centuries.

In his review, Khatib (2011) makes a long list of good reasons for using literature as a language resource for language teachers. He claims that literatures provide authentic and meaningful material that can be personally relevant to the learners, thus enhancing their motivation. Literature is also a way to promote intercultural awareness. This is especially true for English language literature coming from very different part of the world and expressing different cultures. Besides, literature deals with universal concepts that can be shared by all human beings creating a feeling of connection among diversity. The scholar also mentions more practical reasons for using literary texts in the L2 classroom. Literary texts involve a wide range of grammar and vocabulary, which include also slang, and various genres, dialogues, prose, poetry. All this variety can be fruitful exploited for developing all language skills, including listening and speaking besides reading and writing: for speaking involving students in discussions about social issues or current international events; for listening to songs inspired by classical writers (many Shakespeare's sonnets are lyrics for songs), or watching films or short videos about the literary texts used in the classroom; for practicing reading skills and subskills (skimming and scanning); and of course for writing using the literary excerpts as models for improving vocabulary, grammar and syntax. Khatib (2011) also mentions the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that can be improved by using literary texts. For instance, emotional intelligence, through dealing with feelings and emotions expressed by a character or a poem; critical thinking can be developed through reading comprehension and higher-order questions related to the topics of the texts allowing learners to discover meaning by themselves.



### *Rationale for the research*

As above mentioned, there are many good reasons for using literary text. The aim of this research is to develop language skills, and other 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, using literary text and help developing a holistic approach culture in the language classroom. However, despite the fact that many scholars have been long involved in investigating and fostering the use of literary texts in the L2 classroom, there is lack of curricula methodologies and tasks incorporating literary texts that show that language acquisition can be improved using literature as a source of language and as a model for the learners (Lazar, 2015). In the past, the grammar translation method gave literary texts great relevance as a model of correct language, while the functional-notional method, on the contrary, disregarded literature as a source of authentic language (Llach, 2007). In 1963 a conference on education at King's College in Cambridge highlighted the importance of literary texts as a useful tool to teach languages. Nowadays, many authors agree on considering literary language as real language that serves the purpose of communication (Llach, 2007) using a high concentration of metaphors and other technical devices. Nevertheless, the use of literary texts in the language classroom has remained ignored for a long time due to the impact of the communicative approach (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014).

### *Aim and research questions*

As Duff and Maley (2008) say there are many reasons for using literary texts as a language teaching resource. These reasons may be expressed in linguistic, cultural, and personal growth factors. As a matter of fact, literary texts offer a wide range of genuine texts, they also are a vehicle for culture and affect emotions. Another reason is that literary texts offer the chance to discuss open interpretations which may lead to successful and genuine interactions among learners. These reasons are the valid motivations that support this research, with the aim of finding a useful tool for the practice of using literary texts in the L2 classroom that could be shared with other teachers. Another good reason that supports this investigation on using literature in L2 classrooms is connected to the national school system in Italy. Italian high school students, in fact, start studying literature in their third year when they are about 16, with extraordinarily little previous exposure to it. During the first school years the focus of their language learning is mostly on grammar and vocabulary as learnt

from textbooks, therefore they are not prepared when it comes to study literature. For this reason, most of this research involved students from two different high schools in Italy. One is “Liceo delle Scienze Umane Raffaello Politi”, in Agrigento (Sicily), and the other one is “Liceo Classico Ugo Foscolo”, in Canicatti not far from Agrigento. Then also students from a private language school Eurolingue School, with seven schools around Sicily were involved, plus another class from Liceo Classico Ugo Foscolo.

### *Structure of the study*

The research presents findings from a study that has been conducted between 2019 and 2021. The study has been carried out in two steps with similar but slightly different contexts. The first step involved the two “Liceo Classico” high schools with students learning English as an L2. The research has been conducted with students of the second year to expose them to literature before it becomes the focus of their studies. Besides, students in the first two or three years of high schools are usually at B1 level, which is a good starting point to expand writing skills. The second step of the research involved one of the above-mentioned classes from Liceo classico and about one hundred students from a private language school Eurolingue School, with schools scattered in seven towns of Sicily. During the first step the focus of the research was on writing skills in general, while in the second part the focus was on creativity and critical thinking. For this purpose, in the course syllabus that was set up students were asked to read short literary excerpts and produce their own writing pieces, as further detailed below.

The word literature is used here in a broad sense (both literature with capital L and with small l) and includes not only excerpts from novels, dramas, short stories, and poems but also articles, essays, and songs. The students were asked to use the excerpts as models for their own writing pieces. They were also given opportunities for self-reflection through a series of different activities, as described below. Regarding English as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL), the Italian Ministry of Education states that students in their second year of high school should be at B1 level, therefore this is the most common level of English among this cohort of students. For this reason, to investigate the use of literary texts, the course syllabus was designed with the aim of offering students a series of lessons based on short literary excerpts drawn from several different books to be used for classroom activities. The excerpts included in this study are a mix of classical texts as in the

national curriculum established for “Liceo” (Italian high schools where students study English literature) by the Ministry of Education, plus contemporary writers, best sellers, and teenagers’ favorite authors. The main objective of this study is to verify whether it is possible to use literature to improve writing skills at B1 level

### *Objectives*

The specific objectives of the research project reported here are the following:

- To investigate any improvements in writing skills, grammar and vocabulary in the students’ written production using literary excerpts as models. This investigation is carried out through quantitative analysis of the data collected in two steps: general writing assessment on all modules and assessment on grammar in module one.
- To investigate any improvements in creativity and critical thinking in the students after having engaged with selected literary excerpts. This investigation is carried out through quantitative analysis of the data collected in module two and three.
- To investigate any improvements in motivation, in the students after having engaged with selected literary excerpts. This investigation is carried out through qualitative analysis of the answers given to a feedback questionnaire by both students and teachers taking part to the research project.

This research is structured as follows: after introducing the theoretical background, the methodology of the study is presented, followed by the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data collected. The study concludes that students’ motivation, writing skills creativity and critical thinking can be enhanced by using literature as a source of language and food for thoughts.

### *Originality and innovation*

As mentioned above, a novel point introduced by this study consists in proposing a course syllabus designed to use literary texts from different perspectives. The texts are used with the purpose of prompting students into a wide range of activities aiming at developing language skills together with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The text are short excerpts, poems and songs, while activities developed in the lessons are based on John and

Davies (1983, as cited in Clandfield, 2015) definition of TALO (Text as Linguistic Object), TAVI (Text as Vehicle for Information), TASP (Text as a Springboard for Production). In addition to these definitions, other acronyms have been coined to be more specific on the use of the text as a springboard for production. In fact, texts can be used for different purposes, for instance: for developing language skills, multicultural awareness, motivation, creativity, and personal growth. So, the three modules of the syllabus have different focus depending on how the text have been used.

With this in mind, all TASP productive writing tasks have been divided in:

- TAM (Text as a Model) in Module One, where texts have been used as model to practice and memorize linguistic features.
- TEC (Text to Enhance Creativity) in Module Two where texts have been used to expose student to a creative use of language to develop creativity.
- TACT (Text as a Tool for Critical Thinking) in Module Three, where texts have been used as prompts for reflections and critical thinking on different important topics of today's world.

The novelty of this study then is in the new and more specific use of the text as a springboard for production. Besides, there are not many empirical studies on the use of literary text in general and in Italy in particular, so the aim of this research is also to provide teachers teaching L2 and literature in high schools with a syllabus and useful guideline to be adopted in the classroom. This syllabus could be used both in the second year of high school, as a preparation to the study of literature, or in the third year, as a mean to integrate language, literature, and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

### *Expected outcome*

The study has been carried out with the purpose of offering a new perspective in the teaching of language and literature in Italian high schools. The expected outcome is to show that new approaches are possible to give students better chances to develop linguistic and personal skills in a more holistic way. The study also aims at offering both students and teachers a friendly tool that can be used in a classroom

environment where self-expression is free from judgement and external conditioning. The ideal situation would be a classroom where students writing pieces are not just linguistic objects to be assessed but also a way to express personal feelings, thoughts and emotions which are valued and appreciated for what they really, namely expressions of the immense variety of humanity. In this sense, writing can become a way to humanize the process of learning a language. The ambition is to make this study the starting point of a gentle revolution that allows literature to stand up as tool for personal growth as well as personal enjoyment, for both students and teachers.

## PART 1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### Chapter 1 EFL/ESL methodologies

#### 1.1 Language acquisition and language learning

In having a look at the historical evolution of teaching methods it is of great importance to note that these approaches and methods constitute the application of theoretical findings and positions, and that they must be thought of as “theories in practice” (Brown, 1994). It is evident that each of the well-known language teaching methods has derived from an educational philosophy or a pedagogical theory that has satisfied certain demands or requirements either of the period in which it flourished or of the peculiar situation of the people who adopted it (Stern, 1983).

*Learning* has been traditionally opposed to *acquisition* in which the first is a formal conscious process, based on explanation, study and instruction, the result of explicit instruction about the L2 rule system; whereas the second is a natural, subconscious process based on contact and exposure, and not influenced by explicit instruction about the L2 rule system or about errors against that system (Krashen, 1987). Following Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982), it is possible to define L2 *acquisition* as “the process of learning another language after the basics of the first have been acquired” (p.p. 10-11), thus, including what is known as *foreign language* learning. L2 acquisition includes learning a new language in a *foreign language context* (e.g., learning English in Russia or Spain) as well as learning a language in a *host language context* (e.g., English in Great Britain), and the learning principles discussed by explanatory approaches normally apply to both.

#### 1.2 Second language acquisition theories

Theories about second language acquisition have been trying to analyse and explain the process of learning and the description of the learner’s development of a new linguistic system (Faure et al., 1972). In general, they normally derive either from *rationalism*, thus focusing on cognitive and universal capacities, or from *empiricism*, trying then to analyse the learning process in terms of behaviourist considerations of habit formation (Rivers, 1981).

### *Behaviourism*

Behaviourism is based on the ideas arising from structuralism, basically, those concerning the very nature of the language, this being considered a system, a structure in which the role of each element depends on value of the others, nothing exists for itself but in relation to the others. According to Skinner (1957), then, language and language acquisition is the result of verbal habits. Language behaviour can, according to Skinner, only be studied through observation of external factors. These factors are:

- a) *Frequency*. The frequency with which a certain utterance is used in the learner's environment.
- b) *Imitation*. In the behaviourists' view, children imitate the language of their environment to a considerable degree, so imitation is a strong contributing factor in the language learning process.
- c) *Reinforcement*. This factor is needed to arrive at a higher level of language proficiency. The environment, thus, encourages the learner to produce grammatical utterances, while not encouraging ungrammatical ones.

### 1.3 Language learning theories. The quest for the EFL/ESL perfect method

What is a method? In 1963 Anthony (as cited in Brown, 2002) gave a definition of method based on the distinction among approach, method, and techniques. According to him, an approach is a series of assumptions dealing with language, learning and teaching, a method is a plan for presenting the language according to the chosen approach while techniques are the classroom activities developed in harmony with both method and approach. Brown (2002) claims that between 1880 and 1980 many pedagogical experts were involved in the quest for a perfect EFL/ESL method that would enable teachers to successfully teach foreign languages in any given context.

The procedural and practical results from many different approaches along history do not seem to have established as reliable instruments for learning languages. From now on, we will review some of the most relevant methods in the history of language teaching, paying attention to their origins and sources, outstanding features, objectives, techniques, and theoretical assumptions. In the following pages the evolution of the different methods will be addressed. These methods have been designed to effectively teach foreign or

additional languages, different approaches and methods have evolved, in an attempt to accommodate the necessities in the new millennium. Starting from the conceptualisation of what learning and acquiring a language means, the most significant proposals will be reviewed here. It must be kept in mind that the partial inefficacy of a method, in many occasions, has gave way to the flourishing of new approaches and methods.

A glance through the last two centuries of language teaching gives us an interesting picture of how varied the interpretations have been of the best way to teach a foreign language. Although the question of how to teach languages has been debated even longer than that, for over twenty-five centuries, to use Kelly's (1969) expression: theory development as a debate on teaching methods has evolved. And this debate has provided the main basis for interpretation of language teaching (Stevens, 1977; Titone, 1968). This section focuses on reviewing the different approaches and methods which have dominated the world of teaching, with the aim to offer a comprehensive picture of the theoretical foundations of FL teaching and learning and, what is more important, its implications to the practical concerns of pedagogy in the classroom.

#### *The Grammar Translation Method*

In the past, learning a foreign language was mostly associated with Latin and Greek, in this context the Grammar and Translation method was the only way to approach the study of these classical languages. Since there was no provision for the oral use of both languages the focus was on grammatical rules, syntactic structures, along with memorization of vocabulary and translation of literary texts (Thanasoulas, 2002). This method has been considered very often as the language teaching "tradition", and, in various manifestations and adaptations, has been practised worldwide for centuries. The main characteristics of this method are:

- Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little or no use of the target language.
- Explanations of grammar rules are given extensively, with the objective of learning how to put words together.
- Technical grammatical terminology is not avoided.
- Exercises in grammatical analysis are used as the basis for the comprehension of texts.
- Use of drills and exercises in translating disconnected and de-contextualised sentences from the target language into the native one.



- Little or no attention is paid to pronunciation.

### *The Direct Method*

After the publication of *The Art of Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages* by Françoise Guion in 1880, that the search for a different methodology started (Brown, 2002). Guion was a French man who lived in Germany but was not successful in learning German, despite being able of memorizing books, translating Goethe and Schiller, and learning by heart 30,000 words in a dictionary (Thanasoulas, 2002). After seeing his little nephew mastering French as his native language at the age of three, he was inspired in finding a new methodology based on “series” of actions, connected together, and described as simple strings of sentences: *I stretch out my arm. I take hold of the handle. I turn the handle. I open the door. I pull the door.* Guion’s approach to languages became the basis of Charles Berlitz’s Direct Method at the turn of the century (Brown, 2002). Historically, the development of the direct method is closely linked with the introduction of phonetics into language pedagogy, with an emphasis in the use of the spoken language. Linguistically, language teaching was to be based on phonetics and on scientifically established coherent grammar. The Direct Method started considering the acquisition of a new language as a native language and had these characteristics (Thanasoulas, 2002):

- Classroom instruction was conducted in the target language
- Inductive approach to Grammar. Grammar was learned inductively (no rules, just use).
- Only everyday vocabulary was taught
- Concrete vocabulary was taught through pictures and objects, while abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas
- Difficult expressions are explained in the target language with the help of paraphrases, synonyms, demonstration, or context.
- To elucidate further the meaning of the text the teacher asks questions about it, and the students read the text aloud for practice.
- Exercises involve transpositions, substitutions, dictation, narrative, and free composition.

- Stress is laid on the acquisition of a good pronunciation.

### *The Audiolingual Method*

Audiolingualism has had considerable influence on language education in most parts of the world, even where it was critically and sceptically received from the outset, as for example in Britain or Germany. The origins of audiolingualism are to be found in the “Army Method” of American wartime language programmes in World War II. A time when the government commissioned American universities to develop foreign language programmes for military personnel who required to work as interpreters, code-room assistants, translators, and even spies. For this method, understanding a native speaker and speaking a language with near-native accent were first priorities. The “Army Method” became popular in the 50s as the Audiolingual Method.

This method was based on oral skills and had these characteristics (Thanasoulas, 2002):

- Dependence on mimicry and memorization of set phrases
- Learning vocabulary in context
- Use of tapes and visual aids
- Focus on pronunciation
- Immediate reinforcement of correct responses
- Use of dialogues as the most effective way of presenting the language.
- Grammatical structures are sequenced, and rules are taught extensively.
- Emphasis on the techniques of imitative repetition, memorisation of dialogues, and pattern drills (also called structural drills) with the assumption “teach the language and not about the language”.
- Use of language laboratory.

### *Cognitive approach*

As an alternative to the audiolingual method the cognitive theory developed from the mid-sixties in response to the criticisms levelled against this method. The rediscovery of the grammar-translation or the direct

method was an attempt to bring to language pedagogy the new insights of psychology and psycholinguistics.

Main characteristics:

- It is less concerned with the primacy of oral skills, instead it emphasises the control of the language in all manifestations as a coherent and meaningful system.
- Instead of expecting automatic command of the language from intensive drill, it seeks the intellectual understanding of the language as a system.
- Pronunciation is de-emphasised. Perfection is seen as unrealistic.
- Errors are considered inevitable. They should be used constructively.

### *Humanistic approaches*

A perspective which has gained increasing prominence in language teaching is the “whole person” approach. The idea is that language teaching is not just about teaching language skills and structural components, but it is also about helping students to develop as people. A lot of importance is given to creating a positive class atmosphere in terms of affective considerations. In these methods, the experience of the student is what counts, and the development of their personalities and the encouragement of positive individual and group feelings are considered as important as their language skills. Among them, we can mention Community Language Learning, Total Physical Response.

### *Mentalist approaches*

For the theory of second language acquisition, the development from *behaviourist* to *mentalist* explanations has been of crucial importance. Mentalist ideas are based mainly on theoretical linguistic assumptions, in which the focus is on the innate capacity of any child to learn a language. This view of the language learning process, therefore, stresses the *mental* activities of the language learner himself, and strongly questions the relevance of such external factors as imitation, frequency of stimulus and reinforcement. Mentalist ideas about language learning in general and second language acquisition have led researchers to take further, and in some cases, extreme positions. Just to mention one, what we may call the cognitive study of the language, and thus the cognitive explanation to the acquisition and learning processes, based on the assumption that the language and the amalgam of cognitive abilities are tied the one to the other (*The Silent Way*,

*Suggestopedia*).

#### 1.4 Chomsky

In 1957 American linguist Noam Chomsky published “Syntactic Structures” in which explained his theory on Transformational Generative Grammar or Universal Grammar. This new theory had such a strong impact in linguistic and non-linguistic fields that became known as The Chomskyan Revolution. Chomsky provided a model for description of all languages based on the idea of an inner structure in the human brain called “LAD” (Language Acquisition Device) that is like software of an abstract “syntagmatic” ruling of sequencing different grammatical categories. This “Deep Structure” is the “base component” of “universal grammar” and allows human being to learn to speak at a very early stage of their lives (Meenakshi, 2020). Chomsky criticized structural theories of language saying that they were incapable of accounting for the creativity and uniqueness of individual sentences which is one of the main characteristics of human nature (Manoliu, 2012). As Howatt (1984) specifies, Chomsky also created the distinction between “competence” and “performance”. In 1962, with the publication of *The Ethnography of Speaking*, the sociolinguist Hymes used the terms *communication competence* (Howatt, 1984), proposing a wider notion of communicative competence as part of cultural competence. In this sense, the term includes the ability to understand the sentences and the context in which they occur, and what it takes to communicate effectively in different social situations.

Chomsky’s language acquisition device (LAD)

Chomsky’s ideas have been tremendously influential not only in the field of general linguistics but also within the area of second language acquisition. In this sense, his contribution can be summarized as:

- a) There is a mental predisposition for the acquisition of the language, a certain mental architecture which only humans possess, the *universal grammar*, responsible for the similitude between languages and for the ability to handle linguistic data during the learning process.
- b) We all possess an innate and universal mechanism for the acquisition of languages, the *language acquisition device (LAD)*. Children and adults’ speech are just different stages of the same genetic capacity.

- c) Learning and acquiring another language is, due to this, a *creative* process, based on deducing and hypothesising.

According to the idea claiming for the existence of the LAD, we assume that the ability to learn languages is innate. This “device” enables the learner to make hypothesis about the structure of language in general, and about the structure of the language he is learning in particular.

### 1.5 The Chomskyan Revolution and its offsprings

The Chomskyan Revolution in linguistics drew the attention to the "deep structure" of language, and the affective and interpersonal nature of learning. As a result, new methods started to arise with the purpose of underling the importance of psychological factors in language learning (Thanasoulas, 2002). In the 70s that a series of methods appeared to which David Nunan (1989, as cited in Brown, 2002) referred as “designer” methods (p. 97).

Among them there are:

- Total Physical Response developed by James Asher. This method involves a physical response of the body. Learners are engaged with physical activity to make the learning experience more memorable using imperative mode and interrogatives. This method is proved to be particularly effective with early stages of learning and children.
- Suggestopedia, by Georgi Lozanov, was created in 1979 and it was based on relaxation of the mind for maximizing the learning process with music in the background while a text was read in the target language and then translated.
- Silent Way by Caleb Gattegno who was interested in a humanistic approach where the teacher worked as a stimulator and students were invited to find meaning and pronunciation by themselves with very little intervention from the teacher.
- The Cognitive Code method can also be regarded as an offspring of the Chomskyan Revolution. It is based on Gestalt psychology as well as formational Generative Grammar (Chastain, 1969, as cited in Demirezen, 2014). According to Carroll (1966, as cited in Demirezen, 2014) “... learning a language is a

process of acquiring conscious control of the phonological, grammatical, and lexical patterns of the second language, largely through study and analysis of these patterns as a body of knowledge” (p. 102). CCLT is in opposition to the Audio-lingual Method. In the Audio-Lingual method the assumptions are to teach syntax through mere repetition of pattern drills with no explanations, while in Cognitive Code explanation of grammatical rules are made explicit. In CCLT there is a conscious willingness to organize foreign language teaching materials around a grammatical syllabus for meaningful practice of language. In fact, practice must be meaningful so that the learner can understand the rules involved in order to gain conscious control of the grammatical patterns. The CCLT method is based on Presentation, Practice and Production (PPP), a three-step pattern which brings the learners to gain a clear understanding of a grammatical rule and then practice it in meaningful contexts (Demirezen, 2014).

#### 1.6 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was born in England in the early 1960s (Simhachalam, 2015) as a result of teachers’ dissatisfaction with the previous teaching methods (Howatt, 1984). Past methods, such as Grammar Translation and Audio-Lingual, for instance, were overcome by the communicative approach. This approach is now widely used in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms, and regarded as a useful approach to language teaching, and as a strong theoretical model by both scholars and teachers (Thamarana, 2015). Littlewood (2013) underlines that CLT soon welcomed by enthusiastic teachers all over the world, because it offered ideas and techniques that were ready to be used in the classrooms. In spite of its popularity, though, the definition of CLT has never been very clear and, according to Littlewood (2013), most teachers would regard it as a way of teaching how to communicate in the L2 using very little grammar, focusing on oral skills and spending a lot of time in preparing activities. As Kumaravadivelu (2001) underlines, while the audiolingual method and the grammatical approach were heavily focused on receptive skills and language structures, CLT, on the contrary, would focus on speaking and productive skills. This characteristic made CLT highly competitive as it was able to develop real-life communication practice and innovations in syllabus content and classroom interaction.

Howatt (1984) points out, there are two versions of communicative approach: the “weak” version and the “strong” version (p. 279). The first one is based on providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes integrating these activities into a wider program of language teaching and leaving open the possibility that teachers might present and practice more traditional techniques such as explanations, for instance, before or after students use them (Littlewood, 1984). The second one claims that language is acquired through communication so what is important is stimulating the development of the language without making any use of “traditional” techniques such as explanations, drills, and question-and-answer practice (Littlewood, 2013). An investigation carried out in Asia (Littlewood, 2013) showed that teachers willing to adopt the CLT approach had to face many challenges. These challenges resulted in difficulties with specific issues, such as: classroom management, organizing pair or group work, students’ lack of language proficiency and use of mother tongue, excessive demands on teachers’ language skills, resistance from students and parents, misconceptions about the role of the teacher as a facilitator... With this in mind, the most modern approach to CLT is toward a more flexible use of the techniques and more adaptable lesson plan designed with the aim of respecting the needs of the students and the variety of contexts teachers may work in. In this respect, CLT cannot be regarded as a method but rather as a source of activities and techniques that teachers can use freely to design meaningful classroom practices able to meet the communicative needs of their students (Littlewood, 2013). Littlewood (2004) describes this approach to teaching English with a different acronym COLT: “Communicative Oriented Language Teaching” (p. 325), which keeps the same focus on communication but implies that the means may vary with contexts.

Communicative approach teachers have tried to ensure comprehensive coverage in two ways. The first one would focus on meaning and fluency rather than form and accuracy as described by Littlewood (1981, as cited in Seedhouse, 1997) who defines “pre-communicative” and “communicative” activities. The second one is based on meaning-focused activities as a starting point for form-focused activities, as described by Brumfit (1979, as cited in Seedhouse, 1997). Although both approaches cover accuracy and fluency, form and meaning, none of them attempt does it simultaneously. In more recent time, this issue that Seedhouse (1997) calls a *dual*

focus, has been researched to find a way of focusing on accuracy and fluency, on form and meaning simultaneously.

Didenko and Pichugova (2016) claim that, in the long run, some of the benefits of CLT have become rather questionable. As a matter of fact, although CLT fosters real communication in the classroom, several studies have stated that CLT classroom interaction cannot be classified as genuinely communicative (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) as it is difficult for teachers to recreate real-life communication in their classes. Jeremy Harmer (1982) defines what is communication specifying that the concepts of communication and communicative should not be applied to a methodology. In fact, only the activities can be classified as communicative. According to Harmer, to have real communication we need three conditions: desire to communicate, purpose and adequate language. Once these conditions are met the focus will be on the content rather than on the form, from which derives the attention on fluency rather than accuracy in the communicative approach. However, it is possible to say that not all the techniques used in the communicative approach can be regarded as real communications (Harmer 1982). As a matter of fact, some activities are more communicative than others, for instance drills and repetitions focus on form rather than content. Therefore, after a few decades of successful growth and enthusiasm for CLT, the communicative approach started to show its limitations too.

### *The Communicative Approach*

At this point it is time to take a closer look at the approach that has had the greatest significance world-wide for the current practice of English language teaching, the communicative approach. Dissatisfaction began with the dominant approaches in English language teaching in which the main emphasis of which was on the mastery of language structure, with the students being required, above all, to manipulate grammatical forms accurately (McDonough & Shaw, 1993). Language teaching was undoubtedly ignoring the functional and communicative potential of language (Richards & Rodgers, 1982, 1986). Within the Council of Europe, several experts worked on proposals for the establishment of a scheme, mainly instrumental, to teach the languages of Europe which tried to set out the fundamental considerations for a “functional-notional” approach based on communicative criteria (Byram, 1997). These educational perspectives derived from significant theoretical developments in linguistics and sociolinguistics, particularly on the concept exposed by Hymes (1972) of



“communicative competence”, and his criticism to the exclusive attention paid to “correctness” at the expense of “appropriacy” of use in specific contexts.

The principles of this approach have been summarised in six implications:

a. *“Communicative” implies “semantic”, a concern with the meaning potential of language.*

The concept of “being communicative” is based on the separation of two categories of communicative meaning: “notional” (based on rather abstract concepts such as frequency, duration, dimension, location, etc.) and “functional” (usually found in interaction with other people when making requests, greeting, making suggestions, asking or directions, giving advice, etc.).

b. *There is a complex relationship between language form and language function.*

This implication concerns the relation between the grammatical forms of language and their communicative function. A grammatical structure can, in principle, perform various communicative functions (an imperative might be a command or a suggestion, a conditional might be selected to threaten, to warn, or to give advice).

c. *Appropriacy of language use has to be considered alongside accuracy. This has implications for attitudes to error.*

Once we move away from the idea that mastery of grammar equals mastery of language, we must move away from evaluating our students’ proficiency on the basis of accuracy alone. It is undoubtedly desirable that their language production should be as correct as possible, but grammaticality also takes place in a wider social and communicative context.

d. *The concept of communication takes us beyond the level of the sentence.*

The notion of “discourse”, as a new and different category which is not based on sentence-level criteria but on a broader perspective, gives us the possibility of showing how different parts of a text or conversation are interlinked. A “text” in this sense offers more communicative possibilities as it permits a description based on thematic and coherence features.

### *Task-based learning*

Undoubtedly, in more recent times this proposal, based on the theory that there is no need for formal instruction of grammatical aspects, has become one of the most popular approaches and methods (Council of

Europe, 1993), especially after the explicit indication as an effective proposal in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001). It could be said that shares some of the presuppositions of the communicative approach as students are asked to perform communicative activities and tasks in which they use the language.

One of its main characteristics is the stress is on learner autonomy, “learning to learn” and “learning by doing” (Nunan, 2004). Students are continuously evaluated on how they carry out the tasks. Attitudes and procedures are considered especially important in the learning process. The advantage of this methodology is that it is relatively simple to plan and implement, and the procedure can be adapted to use with any textbook or teaching material. It is, indeed, an action-oriented one in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as “social agents”. While acts of speech occur within language activities, these activities form part of a wider social context, which alone can give them their full meaning. We speak of “tasks” in so far as the actions are performed by one or more individuals strategically using their own specific competences to achieve a given result. This action-based approach therefore also takes into account the cognitive, emotional and volitional resources and the full range of abilities specific to and applied by the individual as a social agent (Hansen, 1998).

### 1.7 Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

In a context of growing dissatisfaction with the results of foreign language teaching programmes, in the early 90s within the last century a new paradigm was arising based on the assumption that introducing the foreign language in the learning of academic content material could complement the learning of a foreign language. Whether in the form of Content Based Instruction (CBI) (Lyster & Ballinger, 2011) or Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Marsh, 2013), the focus was now on the use of the foreign language to learn content. CLIL is a dual-focused approach in which the content is taught and learnt in a foreign language as a way to improve the students’ competence in this language. The introduction of programs based on the teaching of academic subjects through a second language has as one of the main objectives, if not the most important of all of them, the improvement of the competence in the use of this foreign language by the students.

There seems to be a powerful reason to embark on educational measures of these characteristics, and that is that they are low-cost programs compared to traditional foreign language teaching. We refer to the fact that we may count on native language teachers with professional qualifications and on non-native teachers with double qualifications, linguistic and academic. Using these two types of teachers in an integrated program of both language and content teaching multiplies the students' exposure to the foreign language (Marsh and Wolff, 2006). This is when the implantation / cost factor becomes an element to consider.

In any case, regardless of the characteristics of the program to be implemented, there is a consensus in admitting that this type of program in higher education can gradually enhance the students' linguist competence in the foreign language, but in what way? What should be the criteria on which they should be based? Decisions must be made keeping in mind what would be four basic pillars:

- a) Linguistic objectives. In accordance with the rules and regulations in every country regarding languages, a particular foreign language level should be set for students in all the educational stages.
- b) Academic objectives. It must be ensured that there is no appreciable impairment in the progression and assimilation of academic content by students studying subjects in a foreign language. For this reason, the level of control, regulation, and rigor in the administration of this education must be maximum, and therefore the organization of the teachings and the use of a homogeneous and effective methodology acquire maximum relevance.
- c) Temporary objectives. It must be based on a clear awareness of what and of what type the objectives should be, of course, but together with this, it must be borne in mind when it is estimated that results can be achieved. For this, it is essential that there is a temporal sequencing of the actions that must be done, possibly including a gradation in the actual implementation of the program, taking into consideration the linguistic and methodological training of the teachers and the linguistic training of students.
- d) Human and material resources available. Its correct implementation also depends on the adequacy of the plan to the resources available, especially with regard to the methodological and linguistic qualification of the teaching staff. The possibility of having tools already established for this dual training, and the

possibility also of improving the instrumental teaching of the language would be an unbeatable starting point to tackle the implementation of the program.

The integrated teaching of language and content has undoubted benefits. The positive aspects derived from its implementation are fully proven in primary and secondary education (Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Coonan, 2007; Mehisto, Marsh and Frigols, 2008; Coyle, 2013; Hütner et al., 2013; Lasagabaster, 2015; Surmont et al., 2016; Fernández et al., 2017). As Lagasabaster (2008, p. 31) points out, the general benefits of this type of teaching are linked to improved motivation, increased knowledge of specific terminology, reinforcement of intercultural communicative competence, and learning centred on meaning and communication, to the promotion of teacher-student and student-student interaction and, as a result of all this, to the improvement of general linguistic competence of a second language. In line with these considerations, in our opinion, the main benefits of integrated language and content teaching in what specifically refers to the field of higher education, would be the following:

1. Teaching through a foreign language has greater benefits than just teaching in a foreign language.

Faced with the presentation and explanation of academic content using a language other than the mother tongue in the same way that we would do it in our own language (this is what we mean by teaching *in*), teaching through a second language advocates the use of methodological strategies to promote interaction and the use of language in the classroom as the main means of accessing information by students. It is about taking advantage of the principle of redundancy (repeated and coordinated treatment of content) and understandable input (Krashen, 1985), according to which the content becomes better assimilated and stored. The more frequent and accessible the concepts, the more varied the perspectives from which they are approached.

2. The most visible advantage lies in the fact that the second language is acquired without dedicating a specific effort and work to its learning in these types of classes. The main reason is that it is a learning that is based on what Coyle (2007) calls “the four Cs”: content, communication, cognition, and culture; combining the progression in knowledge, the implementation of cognitive processing by association and the use of interaction as a fundamental tool.

3. The use of the foreign language in the classroom offers as a result a change of vision and attitude since, by becoming a necessary means to access information and to reflect and debate on it, its learning becomes more attractive.
4. As the student progress in the use of the second language, increasing frequency of use and the variety of registers, contexts and situations, there is a reinforcement of confidence in the communication skills that they are able of developing (Dalton-Puffer, 2005). This contributes to the disappearance of inhibition, the feeling of inferiority and the idea that only “low-level” activities are carried out. For this reason, psycho-affective characteristics are reinforced, especially those related to motivation, and more particularly, to motivation of instrumental nature. The progression in the use of the language brings a greater self-awareness of their possibilities.
5. Within the scope of the influence of psycho-affective factors, it should also be noted that this type of methodology leads to a progressive decrease in what is known as "the affective filter", the development of a psychological disability that blocks the learning of a foreign language (Krashen, 1985), responsible for inhibition regarding the use of language skills, especially oral ones. And, likewise, it entails an improvement in the attitude towards the language and towards their own learning, two of the most relevant learning engines in adult learners immersed in formal environments such as the classroom (Pavón Vázquez, 2001).

### 1.8 Post-method pedagogy

As Kramsch (1993) claims, some language teachers became dissatisfied with purely functional uses of language. To respond the demand for a most optimal way of teaching English, in 2001 Kumaravadivelu developed his theories on post-method pedagogy. His approach is free from the method-based restrictions and makes the teachers responsible for their own teaching strategies that can vary according to contexts and needs (Chen, 2014). Currently, the quest for the “best method”, is not the main concern of scholars since it has become clear that teaching style, variety of contexts and learners’ specific needs must be considered. Littlewood and many other scholars call this a “post-method” era (e.g., Allwright & Hanks, 2009;

Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2006 and elsewhere; Littlewood, 2011) in which the aim is not to find the best way of teaching but rather have some main guidelines that can be regarded as principles to develop an approach able to meet the specific needs of any given context.

Kumaradivelu (1994, 2003, as cited in Littlewood, 2013) suggests 10 “macro-strategies” that teachers can use to develop their pedagogy:

- Provide the maximum possible number of learning opportunities
- Facilitate classroom interaction with a communicative purpose
- Minimize perceptual misunderstandings
- Activate students’ intuitive capacity for independent discovery
- Foster conscious awareness of aspects of language
- Contextualize the linguistic input
- Integrate the language skills
- Promote learner autonomy
- Raise students’ cultural consciousness
- Ensure social relevance

ESL/EFL teachers are, then, encouraged to explore the infinite possibilities of an enlightened and eclectic approach/method as Brown (2007) calls it. They are invited to experiment and see what works and what does not work in a certain ELT context, using several language teaching approaches and methods and adapt them for different teaching contexts (Widodo & Zakaria, 2008). Brown (2007) suggests that teachers should focus more on approach rather than methods as approaches are more flexible and can be changed according to the needs of the students. He defines 12 principles of language teaching approaches that can be used according to different context and different teaching and learning styles:

1. Automaticity
2. Meaningful learning
3. Anticipation of reward
4. Intrinsic motivation

5. Strategic investments
6. Language ego
7. Self confidence
8. Risk taking
9. The language culture connection
10. The native language effects
11. Interlanguage
12. Communicative competence

Brown also defines ten criteria that teaching techniques should have:

1. Is it appealing and relevant to students' lives?
2. Is it presented in an enthusiastic manner?
3. Are students aware of its purpose?
4. Do students have a choice in some aspects of the technique and or how to reach the goal?
5. Are students encouraged to discover principles and rules by themselves instead of being told?
6. Does it encourage students to develop strategies of learning and communication?
7. Does it help students to become independent?
8. Is it interactive and cooperative?
9. Is it reasonably challenging?
10. Do students receive feedback on their performance?

### 1.9 Widdowson "The use of literature"

In his article "The use of literature", Widdowson (1982) states, there was a time when literature was taken in high consideration in language learning to the point that people would learn languages with the mere purpose of having access to literature of foreign countries and great classical authors. Unfortunately, as shown before, in today's world a more pragmatical approach has prevailed which has given languages just a functional value as a means of communication for every-day life activities or for work and, as Widdowson (1982) claims,

courses focusing on practical use of language give no space to literature. In this sad scenario, there is not much room for literature as a vehicle of culture, meaning and self-expression. For this reason, many scholars today support a return to using literature in the L2 classroom to humanize the process of teaching and learning languages which has become a rather mechanical activity to some extent while literature, as Lazar (1993) states, “involves learner as a whole person and so is potentially highly motivating” (p. 25). Widdowson (1982) underlines, that teaching is not just “training” but it has to do with educational purposes too. The genuinely educational approach offered by literature is confirmed also by Lazar (1993) who claims that understanding a literary text also involves situating them in their historical and cultural context. Nevertheless, it is evident that language courses foster control rather than creativity and non-standard forms of vocabulary and syntax as the ones presented in literature are often seen as obstacles and not as opportunities. As Widdowson (1982) says, literature has become “disruptive” for its lack of control and “subversive” for its lack of correctness. For these reasons, literature in the L2 classroom has been regarded as both not practical and not useful as a language model. Nevertheless, if textbooks cannot use Literature with capital L, they are forced to re-invent some sort of literature, with small l and invent characters, plots, situations to engage students and offer standardized models of language where dialogues only occur with the purpose of displaying language structures and vocabulary (Widdowson, 1982). Therefore, with such models, students can only be linguistically engaged, while their human side is left out of the classroom door missing the focal point of engagement in communication that is “discourse”.

So, while literature help realizing the meaning potential of language by creating alternative reality, pedagogic presentation on the contrary simply manifest language usage that requires mechanical application without any form of engagement from the students with what is presented at the level of language use. In other words, learners do not relate to these texts, they simply pay attention to the language. So, quoting Coleridge, we may say that while the pact between writer and reader in literature is that the reader will believe and accept for real everything that the writer writes, even if displaying crazy worlds and unbelievable reality; on the contrary the pact between writer of textbooks and language learners is that the learners will not believe and accept for real anything they write even if displayed as “reality” and therefore no implication of discourse can take place:



Dissociation of language for display purposes leads to text which represents language as essentially a matter of routine. Dissociation of language for literary purposes leads to discourse which represents language as essentially a matter of creating meaning by procedures for making sense. (Widdowson,1982).

On the other hand, it is undeniable that textbooks have some pedagogical value in the fact that they provide models for repetitions which are important for the assimilation of linguistic forms, however, their main limitation is that the problems they pose are within language itself and not outside, where language would be needed to exploit meaning and interpretation.

#### 1.10 Hanauer “The importance of the unique”

Hanauer (2003) underlines the important role of art in society to access physical and emotional experience of the world and experience the complexity of life through the world created by the artists. He includes poetry among the artistic experiences that can help the reader grasp a new understanding of the world through the thoughts or the feelings related to the text in its linguistic uniqueness. In fact, the meaning of the poem cannot be paraphrased without changing its main feature, since it is the unique construction of a personally meaningful cognition of an artistic experience, thought, or feeling. We live in a world in which, as Beck (1992, as cited in Hanauer, 2003) says there is a constantly increasing “individualization of ways of living and biographical patterns”. In this diversification and pluralization process of our society, Hanauer sees human diversity as the focus of his research and as one of the major challenging for applied linguistics. He also sees the need to collect information to better understand language acquisition, linguistic practice, and social experience.

Hanauer (2003) defines the many advantages of using poetic discourse within the L2 classroom. First, it allows a better understanding of personal experiences which are connected but different from their social environment. For this reason, it can play a role in fostering diversity. For instance, the poem by Iran-American Zara Houshmand, shows the perspective of a minority group in the American society after the Twin Towers dramatic event becoming witness of human diversity. Second, the poetry can be used for text analysis, elicitation method or as an input for production, but always keeping in mind the is the individual negotiating

personal meaning. Third, poetry as a “deviant discourse” as Widdowson (1984, as in Hanauer, 2003) can be considered as a subversive element in second language acquisition because it goes beyond standard structure and vocabulary. However, teachers know that teaching is not just offering regular linguistic features but includes also effective communicative contexts, cultural awareness and pragmatic knowledge are important part of the learning process too. For all these reasons, poetry in L2 classrooms can be an added value to enhance personalized experiences in a new cultural system thanks to its ambiguities and multilevel meanings, becoming, at the same time, a moment of cross-cultural contact.

### 1.11 Language and culture

In her “Translation studies” Susan Bassnet (2014) quotes Juri Lotman stating, “No language can exist unless it is steeped in the context of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its center, the structure of natural language.” (p. 25). According to Juri Lotman, in fact, language is a modelling system, while literature, and art in general, is a secondary modelling system deriving from the primary modelling system of language. Therefore, it becomes evident that it is impossible to talk about language without talking about the culture that a specific language expresses. Quoting Edward Sapir, Susan Bassnet (2014) claims that “language is a guide to social reality” (p. 24), and human beings depend on language as a medium of expression of their society, therefore different languages correspond to different societies. In defining the intertwining and complex relationship between language and culture Bassnet uses a beautiful metaphor stating that language is the heart within the body of culture. Allen (1975, p. 111, as in Brumfit and Carter, 1986, p. 198) claims that, “Literature is a facet of a culture. Its significance can be best understood in terms of its culture, and its purpose is meaningful only when the assumptions it is based on are understood and accepted.”

### 1.12 Kramsch small c and big C culture

Kramsch (1996) underlines that due to the influence of the communicative approach modern pedagogy in language acquisition focuses on communicative competence in all linguistic skills and particularly in conversational skills, while literature pedagogy focuses on the analysis and interpretation of texts. So, while the

first one deals with small c culture, the one that is connected to everyday life, the second deals with the big C culture, that refers to art and literature. These two different perspectives underline the differences in the pedagogical approaches when it comes to language teaching. However, as Kramersch (1996) says culture manifests itself through language. In fact, language constantly mediates, interprets and records culture and because of this mediatory role of language, culture becomes the concern of the language teacher. Besides, culture is also literature, because literature is “reality beyond realism” and enables readers to live other lives. Social communities are defined by culture in two ways. The first definition focuses on the way a social group represents itself through art, literature, social institutions, or artifacts and their reproduction and preservation through history. The second definition refers to the attitudes and beliefs, ways of thinking, behaving, and remembering shared by members of that community (Nostrand, 1989, as cited in Kramersch, 1996). As Kramersch (1996), claims all modern languages have become universal thanks to their literature and in the past learning a language mostly meant have access to the masterpieces of world literatures.

In this context language acquisition was just the acquisition of skills whose only value relied in the promising scenario of giving access to a national literature. However, according to the scholar, in the last few decades there has been a separation between language teaching and culture. Language teaching has been regarded just from a structural or functional point of view, consequently, as a result of this separation, language lost its crucial factor: the *mediating function of language in the social construction of culture*. The outcome of this kind of approach is that not only language teaching is separated from the teaching of literature but also from the teaching of culture. Kramersch (1996) states that, when members of one community learn the language of another culture, how to use it and how to behave in its different context, this fact has the potential to change the social and cultural connection of both communities.

Therefore, if language and culture as so intrinsically intertwined, teaching language also implies teaching cultural values. Culture, according to the scholar, defines itself through the encounter with the Other and language learners learn about themselves and the historical and subjective experiences that made them who they are only when they see themselves through the eyes of the Other. Furthermore, the reality in the world made of habits, beliefs, institutions, monuments, food, way of life and whatever we consider culture it becomes

so thanks to a variety of symbolic systems that we use to give meaning. It is thanks to mean, and therefore language, that we manage to understand and identify culture. Kramersch (1996) insists on underlining the connection between language and culture, to the point of stating that culture itself is defined through language, in fact language is not just a set of grammar rules, because without language there is no cultural identity that can be expressed in the real world. In this perspective language is the essence and the real core of culture. Halliday (1978, as cited in Kramersch, 1996) describes the connection between language and social reality this way:

- It represents social reality by referring to the outside world
- It expresses social reality by indexing social and cultural identities
- It is a metaphor for reality as it stands for, or is iconic of, a world of beliefs and practices that we call “culture”

Other applied linguistic (Pennycook & Gee 1994, Hull & Lankshear 1996, as cited in Kramersch, 1996) have defined the connection between language and society as discourse, Pennycook, in particular, describes verbal discourse as one of the many modalities that can be used to create culture, while Gee, Hull and Lankshear expand the idea of discourse to include all aspects of what we usually call “culture”, as a discourse “composed of ways of talking, listening, reading writing, acting, interacting, believing, valuing, and using tools and objects, in particular settings and at specific times, so as to display or to recognize a particular social identity” (p. 10).

### 1.13 Final considerations

As we have seen, methods have constituted theories of language teaching derived partly from practical experience, intuition, and inventiveness, and partly from social, political, and educational needs, and partly from theoretical considerations. It is because of the fundamental weakness of the method concept that the conviction has gradually spread that language teaching cannot be satisfactorily conceptualised in terms of a teaching method alone.

However, appealing a particular method might be, however practical and sensible it might seem, the best method is one that the teacher has derived through a careful process of formulation, try-out, revision, and refinement. Teachers should be familiar with the theoretical and applied positions that have determined many of the features of the major teaching methods. We will then be able to re-examine the appropriateness of certain techniques in their own situations.

In evaluating the effectiveness of any method, teachers should keep certain questions in mind. We should ask ourselves, what are the objectives of the method under discussion and whether these objectives are appropriate for our present teaching situation, or the type of students (in terms of needs, attitudes, and aptitudes) we will teach. We should then consider whether the techniques advocated by the components of the method achieve the stated objectives in the most effective and economical way. And we should ask next whether these techniques maintain the interest and enthusiasm/motivation of the learners, and at what level of instruction. And, finally, if these techniques are appropriate for all types of students and whether they can be easily adapted.

Today it is clear that the training needs in what concerns the command of a foreign language forces us to design an adequate and, above all, effective educational proposal. Among the many options that we can find at our disposal, the implementation of a program for the teaching of subjects through a foreign language, that is, the integrated teaching of language and content, offers very good perspectives since it is It is a fully proven bet in all educational fields, including higher education. The undoubted benefits that this proposal may bring to students in terms of knowledge and use of a foreign language should not, however, blind us when organizing an educational program based on this principle. Therefore, it is imperative that an adequate reflection be made of the needs, objectives and, above all, of the characteristics of the educational context in which it is to be implemented. The implementation of a program of this nature, based on a specific and fully contrasted methodology, must start from a clear definition of the objectives to be achieved, the time in which it is aspired to get them and its adaptation to the specific conditions of the context. The linguistic competences on entry of the students, as well as the linguistic and methodological competences of the teaching staff, determine that a series of measures are put in place to graduate the application of the program. Also, it seems essential to train the teaching staff involved linguistically and methodologically, to coordinate the teaching of content academics

with the linguistic requirements and needs, and to provide an increasing linguistic base to the students. Finally, the implementation of a subject teaching program in a foreign language should be based on the existence of teachers who want to teach them and students who want to enrol in them. These necessary conditions, together with the adoption of complementary measures, will help to achieve the desired results.

## Chapter 2 Using literature in the L2 classroom

### 2.1 Overcoming criticism to the use of literary texts in the ESL/EFL classroom

In spite the interest the interest of many scholars and the reasons offered in favor of using literary texts for language learning there still many objections. According to Khatib (2011) the criticisms include several aspects of language learning.

- 1 Syntax. Since literary text often deviate from standard English and loaded with complex structures, it is argued that this complexity can create difficulties in comprehension, especially when it comes to poetry. However, it is worth to remember that complexity itself can become a source for practice especially for learners at higher levels and, in this sense, it can become a source for language practice.
- 2 Lexis. Robson (1989, as cited in Khatib, 2011) claims that literature can do “little or nothing to help students to become competent users of the target language” (p. 25), while others argue that literary texts only contain old fashion vocabulary that is not used in real life and real English. Words such as “thee and thou” are not normally found in today’s English. However, teachers are not obliged to use old texts, of course. There is a huge production of modern literary texts that can be used as a source of language (e.g. Hemingway novels) which are closer to the Standard English and the language spoken in daily life.
- 3 Phonetics and phonology. The same kind of objection refer to deviation from normal phonetic and phonological system. Some words have gone through minor or drastic changes in their pronunciation and these changes are not helpful for language learners. An example is the word “love” which was pronounced as /lūv/ in old English. However, authors believe even these fluctuations can be used in the language learning process to make students aware of these phonetic or phonological changes.
- 4 Semantics. In time also some words have changed semantically, including the word “gay”. Therefore, some scholars consider that this could be a limitation in the use of literary texts. However, if they are not impeding language learning, no harm should come from these semantic variations.
- 5 Selection of materials. Literary texts are usually difficult to select, so teachers should take in careful consideration learners’ language proficiency, age, gender, and background knowledge. Also, factors related to the text itself should also be considered: what is the genre of the work, who is the author, which

dominant literary school does the work allude to, is it short or long, and other similar questions. Carter & Long (1991, as cited in Khatib, 2011) argue that these problems can be overcome by selecting an appropriate text for the appropriate group of language learners.

- 6 Literary concepts and notions. As Maley (1989, as cited in Khatib 2011) says, lack of familiarity with certain literary genres might create problems. There are authors that are regarded as particularly difficult, but the solution is to select the texts that best suit the learners' current and potential level of literary knowledge. For example, avoid exposing beginner students to James Joyce's "Ulysses". Another way to face complex literary canons is pre-teaching these new literary concepts and notions before reading related literary text.
- 7 Cultural barriers. As Tomlinson (2001) maintains there is a need to humanize the textbooks and one way to actualize this is to localize the textbooks with interesting L1 topics and themes. However, others (Brown, 2007) take side with the other camp and consider language as culture and culture as language where L2 culture is essential for EFL/ESL. Contrastive cultural studies can be illuminating for our language classes enhancing respect both cultures. McKay (1982, as cited in Khatib, 2011) offers three ways to solve the problems of linguistic and cultural complexity:
  - Using simplified texts
  - Using easy texts that are appropriate to the level of the learners
  - Using young adult texts because they are stylistically less complex

In general, despite the criticisms and although the empirical studies are still limited, there are a series of "empirical studies which provide us with support to the idea that literature can be used to enhance linguistic and cultural knowledge of the target community as well as to develop the students' L2 communicative competence" (Idia, 2012).



## 2.2 Approaches to using literature in the ESL/EFL classroom

In more recent years, with the influence of communicative language teaching, (CLT), the focus in the L2 classroom has changed toward a more process-oriented, student-centered approach (Lazar, 2015). Therefore, teachers willing to use literary texts should pay attention to these elements as well. Carter (1996, as cited in Lazar, 2015) explores the possibilities offered by literary texts beyond the literary field itself and closer to the linguistic area. It is then possible to evaluate and appreciate a text for its artistic literary values or simply as a text depending on the content the teachers focus on, the context they teach in and the need of the learners. In this sense, literary texts can simply be a resource for developing language activities and personal response (Lazar, 2015). Furthermore, a distinction has been put forth between classic literature, which includes texts of great authors such as Shakespeare or Dickens and is referred to as literature with a capital L, and literature with a small l, which includes popular fictions, song lyrics and so on (McRae, 1991).

In any case, whatever the approach and the kind of texts employed, there are many good reasons for using literature in L2 learning. Lazar, also, states several good reasons for using literature as a resource for language teaching. For example, literature is strictly connected with language and communication; and it has a high artistic, social, and historical value. In more recent times the use of literature in the L2 classroom has been adopted through different methodological approaches. Some of the most important approaches view literature as a means for deepening knowledge of the language, while others have regarded it as a resource to raise social and multicultural awareness as well as personal growth. In this regard, Wellek and Warren's (1956) distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic approach to the study of literature can be useful. The intrinsic approach focuses on language, structure, vocabulary, and grammar, while the extrinsic approach focuses on other aspects such as philosophical and social issues, style, historical background, and biography. Maley's (1989) approach, on the other hand, is mostly based on the analysis of the literary quality of the text, while Carter and Long's models (1999, as cited in Savvidou, 2004) define a cultural, linguistic, and personal growth approach through literature.

Generally speaking, it is possible to group the models available to approach literature into three main areas: linguistic, cultural and personal growth. In the *cultural* model a literary text is a source of information about the social, political, and historical background of the text itself. It can also be used to analyze literary

movements and genres. The focus is not on the language and this model is usually used in a teacher-centered approach. The *language* model is more learner centered. The focus is on the language to develop awareness of grammar and vocabulary or to analyze the text from a stylistic point of view. The *personal growth* model is also learner-centered as it encourages learners to pay attention to their own personal feelings, opinions, and experiences in relation to the text. Teachers use literary texts in a different way depending on the model they choose (Clandfield, 2004). Therefore, it is important to find a balance between content and methodology in developing a student-centered approach (Tomlinson, 1998). Literature can play a fundamental role in this respect, where students are responsible for their own learning experience while teachers are facilitators who offer guidance and strategies to support their learning trajectory (Smart, Witt & Scott, 2012). As Lak, Soleimani, and Parvaneh (2017) say, the role of a teacher in a student-centered class is to help learners become the designers of their own learning. Furthermore, as Lynch (2010) claims, learners should develop knowledge through communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Rather than learning irrelevant materials, students should have the opportunity to learn from material that is relevant to their lives. As the teacher helps the students to discover the meaning of the texts, students become responsible for their own learning experience, something that is difficult to achieve with conventional textbooks (Bobkina and Dominguez, 2014).

Literature can be used as a source to enhance students' language skills while also giving them the opportunity to develop critical thinking about themselves and the world. Ehrman (1996) and Bandura (1997) state that emotions play an important role in the learning process, and can enhance learners' motivation and performance (Sturgeon, 2006). In this sense, quality literature can offer characters and social contexts that students can relate to, therefore, it can be the source material for meaningful learning experiences based on shared feelings and emotions; it can also help creating enjoyable learning with appropriate quality material, and interesting activities, combining second language learning with development of critical thinking. Furthermore, in our globalized world, classrooms are culturally and ethnically diverse, so it is important to develop tools to meet the needs of a variety of students, including those coming from marginalized groups and non-traditional homes, and high-quality literature can have a powerful role in this sense (Young, Herring, & Herring, 2017).

### 2.3 Duff and Manley's linguistic approach

Duff and Manley (2008) define the details of their approach in a specific outline that can be very useful for teachers willing to start using literature in their L2 classrooms. There are ten main principles in their guidelines:

- The purpose is to use literature as a resource to teach language. There is no need to be concerned with critical commentary, literary metalanguage, and historical explanation.
- The aim is to engage students interactively with the text, with fellow students, and with the teacher. Students are obliged to pay careful attention to the text and produce language when completing the task.
- The text itself is central, and not the background information or commentary about the text.
- It is central to this approach that the students are involved in a genuine interaction with the text (preferably repeatedly) and between the readers of the text, including the teacher.
- The activities should offer students ample opportunities to contribute and share their own experiences, perceptions, and opinions.
- It is the text that suggests the kinds of activities most appropriate to it. This means breaking away from the traditional format of text + questions as in reading comprehension activities.
- Texts can be presented in a variety of ways: withholding the complete text until the end of the activity, cutting it up, using fragments only. Texts may also be presented in fresh contexts by juxtaposition with other texts or media or made to serve purposes for which they were not originally intended.
- The text is not the only element in the activity. It is regarded simply as one element in a linked set of activities, which may involve preliminary discussion, interactive work on the text, and some sort of follow-up, often in writing.
- Literary quality is not the only criterion for the selection of texts. The texts are not necessarily presented as model of good writing but rather as good starting points for using and thinking about language.
- The activities are intended to provoke 'deep processing' by students. The greater the involvement and effort involved, the more significant is the learning pay-off.

From these descriptions is it possible to understand that literary texts in these contexts are used as powerful tools to both exploit the linguistic features in them and engage students through a process of emotional and thought-provoking participation. Teachers are not there to deliver meaning but to help students eliciting comprehension on their own.

#### 2.4 Clandfield's flexible approach

Lindsay Clandfield's approach is a step-by-step process to develop a lesson plan based on literary texts which can be applied to stories, poems or extracts from plays and can be used for linguistic or cultural model.

- Stage one: warmer

Option one (linguistic model): start a short discussion, a guessing game, or a brainstorming of vocabulary around the topic presented in the text. Option two (cultural model): find out what students know about the text and the writer. Give them some background information to read. Explain in what way this piece of literature is well-known.

- Stage two: before reading

Pre-teaching very difficult words (maximum seven or eight otherwise there is a good chance the text will be too difficult.)

Predicting. Give students some words from the extract and ask them to predict what happens next. If it is a play, give them a couple of lines of dialogue and ask them to make predictions about the play. Giving students a "taste". Read the first bit of the extract (with their books closed, or papers turned over) at normal speed, even quickly. Ask students to compare what they have understood in pairs.

- Stage three: understanding the text, general comprehension

Read the whole text so that they can grasp a "feel" for the text. This can be quite powerful especially

with very evocative pieces of literature or poetry. Then allow students to read on their own without other tasks. One of the aims of teaching literature is to evoke interest and pleasure from the language.

After reading set comprehension questions or ask them to explain the significance of certain key words of the text. Another way of checking comprehension is to ask students to explain to each other (in pairs) what they have understood. This could be followed up by more subjective questions (e.g., why do you think X said this? How do you think the woman feels? What made him do this?)

- Stage four: understanding the language

See how many unfamiliar words students can get from context. Give them clues.

You could also look at certain elements of style that the author has used. Remember that there is some use in looking at non-standard forms of language to understand the standard. If appropriate to the text, look at the connotation of words which the author has chosen. For example, if the text says, “She had long skinny arms,” what does that say about the author’s impression of the woman? Would it be different if the author had written “She had long slender arms”?

- Stage five: follow up activities

Once you have read and worked with your piece of literature it might naturally lead on to one or more follow up activities such as:

- 1 Students write what they think will happen next, or what they think happened just before.
- 2 Students write a character description of one of the characters
- 3 Students decide the location and casting of the movie made from the book.
- 4 Students personalize the text by talking about if anything similar has happened to them.
- 5 Students improvise a role play between two characters in the book.
- 6 Students act out a part of the scene in groups.
- 7 Students make a radio play recording of the scene and then decide who was the best.

- 8 Students read out the dialogue giving the characters special accents
- 9 Students write stage directions, including how to deliver lines (e.g. angrily, breathlessly etc.)
- 10 Students re-write the scene in a completely different location in space and/or time.

The activities suggested by Clandfield show that literary texts can be very flexible in use and may be helpful in developing all language skills, including oral receptive and productive ones, and soft skills like empathy, teamwork, problem solving, etc.

## 2.5 The TALO, TAVI, TASP approach

In 1983, in their article “Text as a vehicle of information: The classroom use of written text in teaching reading in a foreign classroom”, Tim John and Florence Davies coined the acronyms TALO, TAVI for the first time. Their approach suggested different ways of using texts related to English for Specific Purposes. In their definition TALO is a text as a linguistic object, while TAVI is a text as a vehicle of information. They compared the two kinds of text according to five main criteria:

1. The principles underling the selection of texts
2. Preparatory activities for the reading of the text
3. Work with the text
4. The type of teaching/learning interaction involved
5. Follow-up activities to the reading of the text

Although their study refers to ESP teaching and technical texts, they managed to set a methodology, a series of activities that were later developed by Clandfield (2005) and extended to the General English classroom. Clandfield (2005) added the term TASP: Text as a Springboard for Production, to the Johns and Davies’ (1983) TAVI-TALO definition, “this means using a text as a springboard for another task - usually a reading or writing task” (Clandfield, 2005). This framework can now be applied to a wide variety of texts, including those from literature (Ahmad, Abdullah & Ibrahim 2018). Thekes (2010) claims that lessons focusing on reading skills should be based on these three EFL applications of a text in order to develop important sub-skill like scanning and skimming which learners, and people in general, use continuously while reading.

According to Lindsay Clandfield (2004), different L2 teaching approaches - grammar translation, audiolingual and communicative - deal with texts differently, according to the different needs of each approach. The author talks about three different ways of using texts identified by the acronyms: TALO, TAVI and TASP.

1. The first considers texts only from the linguistic point of view, as in the grammar translation method (Text as a Language Object, TALO).
2. The second uses text as a means to obtain information, as in the audiolingual method (Text as a Vehicle of Information, TAVI)
3. The third focuses on the text as a way to produce writing tasks, as in the communicative method (Text as a Springboard for Production, TASP).

In the 21st century, planning a typical L2 lesson should combine the three different ways of dealing with texts. Furthermore, in a holistic approach a further extension of TASP texts can be added. This research proposes a more specific use of TASP texts, namely as models to develop linguistic feature (TAM) and as a springboard to enhance creativity (TEC) and critical thinking (TACT). In the study an attempt was made to include all three acronyms suggesting the possibility to add a fourth one based on personal growth (TAP) in further studies.

## 2.6 Ahmad, Abdullah & Ibrahim's skills, and sub-skills approach

In their article "A rose by any other name... Exploiting any literary text in the ESL/EFL classroom" Ahmad, Abdullah & Ibrahim (2018) present an approach to using literary texts in the ESL/EFL classroom to help learners develop their reading, other basic language skills, as well as their creative and critical thinking skills in the language based on TALO, TAVI, TASP activities. They created three lesson plans based on a list of activities based on three short excerpts from classic novels: *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) by Jane Austen, *Life of Pi* (2001) by Yann Martel, and *Remains of the Day* (1989) by Kazuo Ishiguro. Reading of the excerpts and all tasks, exercises, and activities are planned to be completed within one one-hour lesson and are sequenced this way: A) Pre-Reading Activity; B) TAVI Tasks, C) TALO Tasks, and D) TASP Tasks. Through the use of short excerpts, they managed to define a comprehensive range of activities focused on grammar, creativity and critical skills.

1) ESL/EFL reading skills and sub-skills that the literary texts help develop:

- Comprehending overall text meaning
- Locating key character information
- Predicting content before/after situation depicted
- Suggesting implied meanings in a text
- Skimming for main ideas
- Scanning for specific bits of information
- Producing a gist of textual extract
- Making inferences in context
- Analyzing the plot and locating specific scenes from extract

2) Aspects of grammar and vocabulary highlighted in the literary texts:

- Matching words with meanings
- Identifying parts of speech in a given text
- Locating clauses as examples of basic word patterns. E.g., S-V-O; S-LV-SC, etc.
- Parts of extract presented as rational cloze texts to teach grammar and vocabulary
- Scanning text to locate content words, and function words
- Rational cloze (correct tense forms)

3) ESL/EFL use activities to generate creative/critical discussion of representations of social reality in the literary texts

- Discussion about key character attributes
- Dramatization/improvisation of text situation
- Students source extracts of texts from author's other novels/works
- Students co-construct a written dialogue for dramatization and/or improvisation
- Student references to other texts where main characters show similar behavior traits
- Critical views and comments about Kazuo Ishiguro's winning of Nobel Prize in Literature and/or other authors in the present text selection



- Oral accounts by students to relate similar life experiences and comments by other students.

## 2.7 Carter's linguistic model approach

According to Carter (1986) "recognition of literariness is one of the most fundamental components in literary competence" (p. 111). The way the readers react to the absence of "expected" feature and the amount of information given in a text can be the indicator of literariness in a text. For instance, in non-literary texts such as articles or academic reports, the information omitted is either assumed to be known or irrelevant. On the contrary, in literary texts the reader is given a more productive role and asked to assign some kinds of meaning to information gaps and indeterminacies within the expected frame.

To develop this literary competence, Carter defines a model for the teaching of literature to foreign students which combines language and literariness. Carter's model includes the following language teaching strategies:

- Prediction: What comes next? Teachers stops reading at key points and elicits prediction of how the narrative will develop. A) The title can be omitted and, after the story has been read, students are invited to predict what it should be. B) After reading a paragraph might be asked what the story is going to be about. C) A narrative cut off could be used to elicit a prediction about a specific key event in the story. D) The end of the story also may offer a predictive focus. So basically, predictions may occur at key point in the development of the plot. Prediction exercises work well in pairs or small groups, students are invited to justify their choices by reference to the text and to their own individual experiences of human behavior.
- Cloze procedure. In this case the prediction focuses on a single word or sequence of words rather than a paragraph or part of the text. It is important to give specific attention to the number of words deleted and the linguistic competence of the group.
- Summary: what's it all about? This strategy focuses on the overall meaning of the story or the text, students are asked to produce a summary of what they have read. It is useful to impose a word limit for the summary for several reasons. A) It involves syntactic re-structuring, deletion, and lexical re-shaping.

B) It enforces selection of what is significant. C) It allows students to understand the difference between plot and theme.

- Forum debating: opposing viewpoints. This strategy allows students to develop class discussions and debates with groups being allocated to support either one of the propositions (regardless of personal point of view) using the text to provide evidence relevant to the argument, while the other group listens and provides counterexamples.
- Guided re-writing. This is aimed at helping students to recognize the broader discursive patterns of texts and the styles appropriate to them.

## 2.8 Widdowson's stylistic approach

According to Widdowson (2013) a stylistic approach in literature does not deny the importance of the aesthetic, cultural or moral values of the literary text. On the contrary it can provide the basis for its full appreciation, provided that the texts selected are relevant to the students' life and personal experience. Since the study of literature is most of all a study of language use learning about literature should not be separated from language learning. A comparative study of how the language works in literature and for other types of communicative purposes will help learners developing two kinds of ability: the ability to recognize how language (words, idioms, expressions) can change and extend meaning depending on the context, the second is the ability to develop strategies to define meaning. In other words, they will be able not only to see the difference between what Widdowson (2013) calls "signification", or general meaning of a word, and "value", the different or extended meaning that the same word acquires in specific contexts; but they will also be able to develop strategies to assign meaning to words used in different context according to the discourse developed within the text. Students will be able to recognize non-standard form and interpret them according to the context, which means developing a healthy relationship with both language and literature. In this kind of approach, the texts should be selected not on the basis of aesthetic values, or because they are representative of

different schools or historic periods, but they should be selected keeping in mind the development of the students' sensitivity to language.

In the procedure suggested by Widdowson, comparison among different texts is crucial. He offers a sample of this kind of procedure using an extract from Mackintosh a short story by Somerset Maugham.

He was a little man, considerably less than of middle height, and enormously stout; he had a large, fleshy face, clean-shaven, with the cheeks hanging on each side in great dewlaps, and three vast chins; his small features were all dissolved in fat; and, but for a crescent of white hair at the back of his head, he was completely bald. He reminded you of Mr. Pickwick. He was grotesque, a figure of fun, and yet, strangely enough, not without dignity. His blue eyes, behind large gold-rimmed spectacles, were shrewd and vivacious, and there was a great deal of determination in his face. He was sixty, but his native vitality triumphed over advancing years. Notwithstanding his corpulence his movements were quick, and he walked with a heavy, resolute tread as though he sought to impress his weight upon the earth. He spoke in a loud, gruff voice.

In this case, Widdowson (2013) uses the excerpt to illustrate his procedure of comparing the literary description of a character with conventional description in other passages, and guides teachers and students through a procedure of identifying the literary elements in a text asking questions in order to raise awareness about what is "literature" and what is not.

#### Passage A

Name: Frank Ross

Profession: Accountant

Date of Birth: 17.4.49

Place of Birth: Birmingham

Height: 5'10"

Color of Hair: Brown

Color of Eyes: Blue

#### Question 1

Where would you find a description of this kind?

Possible answers: passports, ID Cards, official documents, etc....

#### Question 2

Height is given but not weight. Why?

Reflections upon permanent and non-permanent features in the description of person.

#### Question 3

What kind of information is given in the description?

Date of birth (permanent) rather than age (non-permanent). The only non-permanent detail is related to job but it can be considered quasi-permanent (probably equal to the duration of the document). The purpose of these questions is to examine the description closely and to come to some conclusions about the information included and why.

#### Question 4

Which of the details in Passage A would you expect to find in

- An application for a driving license
- A Health Service registration form

Which other details would you expect to find?

(Or in alternative question 5)

#### Question 5

In what kind of official forms would you expect to find entries like these:

- Marital status
- Address
- Degree and qualifications
- Religion

These two questions (4 and 5) have the purpose of provoking discussions that may cause disagreement obliging students to justify their decisions

#### Question 6

Who do you think would write a description like that in Passage A?

The purpose of these questions is to focus attention on what is required in writing a description and understanding the nature of Passage A as a discourse. This passage can be then compared to another text.

#### Passage B

He was about six feet tall, thin, and about thirty-five to forty years old.

He had grey eyes, and his hair was fair and curly.

He was wearing a dark blue overcoat.

The same kind of questions can be asked as before.

#### Question 1

Where would you expect to find a description of this kind?

#### Question 2

What kind of information is given in this passage?

#### Question 3

Who do you think would give a description of this kind?

These questions have the purpose to familiarize the students with different kinds of discourses and make them able to identify the characteristic elements that make these passages different from each other. In this case a possible answer could be: a witness's account in a police report.

In order to make the analysis more precise other questions could be asked to elicit the difference between Passage A and Passage B.

#### Question 4

What kind of information appears in Passage A which does not appear in Passage B? Why?

#### Question 5

What kind of information appears in Passage B which does not appear in Passage A? Why?

The following conclusions might be expected. In Passage A details are both permanent and personal. The details are provided by the person who is being described and is also the author. Passage B details are related only to temporary appearance, permanent details like date and place of birth cannot occur in this passage

because this kind of information is not open to observation. These conclusions may be reinforced by asking learners to continue the description in Passage B or making their own description from visual or verbal clues.

A third passage is a conventional description of a different type, but which can be analyzed as the two previous ones.

#### Passage C

Mr. Ross has been employed in this firm as a clerk for the past five years.

I have always found him reliable and hardworking, and he has the initiative to take on responsibility when required. He has a cheerful personality and gets on well with his colleagues.

The procedure can then continue with similar questions as before.

#### Question 1

Where would you expect to find a description of this kind?

#### Question 2

What kind of information is given in this passage?

#### Question 3

Who do you think would give a description of this kind?

#### Question 4

How does the information given here differ from that given in Passages B and C?

This passage represents the kind of description that can be found in references and contains no details in common with Passage A or Passage B, because the elements in those passages are not relevant to describe the capacity of the character to carry out his professional work. The description here controls the selection of the details and in this sense Passage C has a similar function to Passage A. However, the information given is not precise and permanent as in Passage A but is rather a subjective assessment.

The general purpose of this kind of approach is that of exposing learners to different kinds of conventional ways of describing. Ideally, through the examination of these passages, learners should start to

familiarize themselves with literary descriptions and recognize that information given depend on different factors, such as:

- Purpose of the text
- Describer's orientation
- Describer's point of view in relation to the person described
- Constraints or objectivity of the observation

Learners should also be able to identify, through the comparison of different texts, what are the characteristic features of a literary texts. Considering Passage D, the above-mentioned extract from Somerset Maughman's short story Mackintosh, from the comparison made by Widdowson (2013) it possible to say that "Passage D differs from conventional descriptions" (p. 97), mostly because all the elements of the preceding passages A, B and C are here combined.

## 2.9 Sandra McKay's aesthetic approach

In her interesting article "Literature in the ESL classroom", Sandra McKay (1986, as seen in Brumfit and Carter, 1986) examines the use of literary texts in the ESL classroom according to Rosenblatt's (1978) definition of efferent and aesthetic reading. In efferent reading the reader takes away something from the text, while in aesthetic reading the focus is on what happens during the reading itself. With this in mind, McKay analyses the use of a text from both perspective in order to define which is better. The scholar uses an excerpt from *Sweet Promised Land* by Robert Laxalt to show how to develop an ESL lesson based first on the efferent approach, and then on the aesthetic approach. The book talks about Laxalt's father, a Basque shepherd who moved to America at the age of sixteen. The passage describes the man at the age of 63 in an exclusive restaurant in New York and an embarrassing situation in which he does not want his plate to be changed by the waiter, in fact he thinks there is no need for doing that, because the plate is still clean and can be used again.

1. Efferent reading. The follow up activity usually begins with a comprehension test based on questions like:

- was this the first incident the father had with the waiter?
- What did the waiter say when the father refused to give him his plate?
- How many times did the waiter attempt to take the plate?

These questions have the aim of determine the kind of information the student is carrying away from the text in an efferent mode. However, it is important to underline that this kind of information may be relevant in other kinds of texts (scientific, or business texts, for instance), but the passage was not written for this purpose. A second common activity is to use the text to promote language skills on the level of usage. In this case, the use of present of past tenses may be explored asking students to circle the verbs in the past, or listing the irregular verbs, and to explain why the present tense is used in some sentences. However, McKay (1986) underlines that, since the text was not written with the purpose of exemplifying the use of present or past tenses, these kinds of activities, according to the definition given by Widdowson (as cited in Brumfit & Carter, 1986) create “an inappropriate relationship between the reader and the text” (p. 197). Another kind of activities is to explore the language of the text in terms of language use. In this case students could be asked to make a list of the waiter’s comments (p.197)

- “I’m sorry. I thought you were finished.”
- “May I take your plate sir?”
- “But I have to put another plate there, sir.”
- “Oh, it’s no bother at all.”

Then the class could discuss why the waiter used “sir” and “may I” and suggest the tone of voice used by the waiter when making these comments. In doing so the class would gradually get to the core of the excerpt, namely: the relationship between the father and the waiter, the refusal of the father to give away his plate, and the reason why he refuses to do so.

2. Aesthetic reading. In this kind of reading readers relate their experience to the text. In this case students might be asked:



- has anything similar ever happened to you?

In aesthetic reading, readers make judgment about characters, so another kind of activity may be involving students in giving their opinion about the characters in the excerpt (the father, the waiter, the son). Then, they could be asked to imagine what they would have done in the same situations from the perspective of the different characters. According to McKay, this kind of interaction between the reader and the text is much stronger than simply exploring the passage at level of usage. In fact, this kind of interaction is based on familiarity on cultural assumptions. For instance, in this case, the cultural assumption is to know that in a high-class restaurant waiters are supposed to change plates often during the meal. To arise awareness at cultural level students may be asked a simple questionnaire indicating if the following items are typical (T) or unusual (U) in exclusive American restaurants:

- The number of dishes is kept to a minimum to reduce costs.
- Each course is brought on a separate plate.
- It is appropriate for a waiter to insist that he do his job even if the customer is unhappy
- It is appropriate for a customer to insist that a restaurant alter its standard procedures to meet his wishes
- Any conflict between waiter and customer is resolved in as quiet a manner as possible.

If students are not aware of these cultural assumptions the passage can help to demonstrate what is appropriate and what no in that specific context.

McKay concludes that, to promote truly aesthetic reading, it is essential that literature is not approached efferently, but in a way that can promote a personal and aesthetic interaction between the reader and the text.

### 2.10 Savvidou's integrated model approach

Savvidou also focuses her study on designing a rationale for an integrated model for teaching literature. She tries to integrate different approaches of texts analysis including the three elements mentioned by Duff and Maley (1990, as cited in Savvidou, 2004): linguistic, methodological, and motivational. From the linguistic point of view, a wide range of authentic texts can expose learners to a variety of types of English. From the

methodological point of view, literary texts make learners more aware of the process of reading allowing them to take advantage of strategies for extensive and intensive reading. From the motivational point of view, the added value of literary texts is that they prioritize the enjoyment of reading. Savvidou maintains that reading activities that involve interpretation of texts touching significant and engaging topics can prompt personal responses from readers. She suggests an integrated model which includes a linguistic approach with some of the strategies used in stylistic analysis. In this case both literary and non-literary texts are explored from the perspective of style in relation to content and form. This model (O'Brien, 1999, as cited in Savvidou, 2004) works at two different levels: first, it works at linguistic level with a detailed analysis of the features of the text such as vocabulary, structure, register etc.; second, it integrates this accurate analysis with interpretation of the text through a softer version of the stylistics approach. According to Savvidou, this approach can be adapted to all levels with a careful selection of texts.

There are six steps to this integrated approach:

1. Preparation and Anticipation: This stage elicits learners' real or literary experience of the main themes and context of text.
2. Focusing: Learners experience the text by listening and or reading and focusing on specific content in the text.
3. Preliminary Response: Learners give their initial response to the text - spoken or written
4. Working at it – I: Focus is on comprehending the first level of meaning through intensive reading.
5. Working at it – II: Focus is on analysis of the text at a deeper level and exploring how the message is conveyed through overall structure and any special uses of language - rhythm, imagery, word choice etc.
6. Interpretation and Personal Response: The focus of this final step is on increasing understanding, enhancing enjoyment of the text and enabling learners to come to their own personal interpretation of the text. This is based on the rationale for the personal growth model.

Savvidou's integrated model aims at offering learners a comprehension of distinct literary worlds in a multicultural sense, as well as creating the chance for them to express themselves and, finally, also of reinforcing their grammatical structures and expanding their vocabulary. She also points out that an integrated model to the use of literary texts allows learners to develop strategies to interpret language in context and understand how language is manipulated and for what purposes. According to Savvidou, an integrated approach gives language learners the opportunity to develop not only their linguistic and communicative skills but also their knowledge about language in all discourse types. The use of literary texts in the L2 classroom can be a powerful pedagogical tool.

### 2.11 Hanauer's meaningful literacy instruction approach

In his article "Meaningful literacy: Writing poetry in the language classroom", Hanauer (2012) puts the learner personal expression at the core of the teaching and learning process with special attention to his unique experience as a human being. He aims at changing the managerial and efficient and detached attitude developed in language teaching during the past few decades, to achieve a more complex and meaning oriented approach which helps making learning a new language as part of a personal growth experience. As he says that learning a language is a very important experience which can change the learners' life. Besides this, learning a new language involves the human being, not just their intellectual abilities. Hanauer aims at integrating his "principle of unique" (2003), which focuses on reading and writing poetry, with the pedagogy of second language acquisition. The key words in Hanauer's (2012) work are "meaning" and "participant perspective"; in other words, "meaning", in his holistic view, include affect, intentions, personal story and future actions of the learners, while the "participant perspective" is the their perspective toward the world. His approach is based on three main assumptions:

- First, the language learner is a socially and culturally contextualized individual with a rich, extended history of personal experience.

- Second, learning a language is part of a process of widening and deepening the ways an individual can understand, interpret, feel and express her or his personally meaningful understandings to themselves and within social settings.
- Third, learning a language involves an interaction with everything that makes up the experience and understanding of the learner, including issues of identity and self-perception.

On the base of these three main assumptions, which considers the learners from a holistic perspective with their history, past experiences and social context, self-expression becomes the focus of the learning process.

Hanauer (2012) defines four main principles as the guideline of writing instructions in L2 acquisition:

- Autobiographical writing: Employ writing that utilizes memory, imagination and personal experience to explore and understand the self.
- Emotional writing: Promote a student writing process that activates and elicits emotional responses from the writer and the reader and endorses the expression of personal feelings.
- Personal insight: Integrate a reflective process that leads to a deepened appreciation and understanding of personal experience (and, ultimately, greater understanding of the human condition).
- Authentic public access: Situate writing within a social process of presenting personally held beliefs, understandings, and feelings to others in the language learning classroom and beyond the classroom to people and communities who are of significance to the writer.

Hanauer uses poetry to foster self-expression in the classroom. These are the simple instructions he gives his students to prompt them in writing poems:

- Think about the significant moments of your life. Go over in your mind, your memories and think of those moments that truly made an impression on you. Think of real moments and try to see them in your mind.
- Close your eyes and really imagine and relive the moment you are thinking of. Try to see, smell, hear, touch, and taste the experience.
- Now try and show that moment in words – make it possible for someone else to see it too. Just describe the moment itself. Use language to make it come to life for someone else.

- Make a collection of these written significant moments – what is it that you are telling the world – what is it that is uniquely you?

The three steps of this process are:

- Generating personal motivation for self-exploration

This can be done by creating a social context in which is safe, engaging, and desirable sharing personal information and learn about other people's lives.

- Process of autobiographical exploration

This is an extensive process during which learners are invited to explore their lives through guided imagination sessions aiming at exploring their experiences in life. Students try to relive the feelings and the details of the experience itself. The outcome of this process is a large quantity of personal and meaningful material that can be used for writing.

- Poetic expression of autobiographical memory

The creative and final part of the process focuses on the visual description of the memorized experiences in simple language and the poetic technique of lining and imagery. The main criterion in this phase is to tell students that poetry is about “showing the experience” not “talking about it”.

## 2.12 Textbooks and materials. Form and meaning

In his article “Combining form and meaning”, Seedhouse (1997) investigates the dualism between form and accuracy vs. fluency and meaning, to create a balance between grammar and communication and producing activities and teaching material whose focus include function, grammar, perfect form, content, fluency and communication. The scholar shows the sides of this dualism based on one end, on extreme form-focused or accuracy-focused classroom where the lack of correspondence between the forms practiced and any kind of real-world meaning is evident. Here is an example of an audio-lingual approach activity exclusively focused on form and accuracy which has such a rigid structure that produces an unnatural discourse:

T: Do you make your bed every morning

<nods>

L: Yes, I make my bed every morning

T: <shakes his head>

L: No, I don't make my bed every morning

T: Does your father make your bed every morning

L: Yes, my father makes my bed every morning

T: Does your little brother make your bed every morning

<demonstrates a small brother>

L: Yes, my little brother makes my bed every morning

T: <shakes his head vigorously>

L: No, my little brother doesn't make my bed every morning

I have no little brother

(Bolte & Herrlitz 1986, p. 206, as cited in Seedhouse, 1997, p.2)

On the opposite side of form and accuracy, it is possible to find an extreme focus on meaning and fluency. In this case, as the scholar underlines, the structure becomes extremely flexible to the point that, in order to support fluency and meaning, teachers are forced to reduce their expectations of the linguistic forms produced by the learners. Here is an example of this kind of focus on fluency and meaning:

L: China, yes.

2: T: Uh huh. in Greece. What about in Greece. Many bicycles?

3: L: Mmm. Bicycles, motor.

4: T: Uh huh, In Australia, er, bicycle, er, we wear a helmet.

5: LL: Helmet. yes, yes.

6: T: Special [gestures] helmet.

7: LL: Ohh. Kong.

8: L: Malaysia, same, same.

9: T: Same in Malaysia?

10: LL: Yes, yes.

11: L: Moto, moto.

12: T: In China a little or a lot?

13: L: Motor. Some motor bicycle

14: T: Motor bike.

15: L: Yes, yes. Bicycle, no. China, bicycle no. Motor, yes.

16: T: Ah huh.

17: L: Cap, cap

18: L: Cap.

19: L: Hat on, hat, hat.

21: LL: Hat, hat.

22: T: Ah, in Australia, motor bike, yes. Yes, yes, yes.

Bicycle, yes, good (oh). Children, special helmet (helment)

Helmet, mmm. Special helmet.

(Nunan 1989, p 44, as cited in Seedhouse, 1997, p. 4 )

As Seedhouse points out, in this case “the teacher (a native speaker) is actually downgrading his/her own language to a minimalized, pidginized interlanguage devoid of verbs (apart from line 4) which is in effect mimicking the learners' interlanguage” (p. 4). Recent studies (Lightbown & Spada 1993, p.105, as cited in Seedhouse, 1997, p. 5) support the view that from focused activities followed by corrective feedback within a communicative approach are more effective in second language learning than activities exclusively focused on accuracy or, on the other hand, exclusively focused on fluency.

This is a crucial issue in L2 teaching and both scholars and teachers have always been concerned with the issue of balancing these two terms of the question with constant commitment in developing new methods and activities. Littelwood (1981, as cited in Seedhouse, 1997) describes the attempt to combine form and meaning, proceeding from accuracy to fluency through a progression process which includes “pre-

communicative” and “communicative” (p. 6) activities; while Brumfit (1979, as cited in Seedhouse, 1997) describes a process that starts from meaning-focused activities, with teachers taking notes and giving feedback on accuracy, followed by form-focused activity. However, none of approaches solves the issue the Seedhouse calls the dual focus: the opportunity to focus on fluency and accuracy, form and meaning all the same time, developing communicative grammar activities that aim reconcile as Widdowson (1990, as cited in Seedhouse, 1997) says, “linguistic repetition, with its necessary focus on form, and non-linguistic purpose, with its necessary focus on meaning” (p. 6). However, as Seedhouse underlines, it is not easy to know what is meaningful and what is meaningless because materials and activities do not have meaning *per se* but may vary according to the value that either the teachers or the learners give them. So, a form-based activity can be meaningless for the teacher but not for the learners and vice versa, depending on the goals and the personal priorities that each of the member has in the complex community involved in the teaching and learning process. With this in mind, a good starting point would be establishing what is meaningful for the learners, which should provide personal information concerning their lives and experiences as well as their opinions and beliefs. As a sample of personal meaning and sharing “new” information concerning their personal experiences Seedhouse (1997) shows another sample of speaking activity:

L1: And what did you do last weekend?

L2: On Saturday I went on my own to Canterbury, so I took a bus and I met L6 - he took the same bus to Canterbury. And in Canterbury I visited the Cathedral and all the streets near the Cathedral and I tried to find a pub where you don't see where you don't see many tourists. And I find one

T: Found

L2: I found one where I spoke with two English women and we spoke about life in Canterbury or things and after I came back

T: Afterwards

L2: Afterwards I came back by bus too. And on Sunday what did you do?

L1: Oh, er, I stayed in home

T: At home



L1 On Sunday I stayed at home and watched the Wimbledon Final. What did you do on Sunday?

L2: On morning

T: In morning

L2: In the morning I took the bus...

(Mathers 1990, p.109 as cited in Seedhouse 1997, p.12)

According to the scholar this is a good sample of how to balance form, fluency, accuracy and meaning. In fact, this kind of activities correspond to the three criteria he sets for a good balance: first, learners should talk about topics which are personally meaningful to them (teachers should negotiate with learners which topics are relevant to them); second, teachers should allow learners handle interaction; third, teacher's corrections should have very small impact on students' fluency through camouflaged correction techniques aiming at upgrading and scaffolding learner utterances.

Not only speaking activities but also creative writing tasks can offer other samples of good balance between form and meaning in a communicative approach. In his article "Creative writing as an important tool in second language acquisition and practice" (2012), Cameron Smith describes some very interesting activities aiming at using creative writing as a means of second language practice combining meaning-focused and form-focused tasks within pattern of poetry in a prescribed format through which students can express themselves. The scholar underlines that these exercises provide the advantage that students have to combine the form of a given structure or pattern with attempts create meaning and communicate ideas. Here is an example of one poem produced by some student thanks to one of these rather simple structures that can be used also by low level students. This is the structure provided by the teacher:

Line 1: First name

Line 2: Four traits that describe the character

Line 3: Relative of \_\_\_\_\_ (brother, sister, daughter etc.)

Line 4: Lover of \_\_\_\_\_ (list three people, things or ideas)

Line 5: Who feels (three emotions)

Line 6: Who needs (three items)

Line 7: Who fears (three items)

Line 8: Who gives (three items)

Line 9: Who would like to see \_\_\_\_\_ (three items)

Line 10: Resident of \_\_\_\_\_

Line 11: Last name

And this is one of the poems created but three students aged 15/16:

Rose

Colorful, aromatic, pretty

Sister to gardenias, sunflowers, and daisies

Lover of parties, weddings and dates

Who feels warm in the sun, hurt when cut, and  
satisfied when it rains

Who needs water, sun, and dirt

Who fears drought, chemicals, and scissors

Who gives love, happiness, and peace

Who would like to see all people happy

Resident of beautiful gardens

Linda

(Holmes and Moulton, 2001, p. 52 as cited in Smith 2012, p. 13).

As Smith says, these kinds of tasks can be very useful for low intermediate students struggling to expand their vocabulary. Carter (1998, as cited in Smith, 2012) distinguishes between core and non-core vocabulary items. Core words, such as angry or door for instance, as are neutral, while non-core words are synonyms which usually carry extra meanings and cultural connotations, such as furious and portal. Structured creative writing tasks can offer students the chance to use non-core words in the attempt to express themselves in a more detailed and meaningful way. In fact, as Smith (2012) says, “Where the emotional impact (rather than simple

semantic message) becomes important, so does the nuance in word choice” (p. 14). Here is a task designed by Smith (2012, p. 15) with the purpose to raise awareness of non-core words synonymous with “look”:

Answer the following questions – use your imagination!

1. John stared at Peter. Why?

*Peter had walked into the room*

*wearing a gorilla costume.*

3. Catherine glared at Sophie. Why?

4. Stephen glanced at Helen. Why?

5. Helen frowned at Susan. Why?

Smiths (2012) underlines the importance of “language play” as an integral part of language use. In this sense, as Carter (2004, as cited in Smith, 2012) states the use of rhymes, repeated patterns, puns, morphological inventiveness, jokey deconstruction of idioms etc. serve as a common means of building intimacy and trust in the language acquisition process as well as in human relationships.

Dewaele and Pavlenko (2002, as cited in Smith, 2012) state that intermediate level students have often difficulties in expressing their communicative intentions accurately and they usually employ direct descriptions of emotions instead of figurative speech, because this implies higher language competences. As a matter of fact, associative and figurative language, and the ability to express nuance, are a central part of creative writing, but, as Smiths (2012) claims this kind of techniques can be taught can be taught and practiced encouraging students to write literary-style pieces using structured tasks where students need to transform literal descriptions into actions. In this simple exercise students are guided to “show” not “tell” the emotions of actors to achieve a greater emotional impact, like the following, “Change the statements into ones that show someone’s feelings rather than tell the reader directly” (Smith 2012 p. 24).

Telling

Showing

Lucy’s mother was very angry with her.

*Lucy’s mother stared at her with cold eyes.*

Terence hated John, because he was also in love with Lucy.

*Terence’s fists tightened as he saw Lucy, Lucy, Lucy, holding hands with that fat idiot, John.*

Lucy missed her father a lot.

*Lucy still kept her father's old walking stick in  
the umbrella stand by the door.*

Lucy was very scared of big dogs

Lucy didn't like Anna.

Lucy's favorite food was ice cream

Lucy's French lessons were always boring.

Lucy got very upset when she was told that  
her pet hamster had died

All the above samples show how to overcome the difficulties in balancing form and meaning through speaking and writing activities with the aim to support the L2 learners in the process of language acquisition while, at the same time, foresting the development of their own personal, creative and meaningful self-expression through structured and simple learner-centered activities.

### 2.13 Textbooks vs. literary texts

As discussed before, literature provides authentic and rich language, instead of the ready-made chunks and artificial dialogues provided by most textbooks that do not offer appropriate pragmatic models, as maintained by Kasper (2001). Hence, to give students adequate models of language, it is of paramount importance to expose them to unmanipulated literary texts. To engage students in their learning process, choosing the right material is a crucial point, together with matching texts and authors with learners' interests, age, and levels of English. In fact, students are not supposed to passively absorb an interpretation of the text but are actively engaged in various tasks to be able to process, create and understand meaning. Many of the techniques used in CLT are used with literary texts, including cloze and gap fill, prediction and ranking, information gap, and sentence and paragraph reordering (Lazar, 2015).

As Widdowson (2013) says, to offer standard models of language textbooks are forced to create texts in a literary mode, in the sense that they only relate to their own context. This kind of contexts are away from

reality and self-contained, and their only focus and purpose is language itself. The intention of the writers of this material is creating a simulation of reality in simple language, showing people dealing with everyday situations in restaurants, railway stations, post offices etc. However, according to Widdowson (2013), rather than simulations, they are dissimulations. In fact, these kinds of texts are fictional but offered as “real” and this is the reason why, as Gong & Holliday (2013, as cited in Littlewood, 2013) say, that great part of the language use that occurs in the communication-oriented language classroom does not seem to emotionally engage the students, while Pennycook (1994, p. 311, as cited in Littlewood, 2013) talks about the “empty babble of the communicative language class”. In teaching an L2, literature needs to be viewed as our ally rather than our enemy, as a source of unmanipulated language, written with a purpose that is not merely linguistic and can be exploited in many ways. “The great advantage of natural, idiomatic texts over artificial “methods” or “series” is that they do justice to every feature of the language” (Sweet 189, p. 177, as cited in Gilmore, 2007, p. 1). According to Sweet, textbooks only use a limited and repetitive set of grammatical constructions and vocabulary, excluding other elements which are equally important or even more relevant. Language in textbooks is very structured and predictable and tends to focus on monologues or dialogues with not too much room for non-goal-oriented language, and for this reason students are not comfortable when facing the kind of talk used to establish relationships (Gilmore 2007). On the contrary, this kind of interactional non-goal-oriented language can be found in literary texts.

#### 2.14 Difficulties in selecting literary texts

Even the most enthusiastic scholars in support of the use of literary texts agree on the need to be careful in the selection of the excerpt or the material. As a matter of fact, this is the crucial point for many reasons and we must be respectful of the age, the needs, and the goals of our students before exposing them to literary texts and make sure they are adequate under different aspects: language, content, literary devices, length, etc. Another element to be considered is cultural difference. As it will be discussed further, multiculturalism is an important skill that can be developed using literature. However, in using texts from all parts of the world it is

necessary to consider that it might be difficult for the students to understand elements of cultures which are distant from their everyday life and experiences. These elements may affect the linguistic part of the text too.

Lazar (1993) makes a list of “the cultural aspects to consider when using literary texts with students” (p.65), warning teachers about the fact that these aspects may become difficulties which may challenge the students’ relationship with the text from a cultural point of view.

1. Object or products that exist in one society but not in another (e.g., food, fruit, etc.)
2. Proverbs, idioms, formulaic expressions which embody cultural values.
3. Social structures, roles and relationships (e.g., number of wives, role of women, hierarchies based on wealth or rank, relationships between parents and children, etc.)
4. Ritual traditions and festivals
5. Beliefs, values, and superstitions
6. Political historic and economic background
7. Institutions
8. Taboos
9. Metaphorical or connotative meanings
10. Humor and insults
11. Representativeness: to what part of a culture or society does a text refer? Does it describe a particular class or subgroup?
12. Genre: how far do different genres translate cross-culturally? Will students understand if a text is meant as a representation of oral history in writing etc.?
13. The status of the written language in different cultures and the resulting strategies for reading a text.

As stated above, Lazar (1993) reminds us that, “Language can never be divorced from culture – by helping to explicate the cultural factors in text, we are helping our students to understand more fully the language in which it is written” (p.67). The cultural elements in a text should never be neglected or underestimated. These are some of the strategies that Lazar (1993, p. 67) suggests to avoid the above-mentioned list of potential issues.

1. Personalizing. Focus on theme or topic of the text and make it relevant to the students' experience, such as:
  - a. a *family gathering*: think of a situation in which you and your family last spend time together. Where were you? Why were you together? Did you all get on together? Now read the text. What occasion is being described? Who is there? Are they all getting on with each other?
  - b. Think of a situation in which someone you know has been sad. Why? Could you do anything to help them? Tell your partner about it. Then read the text and write down who is sad and why.
2. Providing explanations or glosses:
  - a. A description of a word or a situation that does not exist in the students' culture
  - b. Information about the author
3. Inferring cultural information. Provide questions designed to infer cultural information from a text by making this information explicit.
4. Making cultural comparisons. Get students to brainstorm ideas about their own society and then compare them with those in the text. For instance:
  - a. Think about a festival or a celebration in the students' country (or countries) and create a chart with the following information: the name of the festival (or festivals), the reasons for holding it, where the festival is held, how is celebrated. Then collect the same information about the festival depicted in the text and make a comparison between them. What similarities or differences do you notice between the celebrations described in the two columns?
  - b. In your country, are there any beliefs or superstitions related to natural phenomena? Write them down and discuss it with your partner. Now read the text. Can you see any superstitions? Are they the same or different from the ones you mentioned yourself?
5. Making associations. Ask students to brainstorm about a word or a phrase that might have connotations or figurative meanings for a native speaker of the language. Then discuss difference and similarities among these words and the ones from another country. Do these words take on any symbolic meaning in the text?

6. Providing cultural background information. Give students a mini comprehension, to listen or to read, which provides more information about a particular aspect of the text they have read.
7. Extension activities. These are activities that the students do after reading the text, which ask them to think critically about, and become personally involved in, the cultural aspect of the text, such as (these are just samples that may change depending on the topics in the texts):
  - a. Role play/Simulations: Imagine you are the students and the teachers at Oxford University in the days before women were admitted at college. Decide who will take the role of students and teachers and then discuss whether, or not colleges should become mixed, or genders should be kept separated.
  - b. Discussion: what are the advantages and disadvantages of arranged marriages?
  - c. Project work: write an essay or a presentation on the changes in British society after the First World War.

Duff and Maley (2008, pp. 6,7) are very clear about the difficulties of selecting good literary material but they also specify how it is possible to overcome such difficulties. The objections that most teachers rise refer to:

- the linguistic difficulties
- the length of the text
- the cultural appropriacy
- referential difficulties
- conceptual difficulties

If it is true that literary texts may present this kind of problems, it is also true that they may be easily avoided by choosing the adequate text for the right learners. According to Duff and Maley (2008) there are some criteria that can apply for the selection of the right materials. Before choosing the texts, it is necessary to reflect about these questions:

- is the subject matter likely to interest this group?
- Is the language level right? Not too easy, not too difficult?
- Is it about the right length for the time available?



- Does it require a lot of cultural or literary background knowledge?
- Is there anything culturally offensive in it? If there is, teachers may still decide to use as a way of discussing such matters, but they must be aware of what they are doing
- Does it lend itself to exploitation for language learning

Lazar (1993, p. 25) specifies that material must be selected on the base of the methodological assumptions: language-based approach, literature as content, literature for personal enrichment.

- The language-based approach integrates language and literature syllabuses, encouraging students to develop their grammatical knowledge as well as familiarize themselves with discursal categories to make meaningful and aesthetical interpretations of the texts. In this case material chosen should display stylistic features of the language together with literary values.
- Literature as content is the most traditional approach whose focus is on literature itself and on areas such as literary movements, historical and cultural background, literary genres, and rhetorical devices. In this kind of approach texts are selected according to their importance as part of a literary canon or tradition (or as part of a Ministerial syllabus outline as in the case of Italian high school system).
- Literature for personal enrichment. In this approach literature is used to engage students encouraging them to share personal feelings, thoughts, opinions, and experiences. In this case the material is selected according to the interests of the students so to stimulate in them a high level of personal involvement mixing literary and non-literary texts.

Lazar (1993) also warns about the risks of using material that has not been properly selected on the base of the methodological assumptions. For the language-based approach the risk is that the text maybe difficult linguistically creating demotivation and very little participation from the students. Besides, it may require a lot of explanations using mother tongue and dependance from teacher interpretations.

For the literature as content approach, the risk is that not enough information on historical or cultural background about the text is provided which would make difficult for the students to analyze and grasp meaning from it. As for the literature for personal enrichment approach, some texts maybe be far away from the students' interests or life experience to the point that it could become difficult for learners to relate and respond

appropriately or, in other words, to be engaged. Or, in some other cases, students may be reluctant about being involved in discussions involving personal feeling or reactions.

### 2.15 Criteria for selecting texts and extracts

As previously stated, this case study is based on original excerpt from literary texts. Literature in a wide sense but always unmanipulated original works. As Monica Vincent says (1986, p. 210) “English abounds in simplified versions of famous works of literature” and many teachers and students would find difficult to deny the advantages of using graded Readers. As Vincent claims, it is, in fact, undeniable that simplified literature serves many purposes. First, it is important for a child with limited number of words to be able to appreciate a story that is close to the original (West, 1950, as in Brumfit and Carter, 1986). Secondly, it is easier to adapt the work of a great writer than to generate original stories. However, despite the advantages, simplification means reduction, and many things are lost in the process.

Vincent (1986) stresses that vocabulary, events, and structures are restricted, cut and controlled, all the elements that make literary works interesting are expunged, such as: idioms, metaphors, allusions, and ambiguities in general, language becomes standardized, and any unusual use is erased. Vincent underlines that graded Readers lack the linguistic, emotional, and aesthetic elements that characterize real literature, with the result of becoming demotivating. For these reasons this research advocates the use of original unmanipulated texts written for a native-speaker audience. A way to overcome difficulties, as the scholar suggests, is to start a course using simple texts and then progressively lead to more difficult ones. Ronald Carter (1986) defines four categories of difficulties that can be found in literary texts (p. 216).

- Linguistic structural criteria. In this respect it is important to consider the fact that simplicity in style, syntax and lexis does not mean that the text will be easy to read and understand. There are writers such as Pinter and Hemingway, for instance, that are apparently simple at level of vocabulary and syntax but can be complex in terms of use of language and narrative structure.
- Marked language. Another element that can be perceived as difficult by ESL students is language that is marked for historic period, geographical area, or social class.

- Content and response. This element refers to non-linguistic criterion and in particular the identification made by the reader with the writer's culture (ideas, attitudes, ways of living...)
- Authorial position. This criterion refers to the position of the author in the mediation between the reader and the text which can be crucial to fully understand the literary material.

The syllabus in this study is based on brief passages rather than entire stories or articles. This choice is justified by the need of focusing on specific linguistic elements and avoid complex long texts which may produce comprehension issues. Choosing the right excerpt for every student need and the linguistic topic to be delivered is not easy, nevertheless is not as difficult as it is commonly thought.

Guy Cook (1986) underlines the kind of problems that may arise when using extracts. Although he refers to extracts used in teaching literature *per se* some elements can be shared with the teaching of language through literature. Let's have a look at the characteristics noted down by Cook (p. 151):

1. Extracts should not encourage students to create false texture by making interpretations which can be true within the excerpt but are demonstrably false in context.
2. Extracts should be introductory rather than continuing or conclusive
3. Allusions to information given in the preceding text should be analyzed and annotated, omitted, or altered. Texts particularly rich in such allusion should be avoided.
4. Extracts whose mood is internally created are better than extract whose mood is created in conjunction with the preceding text.
5. Extracts whose purpose within the text is to show peripheral aspect of the character should be avoided
6. Extracts containing less cohesive ties presupposing items in the preceding text are more suitable
7. Extracts with density of lexical and grammatical deviations should also be taken into consideration for advanced students or for those particularly interested in literary English
8. 'Literary merit' should not be taken as a criterion for choice if that merit resides not in the extract itself but in its connection with the entire text.

As above mentioned, these instructions see the extracts from the point of view of the teacher of literature to non-native students. However, from the point of view of the language teacher, who uses literary extracts to

teach language, different considerations may apply. For instance, considering Cook's first instruction about false interpretations, it is possible to say that a language teacher has a different perspective, and each extract can be regarded as complete in its own because the focus is not on the story, the plot, or the character but on the linguistic features in the excerpt. Interpretation, in this case can be limited to the comprehension of the extract itself, rather than to text. Students react to what they read knowing that the information may not be enough to infer general meaning on the story. Besides, some works of literature are well known to students and they can grasp meaning from their general knowledge of the author or the novel (such as Orwell, Hemingway, Rowling, Austen, to name just a few). Cook (1986) underlines that: extracts should be introductory rather than continuing or conclusive. It is true that introductory excerpts work usually well but this does not imply that other parts could not work well too. In this study the final part of *Ulysses*, Molly Bloom's monologue, has been used to practice punctuation and students have responded very well to this input, as it will be shown further on. Nevertheless, as Cook says, it is possible to say that also from the linguistic point of view it would be recommendable to use extracts which are homogeneous in internal coherence and mood, and work well as a unit in themselves with limited or no reference to the text. The same can be said about extracts that show peripheral aspect of the character, in fact, even if they are not recommended by Cook from the literary perspective, this kind of excerpts can be very useful. In this research study, brief paragraphs describing a character's physical features or a place, for instance, have been very usefully exploited as models for students' productions. Finally, it is of course advisable, as Cook states, to consider extracts with density of lexical and grammatical deviations for high level students, but it is also important to keep in mind that some non-standard form can offer food for thoughts also to lower-level students involved in the process of meaning negotiation.

Brumfit (1986) suggests some criteria for the selection of literary texts in the L2 classroom. Although these principles are for students of literature in the second language classroom, they can apply to the use of literature for linguistic purposes as well. The criteria refer to different kinds of levels (p. 189):

1. Linguistic level. This can be measured in lexical or syntactic level. However, it is important to underline that there are no descriptive models that can measure significance in literary terms. Even linguistically

simple works, such as Blake's poems or Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, can offer difficulties in literary terms.

2. Cultural level. Cultural and social expectations may differ depending on the students social and cultural background. For instance, Western society authors could be culturally distant from Third world's students and vice versa.
3. Length. This is still a crucial factor in pedagogical terms.
4. Pedagogical role. In reference to the connection between texts with other texts and texts with life, works may be linked to each other or maybe books could be read in connection with temporary events.
5. Genre representation. The selection cannot be restricted to limited genres. All normal types of literature need to be available.
6. Classic status. Some texts may be relevant for students even if they do not match other criteria apart from the students' demand. On the other hand, reading Dickens or Shakespeare may be motivating and enable students to overcome difficulties.

Brumfit (1986) bases these criteria on the recognition of the students' needs and their authentic response to literary texts and the idea that literary text can provide "a particularly suitable base from which motivated language activity can develop." (p. 190)

Sandra McKay (1986) gives a series of suggestions aiming at choosing the best possible texts to meet the needs of the learners in the ESL classroom. These suggestions are listed here (p. 193):

1. Avoid simplified texts. There are serious disadvantages in the simplification of texts because this tends to produce a homogenized product (Honeyfield, 1977, pp. 434-5, as cited in Brumfit & Carter, 1986, p. 193). Besides, it produces difficulties in identifying information as it becomes diluted along the text. Finally, simplification of syntax undermines cohesion and readability.
2. Select relatively easy texts. When selecting text, it should be paid attention to readability, vocabulary difficulty, and syntactic complexity such as sentence length, for instance. Special attention should also be granted to complexity in terms of plots, characters, or cultural difficulty.

3. Use texts from young adult literature. This type of literature according to Donelson and Nilsen (1980, pp. 14-15, as cited in Brumfit & Carter, 1986, p.194), has some characteristics which can be very helpful when presented to adolescent learners. Firstly, it deals with personal growth and development problems learners can identify with. Secondly, stories are relatively short, and characters are limited to a small number with a young adult as the central figure. Finally, and most importantly from the perspective of an ESL teacher, the style tends to be less complex in this kind of literature.
4. Select themes with which the students can identify. Besides style and complexity in general, also themes are important. In the ESL classroom learners struggle with a language and culture with which they are not familiar. Literature dealing with either of these themes should be relevant to them.

Lazar (1993) gives a detailed description about selection of texts and criteria for teachers to have in mind to devise a well-organized syllabus that is also coherent with the aims of the course. He focuses on three main aspects:

- The type of course
- The type of students
- The type of texts

1. In reference to the type of course, these are the basic criteria to be considered:

- The level of the students
- Students' reason for learning English
- The kind of English required (e.g., English for Academic purposes, English for Business, General English, etc.)
- The length and intensity of the course
- Flexibility of the syllabus (if any)
- The kind of texts that could be most suitable (extract, poems, plays, short stories, etc.) and why.

2. As for the type of students the things that should be considered are:

- Age
- Interests and hobbies

- Cultural or ethnic background
- Nationality
- Experience in reading literary texts (literary ability).
- Relevance of the text.

To measure the relevance of the text it is possible to use a simple scheme of evaluation (that could be from zero to five, for instance) based on the student profiles according to the following characteristics: age of students, intellectual maturity, emotional understanding, linguistic proficiency, literary background, interests and hobbies, cultural background.

When dealing with these criteria it is important to consider a few elements. Firstly, the cultural background of the text could be far from the students in terms of values and social system and yet be appealing to them because it deals with themes or feeling that may be familiar to them. Secondly, when considering the language of the text it is necessary to evaluate the difficulties that may be in it, for instance archaism, rhetorical devices, and metaphors, dialect, register and specialized field or jargons (law, medicine ...). The questions to be asked in this case are: are the students familiar with this kind of language? How much will they be able to infer? Will they find it enjoyable, or will they feel frustrated and demotivated by the difficulties? Is the text too specialized? Is the students' literary competence adequate to the text?

3. In reference to the text itself, these are the criteria to be kept in mind:

- Availability of the text. What kind of texts are available for teachers and students
- Length. How much time is there for the teacher to work with the text in class and for the students to work at home. How much background information do students need to understand the text.
- Exploitability. What kind of tasks and activities can be devised to exploit the text. What kind of resources are there available to help the teacher to exploit the text: films, recordings, videos, materials giving info about the author etc.
- Fit with syllabus. How do the texts link with the syllabus in terms of themes, vocabulary, grammar, and discourse. Possibility to devise activities and tasks connected with the methodology of the syllabus. For instance: Multiple Choice, True/False questions, etc.

Lazar (1993) also offers practical tools for teachers to evaluate these criteria and if there are fit for the syllabus purposes, according to the students' different needs. In this regard, he also created a detailed checklist to help teachers selecting the right material for their students. Lazar (1993, pp. 58-59) also offers ideas and suggestions for evaluating books which make use of literary texts in two different schemes. The short version of the scheme includes criteria such as: title, author, publisher, level, overall aims, type of texts used, skill or language area that the book will help to improve, strengths and weaknesses, suitability. The longer version offers a series of questions for the teacher to ask themselves, based on different topics:

#### Aim and organization

- What are the overall aims of the book?
- What approach to using literature seems to have been adopted? Is this approach suitable for your students?
- How is the book organized? (Thematically? according to linguistic difficulty? chronologically? etc.)
- Are units/sections self-contained? Can you use some of the material or do you need to work through it all?

#### Materials and activities

- What kind of texts are used in the book? (Poems? short stories? extracts from novels and plays? literary and non-literary texts?)
- Are the texts sufficiently varied, interesting and relevant to students?
- Are the tasks and activities sufficiently varied, interesting and relevant to students?
- Are the students given sufficient linguistic guidance with the language of the texts (for example, vocabulary exercises, glossaries, etc.)
- Are the students given adequate cultural, historical, or literary background information to make sense of the texts?
- Are students encouraged to relate the materials to their own lives and experiences?
- Is the material challenging enough for the students?
- Could the material be adapted if necessary?



### Instructions and layout

- Are the instructions in the book clear and easy to follow?
- Is the layout clear and attractive?
- Are there visuals (pictures, photos, diagrams, etc.) to supplement the text?

### Accompanying resources

- Is the teacher given sufficient guidance in how to use the book (either in the book itself or in a teacher's book)?
- Is there recorded material available to accompany the book?
- Could the book be used by students working on their own (is there a key, for example, to help them)?

### Suitability for class/group.

- Would you use this book with your students? Please give reasons.

There are many writers whose style is known to be simple yet evocative. However, putting together a list of books to be used as teaching sources can be a challenging task. First, because of the huge literary production in English speaking countries; second, because it is not easy to please everyone; and finally, because it can be difficult to choose the right topics to attract teenagers' attention. Variety is important to satisfy the different reading preferences of the students and expose them to different kinds of style, tone, register, vocabulary, and also to different cultures. This can be done by selecting authors from different English-speaking countries and choosing a variety of genres. Another important consideration is the choice of quality multicultural literature as this is an excellent method to introduce students to cultural diversity (Salas, Lucido and Canales, 2002).

Lindsay Clandfield (2015) says that the best way to find literary materials is through the internet. He lists a series of web sites that are excellent for selecting book excerpts, and stories:

- [www.bookbrowse.com](http://www.bookbrowse.com) – contains excerpts from a multitude of recently published books.
- [www.readersread.com](http://www.readersread.com) – contains the first chapter of many recently published books.

He also points out that English Literature does not just mean English or American writers, and suggests websites such as: [www.bookbrowse.com](http://www.bookbrowse.com), where it is possible to find writers from other English-speaking

countries and allow students to be exposed not only to a richer variety of Englishes, but also to a larger variety of cultures and values. Clandfield also includes poetry websites in his list: [www.favoritepoem.org](http://www.favoritepoem.org) - a site collecting America's favorite poems.

## Chapter 3 - Empirical studies

### 3.1 Bridging the gap between theory and practice

As mentioned before this study aims to bridge the gap between theoretical and empirical studies in the use of literature in the L2 classroom. Iida (2013) claims that, although in recent time there has been a growing number of investigations in using literature for didactic purposes, empirical studies done in the field are still limited. Besides, according to Paran (2008, as cited in Iida, 2013), articles mostly focus on the impact of reading on L2 learning.

- Hanauer (2001a, p. 319, as cited in Iida, 2013) conducted a study investigating the use of poetry reading in the L2 classroom which provides some empirical evidence that poetry reading can be an effective task for advanced learners and can help them developing L2 linguistic and cultural knowledge.
- Kim (2004, as cited in Idia, 2013) explored the interaction with literary texts and with peers among a group of advanced learners investigating the relationships between this kind of interactions and the language development. This study showed that discussions on literature can engage students and enable them to practice the target language and express themselves meaningfully in English.
- Wang (2009, as cited in Idia, 2013) evaluated the results of his study conducted using novels in advanced level students at the university of Taiwan. This study showed that literature can have an impact and improve a series of linguistic and non-linguistic skills such as: reading, translation, vocabulary, problem-analysis, grammar, rhetoric, listening, speaking, and writing.

Idia (2013) says that, although the empirical studies in this field are not many, they support the theoretical rationale of using literature in the L2 classroom. Infact, despite the difference in genres, practical approaches, and contexts, these studies show that using literature has a positive impact on L2 learning.

Most of the empirical studies on using literature in the L2 classroom focus on reading, while very few studies have been done on writing (Hanauer 2010, Idia 2012, as cited in Idia, 2013). Idia (2013) claims that this may be since at university level the focus is on academic writing and accuracy rather than on creativity, consequently, most studies of this kind have a reading and writing integrated approach where students are asked to read and write literature.

- Hirvela (2005, as cited in Idia, 2013) carried out an investigation toward reading and writing about literature among 195 university students, many of which regarded the inclusion of literature as helpful in the improvement of their writing skills.
- Chen (2006, as cited in Idia, 2013) examined the impact of reading and writing literature on students at a university in Taiwan providing empirical support for the theory that the reading and writing of literature should be taught together (Grabe, 2003; Hirvela, 2004; Vandrick, 2003 as cited in Idia 2013).
- Hanauer (2010, as cited in Idia, 2013) conducted research on the relationship between writing poetry and second language learning analyzing 844 poems written by 81 advanced ESL learners at an American university. The elements taken into consideration were both textual and literary characteristics such as: text size analysis, linguistic category analysis, lexical frequency profile, poetic features, thematic organization, lexical content analysis, and expressed emotion analysis. The result showed that L2 poetry was short, personal, descriptive, and direct and that the poetry involved the “individual perspective on particular events and experiences” and “the emotional states of the writer”, and “a process of self-reflection” (Hanauer, 2010, p.53, as cited in Idia, 2013).
- Hanauer (2010, as cited in Idia, 2013) also conducted a case study on a book of poetry which consisted of ten poems written by an EFL Japanese student entitled “Family”. The results of this research, focusing on the analysis of the poems expressing the feelings and the personal experience of the student’s parent divorce, show that poetry writing can result in a better understanding of the writer’s identity in his/her exploration and negotiation “of different ways to be in the world” (Hanauer, 2010, p. 73, as cited in Idia, 2013) together with his/her progress in the process of language learning.
- Iida carried out another investigation on poetry (2012, as cited in Idia, 2013). In this case the study was based on a writing exercise on the Japanese poetry called haiku and involved students from a Japanese college. The results, after six-weeks of practicing haiku writing, showed that this exercise had a positive effect on students’ writing skills. The post-essay improvements were higher rate of total amount words used, larger use of impersonal pronouns, greater ability to express ideas in a more direct and succinct way.

Both Iida (2012) and Hanauer's (2011) empirical studies support the theoretical assumption that learning one genre has an influence on students' general writing skills, which means that the use of literature (namely poetry) in L2 writing classes is beneficial even if the final goal of the class is the production of a different genre such as writing an academic essay, for instance (Iida 2013).

Although the empirical studies are not in great numbers yet, Iida (2013) underlines that the evidence seems to show "that literature can be employed by the teacher to work at a number of different levels, for different goals, and in different contexts" (p. 9). Furthermore, it is possible to say that not only literature helps students developing language and cultural awareness together with critical thinking as mentioned before, but it also rises students' motivation through personal emotional engagement. Besides, L2 literary writing offers students the chance to express their thoughts on different subjects create and negotiate meaning placing their own perspective and experience at the core of their learning and writing processes in a real learner-centered context (Iida 2013).

Liao (2017) gives accounts of other empirical studies carried out by Garvin, Hanauer and Iida. These studies offer an insight on what EFL/ESL students write in their poems, although she underlines the need of more empirical studies to be carried out.

- Garvin (2013, as cited in Liao, 2017) involved 75 EFL Chinese students in writing three poems based on a "personal memory of a famous person, place, or object/event in Chinese history and culture" (Garvin, 2013, p. 82 as cited in Liao, 2017, p. 3). Garvin's data showed that EFL students in her study composed poems about various places, people, and events relating to China.
- Hanauer (2010, as cited in Liao, 2017) conducted research on 81 ESL students who were guided to write poems about any life experiences, and since these students were living abroad themes such as homesickness, experiencing American students, or emotional response to classroom experiences were common.
- Iida (2016a, as cited in Liao, 2017) conducted research on 78 EFL Japanese students who were instructed to write a poetry book with their own reflections and experiences on the Japanese

earthquake in 2011. ‘The results showed 11 emerging themes, such as the moment when the earthquake occurs, power-failure/Blackout, or hope, prayer and positive action to evacuees.’

- Liao (2017) also reports the results of her investigations on a group of 18 EFL/ESL teachers involved in a poetry writing course with the purpose of collecting data about, feelings, emotions and perceptions when instructed to write poetry.

Table n. 1 Profiles of participants in Liao’s article (2017, p. 5).

Name	Gender	Country	First Languages	Poetry Writing Experiences	Years of Experienci Writing Instructions
Amanda	Female	China	Mandarin	None	11 years
Amir	Male	Niger	French & Local Dialect	Personal interests and one in-class activity	8 years
Bob	Male	Saudi Arabia	Arabic & Local Dialect	One poetic autoethnography assignment	15 years
Charles	Male	Saudi Arabia	Arabic & Local Dialect	One poetic autoethnography assignment	17 years
Ember	Female	China	Mandarin & Local Dialect	One poetic autoethnography	11 years

				assignment and personal interests	
Enzo	Male	Saudi Arabia	Arabic & Local Dialect	One poetic autoethnography assignment	12 years
Grace	Female	Indonesia	Indonesian & Local Dialect	One poetic autoethnography assignment	13 years
Iris	Female	Indonesia	Indonesian & Local Dialect	One in-class activity	9 years
Joseph	Male	Iraq	Arabic & Local Dialect	None	8 years
Joy	Female	Ivory Coast	French & Local Dialect	One poetic autoethnography assignment	13 years
Kelly	Female	China	Mandarin	One poetic autoethnography assignment	15 years

Liz	Female	China	Mandarin & Local Dialect	Personal interests and one in-class activity	8 years
Mike	Male	Togo	French & Local Dialect	None	12 years
Rania	Female	Saudi Arabia	Arabic & Local Dialect	None	2 years
Roger	Male	Saudi Arabia	Arabic & Local Dialect	One poetic autoethnography assignment	12 years
Sarah	Female	Algeria	Arabic & French	One poetic autoethnography assignment and personal interests	11 years
Thapelo	Male	South Africa	Xitsonga & Local Dialects	One poetic autoethnography assignment and personal interests	8 years
Zak	Male	Japan	Japanese	None	8 years



Table n. 2 Teachers feedback after the course in Liao's article (2017, p.7).

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Example
Difficulty of Writing Poetry in A Second Language	Vocabulary	13/18 (72%)	Touch, sometimes you you're your emotion is you you don't have the real words to express that the feeling you you wanna uhhh express. (Joy)
Features of Poems		12/18 (67%)	That was the challenge for me to come up with those figurative using idiom, you know, metaphor. (Thapelo)
Topic or Content of the Poems		7/18 (39%)	It's very difficult for me to develop the idea...because of the topic is I mean uhmm I just hardly think about the question (poetry theme assigned by the instructor). (Ember)
Self-Expression		4/18 (22%)	Poetry is about emotions...I didn't know it's a good thing...[In] my culture, it's a bad thing if you are a man or a guy express himself. (Enzo)

Organization or Format of the Poems		4/18 (22%)	Another challenge was how how I'm going to make this poem short straight to the point. (Thapelo)
Lack of Knowledge		4/18	Before coming to that course [poetry writing], uhh we didn't have the proper, you know, uhh, education and and that was uhh major
About Writing Poetry		(22%)	fact in our, you know, difficulty having to write poetry. (Charles)
Value of Writing poetry in A Second Language	Self-Expression	13/18 (72%)	I start writing [poetry] and sometimes like I don't wanna stop, I really don't wanna stop. (Roger)
Self-Discovery		8/18 (44%)	Poetry writing experience help(s) me to uncover something, which was uh hidden inside me. (Joy)
Therapeutic Healing		6/18 (33%)	When you write a poem, it frees you from some kind of inner pain you are having. (Amir)

Language Skills	5/18 (28%)	It [poetry writing] can be a strong uh tool, really for students to learn to improve their literacy. (Amir)
Writing Ownership	4/18 (22%)	In writing poetry, I mean you are the center...you are the author, you own the you feel like you have ownership in that one, I don't care people say right or not, but this is how I feel it is, this is how I write my poems ...they [readers] cannot have any objections. (Grace)
Connecting with Others	2/18 (11%)	when you really write something in English and then you when you share someone they said okay we experience the same thing before. (Kelly)
Emotion of Writing Poetry in A Second Language	Enjoyable/Free 15/18 (83%)	They [poetry writing] permitted me to to open to a to say it, and to it's kind of liberation, I free myself when I wrote. (Joy)
Confident	11/18 (61%)	You can say it's revolutionist, because I didn't imagine that I can I can I can do this (poetry writing). (Enzo)

Self-Doubting	9/18 (50%)	I was asking myself that I don't think I will have the ability to do that, and not being able to do that.... It means I'm not going to do well in the class. (Thapelo)
Anxious	9/18 (50%)	I was you know really scared that I don't know what I'm going to do. (Charles)
Frustrated	4/18 (22%)	I found I use I use that [the same vocabulary] in my poem, even sometimes over 6 times, I'm terrible at and really terrible poetry writer, I I feel kind of disappointed. (Kelly)
Attitude of Applying Poetry Writing in ESL/EFL Classrooms	Acceptance  14/18 (78%)	I'm gonna teach part of the class, like creative writing, I wanna like encourage my students to uhmm you know, be like proud of themselves. (Roger)
Uncertainty	4/18 (22%)	Until I know the teaching language through creative writing is logic, is is sounding logical to me, or it's kind of uhh I believe in it, or see how it work, at that time, yes [I will apply it]. (Bob)

Resistance	2/18 (11%)	You have so little little to say about poetry writing, it's it's not as important to uh to create a new course for. (Amanda)
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In commenting the results Liao mentions that 44% of the participants (eight teachers) named self-discovery as part of their poetry writing experience, while 33% (six teachers) felt liberated, which confirms the therapeutic healing benefits of the process, and 28% (five participants) underlined improvements in language skills. Finally, 22 % (four participants) also mentioned ownership of writing as a benefit of learning how to write poetry and becoming authors. In general, the results of this study confirm self-discovery and self-expression are the most frequent values of learning and teaching poetry writing.

Liao (2017) compares her studies with Iida's similar investigation on poetry writing carried out with 20 EFL college students. The aim was to investigate whether students and prospective teachers shared the same kind of perceptions toward poetry writing. Both studies used the same four categories: difficulty, value, emotion, and attitude.

Table n. 3 Comparison between EFL Students (Iida, 2012a, as in Liao, 2017, p. 8) and Prospective ESL/EFL Teachers' Perception of Writing Poetry in a Second Language

Category	EFL Students (N=20)	(Number) Percentage	Prospective EFL/EFL Teachers (N=18)	(Number) Percentage
Difficulty	Syllables	(14) 70%	Vocabulary	13/18 (72%)
	Self-expression	(13) 65%	Features of Poems	12/18 (67%)

	Seasonal references	(10) 50%	Topic or Content of the Poems	7/18 (39%)
	Vocabulary	(8) 40%	Self-Expression	4/18 (22%)
	Previous learning experiences	(6) 30%	Organization or Format of the Poems	4/18 (22%)
Remembering		(3) 15%	Lack of Knowledge About Writing Poetry	4/18 (22%)
Value	Vocabulary	(17) 85%	Self-Expression	13/18 (72%)
			Self-Discovery	8/18 (44%)
	Self-expression	(15) 75%	Therapeutic Healing	6/18 (33%)
			Language Skills	5/18(28%)
	Applicability to other genres	(14) 70%	Writing Ownership	4/18 (22%)
	Audience awareness	(6) 30%	Connecting with Others	2/18 (11%)
Emotion	Interest	(11) 55%	Enjoyable/Free	15/18 (83%)

Sense of achievement	(10) 50%	Confident	11/18 (61%)
	(8) 40%	Self-Doubting	9/18 (50%)
Surprise			
	(6) 30%	Anxious	9/18 (50%)
Anxiety			
	(2) 10%	Frustrated	4/18 (22%)
Reluctance			
Attitude	Acceptance (14) 70%	Acceptance	14/18 (78%)
	(8) 40%	Unsureness	4/18 (22%)
Resistance			
	(3) 15%	Resistance	2/18 (11%)
Unsureness			

The results showed that both EFL students and EFL/ESL prospective teachers had difficulties in expressing personal opinions and emotions, and they shared many perceived difficulties in writing poetry. In this sense, there is space for teachers willing to use this kind of approach for addressing these difficulties developing appropriate skills. Self-expression has a high value in both studies (75% and 72%), while vocabulary (85%) and applicability to other genres (70%) are the students' values that can be added to language skills (39%) from the prospective teachers as an improvement in lexis and writing skills. Both groups share the same feeling of involvement defined as interest (55%) for the EFL students and enjoyable/free (83%) for the prospective EFL/ESL teachers. Liao (2017) underlines the fact that in both studies negative feeling towards poetry writing emerged too, however the negative feelings have a lower percentage rate if compared to the positive ones. So, the scholar concludes that for both EFL students and prospective ESL/EFL teachers writing poetry in a second language can be considered as a positive experience.

In their article *Teaching Study Skills for English Literature*, Michael Short and Christopher Candlin (1986) describe a series of courses of English language and literature which have developed an integrated approach of these two areas of study. The first course took place at the University of Lancaster in 1980 and involved the staff from the Department of Modern English and the Institute of Language Education, the second involved the same staff and was carried out in 1981 (in this second course input from teachers of the Department of English Literature of the University of Lancaster were also considered). A similar approach was also used during a two-month course in China (University of Nanjing), the course was taught by M.H. Short in 1981. The courses were designed for teachers of English who were involved in teaching both language and literature to non-native speakers of English. Based on the outcome of these courses Short and Candlin concluded that the focus should be on the text. This means putting the text at the center of the attention of both teachers and students. In the past decades there has been a tendency to teach *about* literature giving information about authors, literary movements, critical schools, synopses of novels and plays instead of teaching literature *itself*. In this kind of approach, the text is kept in the background, as this way to teach it is considered easier. However, in literature there are many works of art whose author identity is unknown while, on the other hand, the importance of cultural or historical background have often been overstressed. Short and Candlin, state that background knowledge should be used to interpret linguistic events: a) knowledge of the particular social situation and the participants involved; b) small-scale social events that are relevant to the comprehension of the text itself.

The approach was based on the following concepts:

- There is not linguistic distinction between literature and other kinds of language (Werth, 1976; Pratt, 1977; as cited in Carter & Brumfit, 1986, p. 91).
- Although language and literature may appear different from the point of view of the teachers, they are not so different from the point of view of the students, who perceive literature also as language
- Many students enjoy reading literature and enjoyment has an important role in the learning process.
- Literary texts can expose students to different varieties of English.



- There are great advantages in the fact both language and literature are taught by the same teacher, as the texts can offer opportunities to identify the students' weaknesses in reading or other skills.
  - Both teachers and learners should be made sensitive to the process of reading
  - An integrated curriculum covering both tertiary institutions and university colleges should be created
1. The participants to the 1980 course were all EFL teachers at university or college level coming from different parts of the world, including European, African, and Latin American countries. Before the course, a questionnaire was sent to the participants identify their needs. Part of the course was designed from the results of the questionnaire and part from the general approach described before. It was a four-week course, but each week was planned according to the results of a questionnaire completed by the participants at the end of each week. The first unit of the course focused on stylistic analysis of poetry, prose, and drama. The second unit focused on reading skills, and on as much meaning it is possible to extract from texts, the reading process and reading strategies, the teaching of reading and the development of appropriate reading activities for EFL learners. The focus of the third unit was the development of the curriculum and the discourse analysis. At macro-level, particular attention was to relate curriculum design to learners' needs and their role in the choice of the authors to be included rather than simply decide to choose authors as 'good' representative of literature in any given period. At micro-level, this unit focused on examining a variety of strategies for teaching literature in the EFL classroom according to different text types and instructional mode (Candlin & Edelhoff, 1982, as in Carter & Brumfit, 1986, p 95). An attempt was made to create an integration of the three course elements with central focus on description, interpretation, and evaluation of texts as according to the following course components:
- Curriculum Design: understanding the purposes, methodology and evaluation
  - Reading Strategies: understanding the process of comprehension
  - Stylistic Analysis: understanding language as literary communication

The workshop was designed to connect literature to language study, and this was carried out by comparing literary and non-literary texts to explore similarities and differences in form and function. With this

is mind, great attention was given to implications for practical teaching and how particular texts could be used for teaching particular students. Participants expressed interest in the selection of texts and the teaching techniques and the implications in terms of critical theories, linguistic studies, creative writing, translation theory and its application in the in the bilingual context.

2. The 1981 course was very similar to the previous year for type of participants and program. However, a unit on literary criticism was added as suggested by participants of the 1980 course. This course was a bit shorter than the other and consisted of just three weeks instead of four, so this added the difficulty of having an extra topic in less time. Participants in this case were mostly high school teachers coming from all over the world. The unit on Literary Criticism matched the one on Stylistics and was appreciated although the techniques showed were reported to be known by the in-service teachers.
3. The Nanjing course was addressed to Chinese teachers of English language and Literature in the Chinese Universities and Colleges. The focus was on Post-War British literature organized in Literature and Stylistics according to genres. The feedback was positive although the course suffered from two major limitations: non-homogeneous level of English competences and background among participants, and differences between Chinese and Western teaching and learning style, especially as regards the students' involvement in terms of analysis and interpretation. The workshop main aims were:
  - To encourage links between language and literature studies
  - To clarify the connection between linguistic form and pragmatic function
  - To design usable teaching materials for piloting in participants' home situations

The topics of the workshop included:

- the language of poetry and the language of advertising
- the language of instructions and poems making use of this variety (e.g., Ted Hughes's "To Paint a Water Lily", Henry Reed's "Naming of Parts")
- passport description and character descriptions (Leonard Cohen's "All there is to know about Adolph Eichmann", Charles Dickens's initial description of Mr. Bounderby in "Hard Times")

- place descriptions (e.g., a travel guide to Chester and Charles Dickens’s initial description of Coketown in “Hard Times”)
- a nineteenth-century sermon and Mr. Chadband’s speech of thanks for the meal provided by Mrs. Snagsby in *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens
- dramatic texts and authentic, tape-recorded dialogue

A final discussion included a set of proposals for a new literature examination within the Cambridge Proficiency Level focusing on the connection between literary and non-literary language. The conclusion, however, was that there are no sets of linguistics features than can be found in literature only. At the end of the workshop participants compared language of poetry with language of advertising and they found out that the kind of features that are traditionally associated with poetry, (such as: rhyme, meter, ambiguity, metaphor, parallelism, linguistic deviation), also appear in in advertising. During the workshop it was discovered that the two genres have a lot in common, in fact, poetry and advertising texts are designed to have an emotional impact on the reader o hearer as the purpose of both genres is being memorable.

In his article “Measuring ownership of creative versus academic writing: Implications for interdisciplinary praxis”, Nicholes (2017) reports the results of an investigation on creative writing carried out with the purpose to explore Hanauer’s (2010, 2012) meaningful literacy instruction approach based on the concept of ownership. He defines writing ownership as a feeling of caring about the writing because the writer thinks that the writing produced is important to them. The study involved 76 students majoring in English in two U.S universities (one private and one public), 70% of them were female and 24% were male, about half of them were undergraduates and the other half were postgraduates. As for language 75% of the group used English as a mother tongue while 25% used English as an additional language

The research questions of the investigation were:

1. Do students feel different levels of ownership over poetry, short story, argument, and research-paper writing?
2. Do undergraduates and postgraduates differ regarding ownership over creative and academic writing?

The instrument used included three carefully worded items that asked about ownership. These three questions were asked four times, in relation to poetry, short stories, argument essays, and research papers. Participants responded on a five-point Likert scale that ranged from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree as in the scheme reported here (Nicholes, 2017, p. 5).

Table n. 4 shows poetry writing ownership instrument

When I write poetry,

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel a strong personal connection to my writing.					
I feel that what I wrote is an important part of me.					
I feel emotionally connected to my writing.					

The results of this study showed that participants reported more ownership over creative genres (stories and poetry) than over academic genres (argument and research-paper writing). The hierarchy of owned genres showed that stories were most owned, followed closely by poetry and then by argument and research papers. As for the difference between undergraduates and postgraduates, the first ones reported feeling more ownership over creative genres than the second ones while postgraduates reported feeling more ownership over academic genres than undergraduates.

As reported by Nicholes (2017, p. 4) the answer to the first research question (Do students feel different levels of ownership over poetry, short story, argument, and research-paper writing?) is that ownership is felt

more for creative genres than for academic genres. It also seems to be felt more for argument papers than for research papers, while there is no difference in the levels of ownership between story and poetry ownership. Besides, participants using English as a first language (n = 57) and participants using English as an additional language (n = 19) showed the same feelings of ownership.

In reference to the second research question (Do undergraduates and postgraduates differ regarding ownership over creative and academic writing?), Nicholes (2017, p. 4) reports that, although both undergraduates and postgraduates show the same results regarding levels of ownership for poetry or argument-paper writing, nevertheless, undergraduates seem to feel more ownership for stories than postgraduates, whereas postgraduates feel more ownership for research papers. As above mentioned, Nicholes concludes that students feel more ownership over creative genres than over academic genres, and that postgraduates feel more ownership over research writing than undergraduates. Therefore, these findings suggest that, both for English native and non-native speakers who are majoring in English, writing ownership may be situated in creative writing. As in Hanauer's (2010, 2012, as cited in Nicholes, 2017) meaningful-literacy instruction approach, this may be the starting point for an instructional writing sequence of this kind:

1. students explore a topic that is meaningful for them through a literary genre
2. this topic later becomes the topic for argument- and research-paper writing.

This would lead to student's self-expression and freedom in the selection of topics in fact, they think of academic writing as something artificial and remote, while, on the other hand, creative writing, such as poetry writing, is perceived as a more natural way of using language (Spiro & Dymoke, 2016, as cited in Nicholes, 2017)

### 3.2 Language and literature

In Halliday's view (1966, p.67, as cited in Widdowson, 2013, p. 7) "if a text is to be described at all, then it should be described properly; and this means by the theories and methods developed in linguistics, the subject whose task is precisely to show how language works". As Widdowson underlines, in reporting

Halliday's theory, in describing a piece of writing as a literary work, it must be considered that the linguistic elements in the text are a crucial part of the analysis. It is in fact, only through linguistic analysis that it is possible to negotiate meaning with the text, especially in consideration of the fact that as Widdowson states, deviance from grammar rules is extremely common in literature. With this in mind, the scholar points out the importance of the role of the linguist, in fact, he claims that there are a number of ways in which linguists can give account of how literary texts are representative of the grammar of the English language system, or, on the contrary, how literature deviates from the rules. From the above-mentioned statements, it is possible to infer that grammar and comprehension of the literary text are inextricably intertwined, and, most of all, that although ungrammatical sentences make no sense, they do make sense when it comes to literature. Widdowson (2013) offers an explanation to this phenomenon stating that, "linguistic deviations do not occur randomly in literary work, but pattern in with other linguistic features, both regular and irregular, to form a whole" (p. 27). So, each deviation must be regarded and analyzed within its context and in connection with the linguistic system, or code, in the literary text itself as part of a discourse. In this sense, irregularities may appear regular in the context of the text so every literary work should be regarded as different language or dialect with a grammar of its own. The poem "Anyone lived in a pretty how town", by Thorne, offers a good sample of extreme deviance (Widdowson, 2013, p. 29).

*anyone lived in a pretty how town*  
*(with up so floating many bells down)*  
*spring summer autumn winter*  
*he sang his didn't he danced his did*  
*Women and men (both little and small)*  
*cared for anyone not at all*  
*they sowed their isn't they reaped the same*  
*sun moon stars rain*

Although the poem presents a series of difficult deviance from grammar, nevertheless the linguist can find a method behind the apparent chaos, as these deviances apply consistently within the poem. The rules

applied in the text concern the use of *anyone* as a Proper noun, while the auxiliaries *did*, *didn't*, *isn't* are regarded as common nouns. This regularity within the deviances allows an interpretation of the text.

Widdowson, defines this reconciliation of chaos and rules, and amalgam of opposites as very distinctive features of literary texts and the essence of literature as discourse. Nevertheless, grammar itself is not enough to account for meaning because grammar can only describe text, while to be able to infer meaning there is the need to describe *discourse*, or the way linguistic elements function to communicative effect. To do that, it is fundamental to establish a connection between the meaning of the linguistic item, as an element of the language code, and the meaning it takes on in the literary text. These two different faces of the same medal can be named as *signification*, to refer to the linguistic item as an element of the code, and *value*, to refer the meaning the linguistic item assumes in the context of use (Widdowson, 2013, p. 33).

Readers are usually able to identify the specific value of a word relying on the clues given by the context in which it is used, and they do so by extending signification rather than selecting a particular meaning. This, according to Widdowson (2013, p. 35) is “one of the principal factors in linguistic change” which means the ability to give new value to words depending on the actual discourse. Every language user does this, not just poets, as everybody uses figurative or metaphorical meanings, and this is the process through which modification of the language happens. It is possible to say that literature is a way to expose students to an extension of how language is used in “everyday” discourse, rather than a totally different way of using it (Widdowson, 2013). The distinctive element of literary discourse, according to the scholar, is that non-literal expressions do not occur randomly, as in ordinary discourse, but they follow organized patterns which make the literary work a self-contained unit not determined by syntax or semantics of the language code. In fact, this approach allows the writer to convey the unique reality of his or her vision through the specific use of linguistic patterns, which become a way of communication.

The connection between language and literature has been long investigated by linguists and linguistic critics also with the aim of defining what can be called literary language. Brumfit and Carter (1986) state that “There is no such thing as literary language” (p. 6). They claim that language can be used for literary purposes but at the same time it is impossible to isolate a specific property of language that is exclusive to literary work.

Lazar (1993, p. 44) identifies some of the most common linguistic features in literature.

- Metaphor: a comparison made between things which are unlike each other
- Simile: a comparison between two things usually indicated by the words *like* or *as*
- Personification: describes objects or inanimate objects as alive and animated
- Paradox: a statement that may appear absurd but may be true
- Oxymoron: a combination of words which may seem incongruous or contradictory
- Metonymy: substitution of the name of a thing with the one it is usually associated with
- Synecdoche: the part of a thing used to mean the whole
- Apostrophe: the direct addressing of an abstract quality, object, or absent person
- Assonance: the repetition of vowel sounds
- Alliteration: repetition of consonants
- Repetition of words or phrases
- Unusual syntactic patterns, for instance reversing the order of subject and verb
- Double or multiple meaning of a word
- Poeticism, poetic lexis
- Mixing of styles or registers

In fact, as the scholar underlines, all the literary devices used in literature such as metaphors, similes, repetitions, oxymorons, and so on, are used in all kinds of texts, and contexts and even in the spoken language, there is large use of metaphors and similes in everyday colloquial speech while assonance and alliteration can be found in children's rhymes and songs and in advertising.

Brumfit and Carter (1986) cite samples of battle metaphors in debates in the journalistic, parliamentary, and academic fields, as, for instance: defend a position, concede a point, conflict of opinion... Similarly, also in poetry it is possible to observe that many elements, regarded as characteristics of poetic language such as rimes, repetitions, alliterations are part of our daily life in children's songs and games and advertisement. They conclude that rather than literary language it is better to talk about "literariness" in language, meaning that it is



possible to identify some uses which are more or less “literary” than others. Therefore, they foster a kind of approach in which language study and literary study are more closely integrated and harmonized.

Micheal Short and Christopher Candlin (1986) report the outcome of three courses for teachers based on the comparative analysis of the connection between literary and non-literary texts. Through this comparison the authors discovered that not only there is no difference between poetry and advertising texts, because they both have an emotional core aiming to leaving an impact on the reader (or hearer), but also that even in scientific and technical texts it is possible to find this kind of “emotive features” (Glaser, 1975, as cited in Short & Candlin, 1986, p. 108). These emotive elements occur because they help communication and facilitate the process of conveying information. They agree with Fowler (1971, as cited in Short & Candlin, 1986) in rejecting the traditional notion that there is a separate literary language and say that “if there is a corpus of text that can be called “literature”, it would appear that the corpus will have to be defined at least partly in socio-cultural rather than in linguistic terms”, (p. 108). They also support Widdowson (1975, as cited in Short & Candlin, 1986) in his advocacy of a comparative approach to literature teaching involving extracts from literary and non-literary texts in the hope that more comparative studies and empirical research will be able to determine whether there is a quantitative difference in the occurrence of certain linguistic features in literary texts compared to non-literary ones.

Littlewood (1986) states that at its simplest level, literature is not different from any other linguistic performance: productive use of several linguistic structures for communication purposes. Differences start to appear at the second level, the stylistic variety level. Literary styles vary according to genres, periods, formality with the aim of giving a representation of life. Moving away from language, it is possible to enter the third level, the level of the content: the expression of superficial subject matter, which means the story or the plot. At the fourth level it is possible to find the vision of the author, the theme, and the meaning of the work. The fifth and final level is the time and place location of the literary work as part of literary history or the biography of the author.

### 3.3 The role of the reader

Lazar (1993) states that the role of the reader is crucial in giving meaning to a text. There are a lot of different variables that can affect the reaction of readers and their relationship with a text, these may involve individual, social and political reasons. It also depends on the “literary competence” that the reader has developed in time being in contact with different kinds of literary texts. Describing “literary competence” it is not easy. Some scholars, such as Culler (1975, as cited in Lazar 1993, p. 12), claim that effective readers of literature have an implicit understanding of some literary conventions, and thanks to this familiarity they can convert these conventions into literary meaning. In this sense, “literary competence” would be like Chomsky’s notion of “grammatical competence”, the ability that people have to recognize certain structures and utterances if these conform to the specific rules and patterns of the language they speak. Skilled readers are able to recognize not only the genre of a novel for instance, but also the themes in the plot and how the plot intertwines with sub-plot, how some values may be represented by the characters, and the type of narration or point of view. Brumfit (1986) tries to define “literary competence” as an exercise of “taste” a mix of sensitivity and capacity of judgement that allows readers to discriminate the “good” from the “bad” (p. 16). He also underlines the fact that both judgement and taste are subject to change in time.

Widdowson (1979) describes reading as an *interaction* between the writer and the reader mediated through the text, rather than a simple *reaction* to a text. McKay (1986) specifies that this interaction occurs on two different levels: linguistic and conceptual. In other words, there are two main activities the reader is involved in when dealing with a text, the first one is decoding the language and the second is understanding the concepts presented. However, these two levels are not separated from each other, on the contrary they are strictly intertwined. Nevertheless, while it may be easy to identify linguistic difficulties based on readability of the text, it is not easy to predict difficulties linked to conceptual issues. This concept of reading as a form of *interaction* between reader and author, presupposes the willingness of the reader to interact with the text, in this kind of attitude lies the motivational factor that is so important when the readers are also learners of a second language. Gaies (1979, p. 48 as cited in McKay, 1986, p.192) underlines the necessity of more studies on the impact that affective, attitudinal, and experiential variables have on the willingness and capability of learners to

decode a text in second language. In fact, as McKay (1986) states that literature can motivate students to read offering them the affective, attitudinal, and experiential factors they need.

In describing the interaction between the text and the reader, Rosenblatt (1978, p. 24, as cited in McKay, 1986, p. 194) distinguishes two different aspects of the experience of reading a text. In fact, she makes a distinction between efferent and aesthetic reading. The first one (efferent from Latin ‘fero’ to carry away’) is concerned with what the reader will carry away from the reading. The second one, refers to what happens during the reading itself. In both kinds of interaction, the readers bring their own experience and use the text as a stimulus. Every reading is a different event in space and time involving a specific reader and a specific text, if any of this variable changes also the experience changes and a different event occurs. So, there are texts that may not be involving for a reader at a specific time, however the same texts in a different time and with more experience from the reader may become involving. For this reason, Rosenblatt suggests giving students the freedom to put aside a particular piece of literature, which is an option that teachers rarely allow to them. Short and Candlin (1986) claim that since there is no linguistic difference between literary and non-literary texts, what makes the difference is the reader perception and his or her interpretative strategies. As Michela Canepari (2020) states, the reader’s role is not a passive one. On the contrary, the reader has a very active role in the process of uncovering “the ‘mystery’ of the text and the “elementary structure of signification”” (p. 18). Although Canepari refers to professional readers, such as translators, this role can apply to all kind of readers who are engaged in the meaning negotiation. Depending on the degree of professional attitude (translators, critics, teachers, learners or simply readers who read for pleasure) they would go through all or most of these categories in their engagement with the text, but they would do so with different degrees of awareness:

1. identify genres and sub-genres (literature, comics, specialized text...)
2. recognize specific conventions (Sci-Fi novels, academic articles...)
3. contextualize the text properly (sometimes difficult with hybrid text)
4. Investigate the lexical level (are lexical items used according to their etymological origin or technical nature...?)
5. Recognize redundant or archaic expressions

6. Recognize poetic or literary devices: alliteration, rhymes, assonance, neologism, numerals, abbreviations, acronyms...
7. Examine the morphosyntactic level: passive voices or nominal forms, impersonal forms, transitive or intransitive verbs, parataxis or hypotaxis...

While the perspective of a professional reader would go through the analysis with technical tools and attitude for specific purpose such as, translating, teaching, learning, etc., a simple reader for pleasure would do that in a more superficial (and almost unconscious) way based on his or her experience. As Short and Candlin (1986) state, readers may decide to process a text as a “literary text” (p. 109), for different reasons, maybe because they have been told it is literature or because it contains linguistic features traditionally associated with poetry or specific literary genres and, in order to do that, they apply a set of interpretative conventions. Based on the outcome of a series of workshops carried out to compare literary and non-literary texts and the process of building meaning through the interaction between readers and texts, Short and Candlin suggest that readers determine the honorific or the non-honorific definition of literature. In fact, the more successful readers are in applying the above-mentioned conventions aiming at reaching an interpretation of the text, the more value they give to the text itself. Although, it is not clear if readers apply the same conventions to non-literary texts as well, the authors conclude arguing that: text perceived as ‘literature’ are processed in a different way from texts which do not have this kind of honorific status.

As Brumfit (1986) states, responding to literature is not just a matter of understanding the language in the text, readers are interested in the significance of the text not just to its translation or linguistic feature. He offers a model for appropriate response to literature which has the following characteristics (p.188):

1. Response to text must be simultaneous in all its aspect.
2. Good readers of literature can generalize from a text to other aspects of the literary tradition or to grasp personal or social meaning outside literature.
3. Theory and techniques in literature teaching make sense only if they serve the above-mentioned capacity to extend reference outside the text.

4. Students must be helped in developing their skills in both directions (literary tradition or personal and social meaning), and exposure to literature must be graded according to established criteria.
5. The purpose of literary work is not to provide knowledge, but to use this knowledge to develop the process of generalization as mentioned in point 2
6. a) The ability to explore the connection between literary texts and other literary texts (developing the notion of convention and tradition) will be developed by reading texts linked by subject matter, formal and structural similarity, themes, or other devices.  
 b) The ability to explore the connection between literary texts and ordinary life will be developed through increasing familiarity with the various mimetic properties of literature by grading the complexity of external reference in the texts used from which generalization to personal or external experience can be made as simple as possible.

In this model it is possible to see that the role of the reader/learner is in the ability to understand the relationship between the texts and its literary context and between the text and the readers' personal life and social context, putting the reader/learner at the core of his/her learning experience. Besides, if, as above stated, it is true that the reader and the author are engaged in a relationship through the text, then it is possible to agree with Frye (1964, p. 129, as cited in McKay, 1986, p. 193) when he says that, "It is clear that the end of literary teaching is not simply admiration of literature; it's something more like the transfer of imaginative energy from literature to the students." The outcome of this research study seems to confirm that this transfer of energy becomes very much so, especially when learners are actively engaged through the production of their own pieces of writing, in the process of second language acquisition, using the text as a model.

### 3.4 Developing literary competence

As mentioned before, the 'literary competence' of the student or reader plays a crucial role not only in the overall understanding of the text but also in the reaction to it. Culler coined the term "literary competence" for the first time in 1975 (Wikipedia).

Paul Kiparsky (1981) defines it as a kind of linguistic knowledge that is structured together with pre-determined elements. In this sense, as above mentioned, Culler's literary competence is like what Noam Chomsky calls linguistic competence, and it consists of a series of interpretative conventions such as: significance, metaphorical coherence, poetic tradition, or thematic unity which are part of knowledge of the reader before he actually starts reading. Kiparsky says that reading literature is a process governed by rules with the aim of producing meaning, while poetics is the process of discovering these rules. So not only grammar, but also basic literary structures have a deeper level within the human essence. The connection between them and human essence can be found in what Jung called "collective unconscious". Frye's "The Archetypes of Literature" (1975) could be included in this system too. In his framework of literary archetypes there are two main categories, comedic and tragic which are divided into two sub-categories: comedy and romance, tragedy and satire. The comedic human world is representative of wish-fulfillment and being community centered. In contrast, the tragic human world is of isolation, tyranny, and the fallen hero. Frye admits that his schema is simplistic and makes room for exceptions by noting that there are neutral archetypes, which cannot be categorized under the tragic or comedic. Frye uses the seasons in his archetypal schema, where comedy is aligned with spring, romance with summer, tragedy with autumn, and satire with winter.

Comedy and Spring - Rebirth of the hero. Comedy represents the birth of the hero, revival and resurrection just like spring symbolizes the defeat of winter and darkness.

Romance and Summer - The birth of the hero. They are associated because summer is the culmination of life in the seasonal calendar, and the romance genre culminates with some kind of triumph, usually a marriage or a happy ending.

Tragedy and Fall - Movement towards the death or defeat of the hero. Tragedy represents the "fall" of the protagonist just like autumn represents the dying stage of the year in the calendar.

Satire and Winter - Absence of the hero. Satire is a "dark" genre associated with winter and represents the dissolution, the return of chaos, and the defeat of the heroic figure.

Besides seasons, Frye defines five different areas in his schema: human, animal, vegetation, mineral, and water.

Animals are docile in comedy and predatory in tragedy.

- *Serpent* (snake, worm): symbol of energy and pure force (libido); evil, corruption, sensuality, destruction.
- *The great fish*: divine creation/life.

Vegetation is represented by gardens, parks, roses, and lotuses in comedies, while in tragedy is usually wild or barren.

The mineral realm in comedy is represented by cities, temples, or precious stones, while in tragedy it is represented as a desert or ruins

Rivers represent the water realm in the comedic genre. In the tragic genre, the water sphere is depicted by the seas, and especially floods.

Archetypes are grouped into two major categories: characters, situations/symbols.

Characters:

The hero - the savior

The outcast - who lives out of society

The scapegoat - the one who gets blamed

The star-crossed lovers - a young couple joined by love but parted by fate.

The shrew - the wife always battering her husband with verbal abuse.

The femme fatale - a female character type who brings upon catastrophic events

The Journey - a narrative archetype where the protagonist must overcome a series of obstacles before reaching his or her goal.

Archetypal symbols vary more than archetype narratives or character types but have deep roots in a culture's mythology. Situations/symbols:

- The task - A situation in which a character, or group of characters, is driven to complete some duty
- The quest - Here, the character(s) are searching for something, whether consciously or unconsciously. Everything focuses on the goal of completing this quest.

- The loss of innocence - This implies a loss of innocence through sexual experience, violence, or any other means.
- Water - Water is a symbol of life, cleansing, and rebirth. It is a strong life force, and is often depicted as a living, reasoning force.
  - (a) Water/birth/death/resurrection; creation; purification and redemption; fertility and growth.
  - (b) *Sea/ocean*: the mother of all life; spiritual mystery; death and/or rebirth; timelessness and eternity.
  - (c) *Rivers*: death and rebirth (baptism); the flowing of time into eternity; transitional phases of the life cycle.
- Sun (fire and sky are closely related): creative energy; thinking, enlightenment, wisdom, spiritual vision.
  - (a) *Rising sun*: birth, creation, enlightenment.
  - (b) *Setting sun*: death.

#### Colors

Red: blood, sacrifice, passion; disorder.

Green: growth, hope, fertility.

Blue: highly positive; secure; tranquil; spiritual purity.

Black: darkness, chaos, mystery, the unknown, death, wisdom, evil, melancholy.

White: light, purity, innocence, timelessness; [negative: death, terror, supernatural]

Yellow: enlightenment, wisdom.

Freud also describes many kinds of symbolism/archetypes largely used in literature:

- a) Concave images (ponds, flowers, cups, vases, hollows): female or womb symbols.
- b) Phallic symbols (towers, mountain peaks, snakes, knives, swords, etc.) male symbols.
- c) Dancing, riding, or flying symbols of sexual pleasure.



Lazar (1993) defines the kind of problems students may have in reading short stories, and in doing so he describes a series of abilities students should have to cope with the literary text. The abilities he mentions are (p.76) the following:

1. Reading strategies. Ability to grasp general meaning rather than focusing on single words
2. Making interpretations.
  - a. Confidence in making their own interpretations.
  - b. Coping with ambiguities
3. Motivation.
  - a. Being keen on reading in own language
  - b. Confidence
4. Appreciating the style
5. Understanding the cultural background of a story
6. Comprehension
  - a. Ability to follow the plot
  - b. Understanding the characters
  - c. Understanding vocabulary
  - d. Understanding the role of the narrator

The scholar also defines a series of activities designed to develop “literary competence” or, as Martins (2011) says, that “set of interpretative behaviors and reading attitudes addressed to literary phenomena in English literature”.

According to Widdowson (2013), literary competence can be acquired through the analysis of the linguistic and stylistic elements of the text. This should be carried out in a way that can help learners to infer meaning on their own, developing the intuitive sense of what the text is about that learners may have. For Widdowson, in fact, being able to interpret the meaning of a literary text is of paramount importance and should be the main purpose of teaching literature. This also means teaching literature from a linguistic perspective, keeping in mind that stylistic analysis is essential for developing a reading strategy for literature and set

learners free from ready-made concepts on what the literary text is about.

### 3.5 Teaching writing skill

The advent of the communicative approach has, in some cases, produced an excess of focus on speaking, giving writing a secondary role in the language classroom. However, writing is a communicative act just like speaking even though they have different characteristics. Donn Byrne (1998, p.3) underlines the differences in a simple scheme:

SPEECH	WRITING
Takes place in a context, which often makes references clear	Creates its own context and therefore must be fully explicit
Speakers and listeners in contact. Interact and exchange roles	Reader not present and no interaction possible
Usually, person addressed is specified	Reader not necessarily known to writer
Immediate feedback given	No immediate feedback possible. Writer may try to anticipate reader's reaction and incorporate them into the text
Speech is transitory. Indeed, to be understood immediately. If not, listener expected to interact	Writing is permanent. Can be reread as often as necessary and at own speed
Sentences are often incomplete and sometimes ungrammatical. Hesitations and pauses common and usually some redundancy and repetitions	Sentences expected to be carefully constructed, and linked and organized to form a text
Range of devices (stress, intonation, pitch, speed) to help convey meaning. Facial expressions, body movements and gesture also used for this purpose	Devices to help convey meaning are punctuation, capitals and underlining (for emphasis). Sentence boundaries clearly indicated

The main difference is that ordinary speech is spontaneous while writing is organized. Nevertheless, the structure underlying writing is often taken for granted and not adequately addressed with specific techniques by L2 teachers. Byrne (1998) underpins a series of pedagogical purposes for teaching writing even in the early stages of second language acquisition (p. 6).

- Writing provides for different learning styles and needs as some learners may feel more secure when facing reading and writing rather than oral skills.
- Written work provides tangible evidence of progress
- Providing exposure to language from different sources allows integration of skills
- Writing provides a break from oral skill and quieter and more relaxed time for both students and teachers
- Writing is part of formal and informal testing.

This list was written a two decades ago and it is still valid. However, in today's world it should be considered also that writing has reached a higher status and is widely used in everyday activities through, emails, message texts, social networks, and for this reason it should be thought starting at early stages as the scholar suggests. Developing writing implies developing reading as well, which means developing the capacity to appreciate and understand what kind of devices the authors of texts use in order to convey meaning and reach their goals. For this purpose, Byrne identifies four key question that can be used in any reading comprehension (p. 11).

1. What is the writer purpose? Understanding the writer's communicative purpose is an essential part of understanding the text. Samples of purpose could be, for instance, informing, entertaining, apologizing, sharing feelings, etc.
2. How does the writer achieve his purpose? This question allows starting a reflection on why and how things are expressed in the text and the way language is used to reach specific goals.
3. How does the writer establish and maintain contact with his reader? This question allows to be more specific about the linguistic devices used to keep the reader's attention.

4. What typical features of written English are there in the text? This question would focus on linking devices and sentence structure.

These basic questions can be a starting point to analyze generic texts (e.g., informal, and personal), with more complex and formal text the questions can be more specific in order to focus on the structure of the text and understand the internal organization and the way information is organized. In this case other questions could be added such as (p. 13):

1. How has the writer sequenced his/her information?
2. Has he/she separated one piece of information from another?
3. Has he/she made any comparison or contrast?

Byrne poses these questions with the aim of eliciting three main concepts which underline the act of writing and that teachers must bear in mind when developing this skill in the L2 classroom. The first one is that any piece of writing is an attempt to communicate something, in fact the writer has always a goal in mind. The second principle is that the writer must establish contact with the reader and maintain it through the text. The third one is that to communicate, involve the reader and reaching their goals writers have to organize their material and use logical and grammatical (and literal) devices. Writers have a variety of resources that they can use for reaching their communicative goals and of which teacher must be aware (pp. 15-17).

- Graphological resources.

- (1) Spelling

- (2) Punctuation

- (3) Headings, footnotes, tables of content and indexes

- Rhetorical resources.

- (1) Logical devices (linking words, connectors, devices for enumeration, etc.)

- (2) Grammatical devices (syntax, anaphora)

- (3) Lexical devices (type of vocabulary, key words)

As Byrne (1998, p. 19) says, “The writing program requires, therefore, both *extensive understanding* of these resources and *considerable practice* in using them in appropriate forms of written expressions.” He also

suggests that, since all these logical, grammatical, and lexical devices occur simultaneously in writing, it seems advisable that they should be dealt with all at the same time rather than separately.

It is important to keep in mind that whatever the attitude in teaching writing, the focus should not just be on fluency, accuracy or on the text (as a structure), in fact Byrne invites teachers to find the right balance according to the needs of the students. In this sense, teachers should reflect on the kind of guidance they want to offer. For instance, they should not feel obliged to correct mistakes just because they are written, in fact the principle of fluency and communication can be applied to writing skills as well as speaking. Therefore, if we accept errors in speech as a fundamental part of learning the language, the same can be done in writing.

Teachers also should leave students free to write what they want. They should also be aware of the needs of the students when dealing with writing and offer their guidance in those areas. The following are the guidelines, ideas and suggestions offered by Byrne (1998, pp. 27-29) for a program that starts introducing writing at an early stage of language learning:

- Teach learners how to write.

Since the spoken and written form of the language are not the same and we use specific techniques for teaching oral skills then teaching writing skills require specific techniques too.

- Provide adequate and relevant experience of the written language.

Learners should be exposed to a variety of written text, not just dialogues in textbooks, otherwise they cannot be expected to be able to produce other varieties of written texts such as, emails or reports.

- Show the learners how the written language functions as a system of communication

Exposure to written language itself is not enough. They need to become aware that communicate through writing is different from speaking. They need to be able to understand the communicative purpose of written texts and learning how to use the resources of the written language to keep the readers' attention and get the message across.

- Teach the learners how to write a text

Writing involves the ability to organize sentences in a coherent text. Writing practice should include exposure to different kinds of texts to recognize the devices needed depending on the purpose and the communicative goal. Learners should also be able to organize their ideas into paragraphs.

- Teach the learners how to write different kinds of texts

Teaching a ‘neutral’ general purpose form of written expression is not enough. Learners should be able to use appropriate register, style and genre depending on whom they are writing and for what purpose.

- Make writing tasks realistic and relevant

Often writing tasks *lack reality* because they are not written to or for somebody. Besides, teachers react more as judges than as genuine readers. So, it is important that writing is a relevant practice to the students, which means that it has to be connected to their personal life and experiences.

- Integrate writing with other skills

Where possible writing activities should be introduced as natural derivation from the use of other skills so that writing can be perceived by learners as a real activity

- Use a variety of techniques and practice formats

This is an important element because learners get easily bored with the same type of activity.

Besides, in terms of developing writing skills, we cannot be sure how effective techniques are.

- Provide appropriate support

Guidance should be tempered with opportunities for free expression. Pair and group work could also be considered.

- Be sympathetic

Teachers should not surrender to their role as ‘judges’, except when writing is being tested or examined. There is a natural inclination to concentrate on what is wrong in a piece of writing, but we should perhaps look not so much at what learners have failed to achieve but rather at what they have succeeded in doing.

### 3.6 Working with short stories

Lazar (1993) describes some guidelines of very useful activity to be used with literary texts. Although these activities are especially designed for working with short stories, they include many excellent ideas that can be used when dealing with all kinds of texts. For instance, they could be used with novels as well, if teachers manage to cope with the length of the text (assigning reading at home as homework) with the volume of unfamiliar words (helping students to familiarize with the vocabulary) and adapting those activities which work well with short stories.

#### - Pre-reading activities (p. 84)

##### 1. Helping students with cultural background

- a. Reading or listening comprehension about the author's life or historical and cultural background of the story
  - b. Involve the students in a mini project on the social or historical background to the story that can be presented as a talk, essay, or slides
  - c. Prediction about the genre
  - d. Discussion about events in the students' country dating the period of the story.
- Cultural or historical background comparison

##### 2. Stimulating student interest in the story

- a. Making prediction about the story using inputs from the book, the cover, the title, etc.
- b. Group discussion about what the title of the story suggests
- c. Prediction about the story based on reading the first paragraph only.
- d. Prediction about the story based on a few words or sentences selected by the teacher from the story.
- e. General discussion questions about some of the themes which occur in the story.

### 3. Pre-teaching vocabulary

- a. Brainstorming a lexical set which is relevant to the story. For example, legal vocabulary in a crime story
- b. Matching important words in the story with their dictionary definitions.

#### - While-reading activities (p. 85)

##### 1. Helping students to understand the plot

- a. Asking students questions to check they have understood the gist of the story.
- b. Students write a summary of the plot in 20/50 words (depending on the length of the story or extract). Then they write another summary in 50/100 words and see what they have added.
- c. Students provide 'titles' for each paragraph
- d. Students are given a series of 'jumbled' sentences which summarize the plot, and they have to re-order them.
- e. Sentence completion activities (i.e., students are given the beginning of a sentence about the story which they then complete) This a way to help them to understand 'cause-effect' relationship within the story.
- f. Students are given three slightly different summaries. They have to decide which is the best one.

##### 2. Helping students to understand the characters

- a. Students choose from a list of adjectives which ones are most appropriate for describing a particular character
- b. Students rank the characters in the story according to certain traits; for example, which character is the most or least active, passive, aggressive, gentle, decisive, etc.
- c. Students write 'references' for different characters as if they were applying for a particular job.



### 3. Helping students with difficult vocabulary

- a. Give the text to one student or group of students in advance. Let them look up any difficult words in the dictionary and prepare a glossary for the others.
- b. Provide multiple choice questions to encourage the guessing of meaning from context.
- c. Provide definitions for certain words in the text – students match word to definition.

### 4. Helping students with style and language

- a. Close textual analysis of a section of the text
- b. Using a section of the text to focus on a particular grammatical problem that students may have; for example, blanking out all verbs forms in a section of the text and asking students to supply the correct tenses. The “students’ version” is then compared with the original one, and their stylistic differences discussed.

## - Post-Reading Activities (p. 86)

### 1. Helping students to make interpretations of the text

- a. Providing students with different critical interpretations of the story which they then discuss.
- b. Provide general questions to ‘debate’, focusing on any contentious point of the story.
- c. Asking students to note down any lexical area which might take on a symbolic meaning in the story (e.g., darkness might be a kind of metaphor for death in a particular story). Students then speculate about possible symbolic associations for these sets.

### 2. Understanding narrative point of view

- a. Students write diary entries or a letter describing the events of the story, as if they were one of the characters in the story.

- b. If the story is written by a first-person narrator, then students write a brief character description of the narrator based on the evidence in the text.
3. Follow-up writing activities
  - a. Writing a few paragraphs using certain stylistic features of the story.
  - b. Writing a review of the story.
4. Follow-up fluency practice
  - a. Reading and discussion of critical literary writings about the author of the story or his or her work in general.
  - b. Roleplay or acting out of a scene from the story.
  - c. Critical discussion or debate about the worldview of values which seem to be depicted in the text.

### 3.7 Working with poetry

As stated before, there are currently several scholars investigating the use of poetry writing among L2 students (Hanauer, 2010; Nicholes, 2016; Lida 2010; Liao, 2016) to develop language skills, creativity and self-awareness. To do so, these scholars invite their students to produce poetry as writers not just use it as readers. However, before reaching the status of writers it is important to expose them to some poetry reading, so that they can develop the necessary “literary competence” needed to be able to produce poems on their own. Nevertheless, there are many recurrent remarks against the use of poetry in the L2 classroom (Lazar, 1993), as reported by teachers (p. 99):

- Use of non-standard form may confuse students
- Students don't read poetry in their own language
- The syllabus is very demanding there is no time to play with poetry
- Reading poetry is a specialized activity
- It is too difficult to understand

These remarks focus on the negative side of using poetry, however, these elements can be dealt with in a positive way. For instance, the uncertainty produced by non-standard form or hidden meaning may help students in coping with frustration in real conversations, making them more aware of language and developing their “interpretative abilities” (Lazar, 1993, p. 100). Besides, very often teachers have a top-down approach when using literary texts, and students have become familiar with expressions like “what the author wants to say” while searching the correct interpretation of the text or poem (Aoki, 2017). This approach is the opposite of communicative language teaching and learning, so, if well used, poetry can help students to explore meaning on their own. As Lazar suggests (1993, p. 101), having students dealing with poetry can be exploited as a chance for teachers to “gently lead students towards making interpretations of their own”. Teachers should facilitate the discovery of the underlying meaning of a poem by inviting students to use interpretative strategies such as:

- speculating about the symbolic meaning of key words,
- involving students’ own interests and experience at all stages of the lesson, to make the poem relevant to their own life,
- avoiding degenerating the discussion of the language of a poem to a mere sterile linguistic exercise,
- accepting that there is not just one exclusive interpretation of a poem but meaning may change from reader to reader.
- giving them information about the historical and cultural background if needed,

As Lazar (1993, p. 98) says it is undeniable that poetry poses some difficulties due to the free and the creative way the language is used. This is a list of things poets do when they write poems:

- reorganize syntax
- invent their own vocabulary
- mix registers
- create their own punctuation
- use archaism and dialects
- generate metaphors
- use pattern sounds and order rhythms

Although these elements are not specific characteristic of poetry (they are also used in all areas of communication such as: advertising, colloquial speech, political slogan, children’s songs, etc.), “it is probably true to say that poetry employs a higher concentration of such devices or effects than other forms of discourse” (Lazar 1993, p. 98). It is useful to give students tools to deal with the difficulties posed by poems. Let’s consider metaphors, they are comparisons or a connection between things which are usually different from each other. Students may have difficulties in associating dissimilar objects or concepts. Sometimes this difficulty may be due to cultural convention differences among societies. For instance, a red rose may be associated with love and passion in British society, but students from other societies may have other kind of associations related to the same flower. In this case, it is important to find a balance between the students’ interpretations and the symbolic meaning that members of the society share with the author of the poem (Lazar 1993, p. 106).

Lazar (1993) suggests a checklist made of questions teachers should ask themselves (p. 128):

#### 1. The background to the poem

To make sense of the poem do the students need to know about:

- Any cultural or historical information?
- The collection from which the poem is taken?
- The author’s life or other works?
- What genre the poem is or to what literary movement it belongs?

#### 2. The language of the poem

Do you need to help the students with:

- Any unusual language in the poem which stretches the norms or rules of language use?
- Any unfamiliar words, phrases, grammatical constructions, or syntactic features?
- Any important discoursal or formal features of the poem (e.g., rhyming, repetitions of certain lines or conformity to set genres such as the sonnet, etc.)?
- Any ambiguities in meaning (e.g., multiple meanings for a particular word, puns, etc.)?
- Any figurative or symbolic meanings?
- Any figures of speech or rhetorical devices in the poem (e.g., apostrophe)?

- Any aural or musical qualities in the poem (e.g., alliteration, assonance, etc.)?

### 3. Motivating and involving students

- How can the theme or topic of the poem be made relevant to the students' own experience?
- How does the use of a poem in class mesh with the requirement of the syllabus and the students' perceptions of their own needs? Can the poem be exploited in such a way that both demands are met?
- What activities will most suit the learning styles of the students? Being asked to discuss the poem in a very open-ended way? Being given only two set of interpretations of the poem from which to choose? Being asked to read a lot of background to the literary period? Being asked to recite the poem aloud?

#### *The Methods of Poetic (Auto) Ethnography*

Hanauer (2021) work is based on a methodology that can be used as a way to teach writing according to a holistic approach which puts the learner at the core of his/her learning experience. In this case, instead of working with famous poems written by well-known authors, the learners themselves would produce poetry according to their life experiences, needs and creativity. This kind of methodology is fully described in "Poetic writing research: the history, methods and outcomes of poetic (auto) ethnography" by David Hanauer (2021). The scholar investigates the use of writing poetry as a 'research method to explore lived experiences' (p. 421).

This is an art-based approach in which the experiences of the learners are at the center of the methodology in a process that involves language learning, improvements of writing skills as well as self-awareness and self-reflections. Before him, other scholars have carried out studies in the field of poetry writing as a research method.

In 1983, Muriel Rukeyser (as cited in Hanauer, 2021) described the Hawk's Nest Tunnel disaster in which one thousand miners died of cancer due to the bad working condition. After interviewing several victims and managers she wrote the *Book of the Dead* according to the ethnographic poetic methodology, which is regarded as the first attempt of written poetic enquiry (Prendergast, 2009 as cited in Hanauer, 2021). Probably

the best-known scholar of poetry writing as a research method is Laurel Richardson (1990, as cited in Hanauer, 2021), who used poetry writing to present data. Furman (2004, as cited in Hanauer, 2021) used poetry writing as a source of personal data to describe and explore his father's cancer. The first collection of poetic enquiries was published in 2009 by Prendergast (as cited in Hanauer, 2021), in which she describes three types of authorial voices:

- Vox Theoria, poems written in response to literature
- Vox Autobiographia / Autoethnographia, poems written from notes, journals, or autobiographical writings
- Vox Participare, poems written after a collection of data through an interview to the participants or constructed by them.

The novelty of Prendergast work is also in the fact that she assigns aesthetic qualities to the poetry produced for the research. David Hanauer (2010, as cited in Hanauer, 2021), develops these studies on poetic enquiry establishing a protocol for the collection of ethnographic writings. In fact, over a period of 6 years he collected data on poetic enquiry in a study-abroad program. In the multilingual writing class students were involved in producing books based on autobiographical poetry addressing significant moments of their lives. Hanauer (2021) suggests three different approaches:

- Poetic Inquiry
- Poetic Ethnography
- Poetic Auto-Ethnography

Poetic Inquiry is a process in which the facilitator supports a process of poetry writing in a group of participants defined by their personal experience or phenomenon of interest.

Poetic Ethnography is focused on life narrative based on moments of epiphany elicited by the participants and followed by a thematic analysis and poetic graphic representation as a poem.

Poetic Auto-Ethnography uses written poetry as data to explore an experience of researcher-poet. As Hanauer (2017, p. 426) says, "These methods of poetry research writing consist of ways of eliciting detail-rich memories of an experience and then accurately transmitting these memories in a poetic form". The core of this

autoethnographic approach is the emphasis on epiphany based on sensory moments of experience. According to the scholars who foster this approach a moment of crisis or a traumatic experience can be revived and understood through the creative process of writing poetry. For instance, Gallardo (2009, as cited in Hanauer, 2021) used the autoethnography approach to explore depression both as a personal condition and as the experience of living with someone suffering from depression. Hanauer (2020), on the other hand, explored the Holocaust and the legacy and suffering burden that was left on his family because of the killing of his grandparents by the Nazi, and in 2014 (as cited in Hanauer, 2021) he used it to explore the experiences of a U.S. soldier who fought in the Second Iraq War. Ida (2016, 2018 as cited in Hanauer, 2021) investigated the responses of his students to the earthquake in Japan in 2011. Samah Elbelazi (2017, as cited in Hanauer, 2021) used the poetic ethnographic approach to describe the life of three generations of Muslim women of Libya under monarchy, dictatorship, and revolution. Park (2013, as cited in Hanauer 2021) used the autoethnographic approach to explore her own childhood as a migrant from Korea to the U.S.

Denzin (2014, as cited in Hanauer, 2021) says that this kind of poetic representations aim at changing social perceptions bringing more awareness in life experience to have a more inclusive society. On the other hand, Kidd and Castano (2013, as cited in Hanauer 2021, p.435) claim that “literary reading which activate theory of mind responses leads to increased social critical abilities.” In this process of self-discovery, language learning and social awareness, emotions play a very important role. In fact, as Hanauer (2021) says, through the emotional response to poetry the reader can empathize with the events and the situations described in the poem.

### 3.8 The lesson plan

As discussed before, implementing the use of literature in the L2 classroom involves a reflection on several aspects of language teaching. Once again, Lazard (1993) comes in support to the teacher offering a series of questions and food for thoughts for self-assessment before, during and after the delivery of the lesson according to different aims. These are the questions any teacher should focus on before the lesson (pp. 170-171).

- What are the aims of the lesson?
- What kind of text has been chosen and why?
- What tasks and activities have been devised and why?
- What opportunities have been provided for the students to participate and respond personally to the text?

Other questions should be the focus of the teacher's attention during and after the lesson:

- What evidence was there that students have found the text interesting and relevant/boring and irrelevant?
- What evidence was there that the tasks and activities devised helped students to understand and enjoy the text?
- Were there any examples of students participating and responding personally to the text? What helped them to do so?
- Were the aims of the lesson achieved? Why?
- What was that the teacher learned from the lesson? How could the way literature have been used in the lesson be improved/developed in future lessons?

Apart from these general questions Lazard (1993, p.171) also provides a series of self-observation and self-assessing questions for teachers to use when dealing with specific issues.

Experimenting with different approaches

Before the lesson

- What texts have been chosen and why?
- What approaches and why?
- Stages of activities
- Aims of the lesson
- Connection between the lesson and the general scheme work. What lesson preceded it and what lesson will follow it.

During and after the lesson



- Was the text (s) suitable for the students?
- Was the approach appropriate?
- Where the tasks and activities staged appropriately?
- What have students learned from the lesson?
- What are the plans for the next lesson and why?
- What has the teacher learned from the lesson? What activities, ideas, techniques, procedures can be used in the next lesson?

### Dealing with linguistic problems

#### Before the lesson

- Note down any linguistic problems students may have with the text chosen
- Think about how to deal with this kind of problems

#### During the lesson

- Note down any evidence of linguistic problems the students have for example in:
  - a. Understanding the meaning of a word or a phrase
  - b. Understanding and appreciating textual ambiguities
  - c. Understanding and appreciating any figurative meanings in the text
  - d. Understanding and appreciating any rhetorical devices
  - e. Coping with unusual language use (e.g., archaism, dialect, etc.)
- Note down any strategies used to help students with these difficulties, for example.
  - a. Encouraging students to use dictionaries and glossaries
  - b. Encouraging students to infer meaning from context
  - c. Explanation
  - d. Translation
  - e. Providing exercises and activities which explore the language

After the lesson

- What have teacher and students learned? Are there other ways of helping students with linguistic difficulties when using a literary text?

Dealing with cultural problems

Before the lesson

- Make a note of any cultural difficulties that students may experience when reading the text
- How can they be helped in overcoming such difficulties?

During or after the lesson

- Note down any evidence that students were having cultural difficulties with the text
- What techniques or strategies were used to help students overcome these problems?
- What other techniques or strategies can be used for helping students cope with cultural aspects in the text?

Involving students personally in the reading

Before the lesson

- What text has been chosen and why?
- Note down how students will be involved personally so that they can discuss their opinions and feelings about the literary text.

During the lesson

- Record under two headings how the teacher involved the students personally and gave them opportunities to discuss their own feelings and opinions

What the teacher did	Student's response

After the lesson

Look at the note taken during the lesson and think about these questions:

- What evidence was there that the text chosen in this lesson was relevant and appropriate to the students?

- What evidence was there that the tasks and activities devised by the teacher encourage students' participation and involvement in the lesson?
- What other ideas or techniques can be used to encourage students' participation and involvement in a lesson using literary text?

### Guiding students towards an interpretation

#### Before the lesson

- What text has been chosen and why? Note down any problems students might have in making an interpretation of the text.
- Note down any strategies that could be used to help students to make their own interpretation of the text.

#### During the lesson

	TASK/METHODS	STUDENTS RESPONSE
1. The teacher guided the students towards a basic comprehension of the text.		
2. The teacher encouraged the students to draw on their own knowledge and experiences when making sense of the text.		
3. The teacher encouraged the students to infer unstated meanings and 'read between the lines' when necessary.		

4. The teacher encouraged students to reach their own interpretation of the text rather than relying on a “correct” or standard one.		
5. The teacher encouraged students to provide reasoned arguments for their interpretation.		
6. Any other ways?		

After the lesson

Reflections about these questions based on the notes taken during the lesson:

- What evidence was there in the lesson that students were helped and encouraged to reach their own interpretations of the text?
- What techniques or activities seemed helpful for doing this?
- Are there any other activities, tasks, or techniques for fostering student self-confidence in interpreting literary texts?

Providing useful background information

Before the lesson

- What background information is planned to be presented in this lesson?
- How is it going to be presented?

During the lesson

Record how the background information is presented in the lesson. Fill in the following table while observing:

Table n. 5 Observation activity

Background information presented	Techniques/Method for presenting it	Students' response

After the lesson

Look at the notes and think about these questions:

- Was there any evidence that the background information presented was relevant/irrelevant to students and helped them making the text accessible/inaccessible?
- Was there any evidence that the way in which the background was presented was appropriate to both the text and the students?
- How did the students seem to react to the background information provided in the lesson? Why?
- How could background information be used next time? In the same way or differently? Write down any other ideas for how it could be used in the literature class.

All the above-mentioned observation tasks and templates created by Lazar (1993, p. 170-175) have been duly reported here because they can be very useful tools in any empirical approach. In fact, besides being very useful for self-evaluation, they also offer food for thought at every step of the lesson or syllabus and can be regarded as guidelines to keep in mind when planning to use literary text in the L2 classroom. They offer different perspectives according to the aims of the lesson and address the main issues of dealing with literary texts, namely: choosing the right approach, methodology, linguistic problems, cultural problems, students' engagement, students' comprehension and meaning mediation, quantity and quality of background information provided.

Lazar (1993) also includes students in his observations. He suggests interviewing the students that is going to be observed according to the following scheme (p.176-177):

- Name
- Nationality
- Mother tongue

- Level
- Reasons for learning English
- Number of years spent studying English
- Hobbies/Interests
- Favorite type of reading matter in the mother tongue
- Favorite authors in mother tongue (if applicable)
- Knowledge of literature in mother tongue
- Experience of reading in English
- Favorite authors in English (if applicable)
- Interest in reading/using literature in English
- Areas an English student most want to improve (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, reading, listening, etc.)

When observing a student in the literature class, the following information should be noted down during the lesson:

1. Evidence that the text seems relevant to the student's interests.
2. Evidence that the task and activities seem relevant and challenging to the student.
3. Evidence of the difficulties with:
  - Linguistic features of the text
  - Cultural aspects of the text
  - Literary aspect of the text (for example, rhetorical devices, figurative language, etc.)
  - Other aspect of the text
4. To what extent did the student participate in the lesson? Why?
5. What did the students learn in the lesson?
6. Write down any ideas for ways in which the teacher could make the lesson using literature if the greatest benefit to the students. Think about the skills practiced, the text used, the type of tasks and activities, the overall approach to using literature, etc.

Finally, Lazar (1993) suggests using a Self-Access Worksheet to be used by students to collect information about the text used in the classroom. He suggests two different worksheets one for novels, thrillers, short stories, etc. and another one about plays. In this case, the worksheet reported is the one about novels and short stories (p.186).

#### Facts about the book

- Title:
- Author:
- Type of book/genre:
- When published:

#### Content

1. Setting (where the story takes place)
2. When is it set?
3. The plot: This is a story about....
4. Characters: write down the names of the main characters, the role of each one in the story, and 2 or 3 adjectives to describe them.
5. Message does the book seem to have a 'message'? If so, what is it?

#### Language

Write down 3 or 4 words, phrases, or expressions you have learnt from reading this book.

#### Opinion

1. Choose from the following adjectives to describe the book:

Lighthearted	Gripping	Moving	Tedious	Gloomy
Amusing	Thought-provoking	Compelling	Well-crafted	Depressing

What other adjectives could you use to describe it?

2. Would you recommend this book? Why?
3. Does this book remind you of any writers or stories in your own language? If so, what?

Although the worksheets refer to full length short stories it could be easily adapted for evaluating short text and excerpt (songs, brief articles, extract from novels or short stories.)

### 3.9 Literature and language skills

Meaning negotiation, reading, speaking, writing, listening

It is undeniable that, as Widdowson (2013, p.74) says “whatever benefits are received through a study of literature, the means whereby these benefits are bestowed must relate in some measure to an awareness of the subtleties of language use.” Widdowson stresses the importance of language as the fundamental component of literature saying that the concepts expressed in literature are not distinguishable from their verbal expression. In fact, while a summary of a scientific report can be still regarded as a scientific statement, the summary of a poem on the contrary, cannot be regarded as literature because literature is defined using language of the writers. It is possible to say that the first skill to be developed when approaching literature is the ability to interpret “the unique language use of literary discourse” (Widdowson, 2013, p. 74). To develop this skill students should have the chance to infer meaning on their own being guided towards techniques of individual interpretations rather than passively studying critics and commentaries. According to Widdowson (2013) students can be guided in doing so when the literary message is not separated from the discourse. This way students, especially L2 students, can be able to make the right choices when it comes to give specific meaning to words, expressions, idioms, and linguistic features in general, because they take into consideration the context, the discourse developed by the text as a whole and they rely on their own human experience. In this sense, critics and teachers are there only to offer guidance and support rather than ready-made meanings to be applied to the text. However, as Widdowson says (2013), recognition of meaning does not happen by simple exposure, so teaching stylistics and the way language functions must be part of the process too.

Teaching stylistics is also a way to integrate the two different aspects of literature: literary studies for cultural knowledge and literary studies as a linguistic subject. English language and English literature are usually taught in isolation one from the other and the consequences are sometimes unfortunate. As the scholar points out, when literature is taught for cultural reasons in the L2 classroom, often the knowledge of the



language of the students is so limited that teachers attempting to teach literary classics use translations and paraphrases to overcome the linguistic barriers. The experience of literature becomes this way just a set of information given and received without engagement. This is very true in Italian high schools, where students are supposed to start studying masterpieces of English literature regardless of their real knowledge of the language, often producing a feeling of frustration in both teachers and students. To avoid that, Widdowson (2013) suggests that literature should be taught as a form of discourse, and its textual feature should be chosen carefully according to the students' knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. This should be done in a comparative way allowing students to understand the different usage of the language depending on the form of discourse (conventional, non-conventional, formal, informal, advertising, poetry, songs, etc.).

One of the main reasons for using literature in the language classroom is that it can engage students through interaction with the text in relation to personal experience. As above mentioned, Widdowson (1986, p. 14) says that it is through this interaction that students can infer meaning. In fact, in literature the meaning is there, within the text itself, but most of the times it requires an effort, attention, the research of clues to be able to make sense out of it. This kind of meaning negotiation is an essential part of communication and a "crucial factor in the development of language learning abilities" (Brumfit & Carter, 1986, p. 14). The challenge included in this effort of finding meaning is stimulating, and therefore engaging, for the students. So, literature is real language in specific contexts which offer the readers content to be explored and discussed. What is said and how it is said are closely intertwined and foster the active role of the reader/students. In this sense, it is very easy to develop group discussions about the content of the text or about its possible interpretations. In the meaning negotiation process students may have come to different conclusions, based on their personal knowledge of the world, literature, and their personal life experiences, and this can give an added value to the debate within the class, especially in multicultural classes. However, even before starting discussing meaning the first skill involved in literary texts is reading, that is where the meaning negotiation process begins.

Littlewood's five perspectives, mentioned before, (1986, p. 177) can be taken as different points of view for the use of literature in the language classroom in connection with the linguistic skill and language competences to be developed.

1. The first level perspective is language as a system of structure. At this level literature can provide language structures in use which are the basis for practicing language skills using reading comprehension, grammatical analysis, explanation, and exercises.
2. The second level perspective is language in a specific stylistic variety. To reach this level students must be able to distinguish stylistic variation. At this stage, literature is a vehicle for learning language varieties. For instance, formal written register, informative style, poetic style, non-standard form, regional dialects and so on.
3. The third level perspective is language as expression of the superficial subject matter. This is where literature can really make the difference from other kinds of simplified texts or texts contrived for language-teaching purposes. This is because language teaching materials and textbooks include texts which are isolated from real contexts. In the language classroom attempts to compensate the absence of real events by talking about them, by using role-plays or make-believe to simulate them and by using reading material or literature to represent them.

This major problem can be overcome by using literary texts in which language creates its own context. In fact, the world created in literature is the foreign world, and literature then becomes a way to know this foreign world through the eyes of the native speakers, a means of access to the foreign culture. In the transition from receptive to productive skills, this stage may offer students the basis for “recording” and “reporting”.

4. The fourth level perspective is the symbolization of the author’s vision. At this level appreciation goes beyond language and plot and penetrates the theme of the work. At this level, discussion may be developed for the benefit of the students’ speaking skills, as well as written essays where they can express their ideas. At this stage the focus is on productive skills and students can be given the basis for ‘generalizing’ and ‘theorizing’.
5. The fifth level perspective is the history of literature. At this level, the literary work is analyzed in its context as part of the history of literature.

Boyle (1986, p. 201) defines some of the activities that can be used in order to test language with students of literature in a ESL situation. Since the focus of the testing is on language, these activities also fit well in those contexts where ESL students use literature to develop language skills.

Reading skills. Developing reading skills is a strategic element when using literature in the ESL classroom.

There are a series of activities that can be done.

- Reading Comprehension. The most common activity is a reading comprehension meaning a series of question aiming at investigating if the students have clearly understood the story or the excerpt.
- Skimming and Scanning. The literature students (but this is relevant to all kind of students too) must be able to discriminate in reading between facts that are not essential and others which are of central or symbolic significance. In this case, the basic reading skills of skimming and scanning must be part of the techniques used when approaching both literary and non-literary texts. Skimming is done to grasp the general meaning of the text, while scanning is done in order to get specific information in the text.
- Cloze test. This kind of test can be very flexible because they allow to create blanks to be filled in by the students according to the decision of the teacher based on the students' needs. Vocabulary, verbs, prepositions or simply deleting words mechanical (one every ten or so, for instance).

#### Writing skills

- Vocabulary. Using literature can help students to expand their vocabulary. For instance, when talking about emotions students could be asked to find six words within a range of that broad feeling and then use them in a sentence. For example:
  - ANGRY: *racing/cross/peevd/annoyed/furious/fuming.*
  - JOY: *happy/glad/overjoyed/pleased/cheerful/delighted*
  - FEAR: *terrified/afraid/dreading/apprehensive/anxious/nervous*
  - LOVE: *adore/love/be fond of/be attached to/be devoted to/be infatuated with*

This kind of activity could be done using pictures expressing complex emotions such as the Mona Lisa, for instance.

- Grammar. Grammar focused activities can be carried out with sentences from the text to be completed at different levels of difficulties.

- Pieces of writing. This can include composition and free response to a text.

#### Listening skills

- Recorded Drama. After a play has been listened to a series of questions could be asked about the content, such as, what was the play really about? Questions could be more specific about one or more characters.
- Story. A story can be read and then students can be asked a global response: briefly retelling the story, followed by more specific questions on what title to give to story, for instance.
- Poetry. The activity suggested is to put the poem into “plain English”. Another activity is to test students’ ability to appreciate the way poetry charges words with different levels of meaning. They can also be asked the meaning of metaphors. This kind of test can be carried out also as a reading activity although poetry is essentially an oral exercise.
- Dictation. A plain dictation can be done with essays for instance. Another version could be reading the students a play and then ask them to fill in the missing dialogue.

#### Speaking skills.

- Reading aloud. Students should read literature with some sort of dramatic attitude reproducing feelings or emotions.
- Conversation/Discussion. In ideal situation this activity should allow teachers to observe two students conversing, maybe after watching a play they could be asked their opinion about it. Another activity could be about the life, or the work of a famous literary figure presented by pictures or slides.

In conclusion, as Adeyanju says (1978) we should give literature the right value also in the ESL classroom, and teacher should become aware of that value. In fact, as we have seen, literature can have significance not only *per se* but also in the process of learning language skills.

### 3.10 Literature and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills

In the early 90' the term “21st century skills” started to appear together with the term “knowledge economy”. In a fast-changing world, new skills and new knowledge were required to face a wide range of new jobs involving workers dealing more with ideas, people, or systems than with physical things. To be able to cope with the challenges of an increasingly complex working environment, students were asked to focus on new skills called the 21st century skills. These skills are divided into three main areas: Learning and innovation skills, digital literacy skills, and personal and professional life skills. Among them the more important ones are the so called 4Cs: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, which are included under the area of learning and innovation. These competences are different from the competences taught in traditional education, in fact they are not based on content knowledge, but may be considered transversal, multifunctional, and independent of context. The aim is to help students to develop practical skills able to support them in making informed choices about themselves and the world around them. “Approaching the 21st century skills within the framework of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) enables students to make informed choices and take responsible actions to foster environmental integrity, economic viability, and a more equitable society for present and future generations.” (Gonzalez-Salamanca, et al., 2020, p. 1)

#### Multiculturalism

*Cultural Awareness* is the title of the book written by Barry Tomalin and Susan Stempleski (1993), and it is also the term they use “to describe sensitivity to the impact of culturally-induced behavior on language use and communication” (p. 5). The book is a collection of activities aiming and developing knowledge of cultural elements present in the target language. In the opinion of the authors, the need to involve cross-cultural studies in the language classroom is justified by several reasons: the increase of number of ESL students from Asia; the influence of immigration on curricula; the increase of interest in the linguistic field of pragmatics, which means the ways in which language is influenced by social context; the study of non-verbal aspect of communication.

Although the book was first published in 1993, these reasons are still valid in our globalized world where different cultures are often close together, and the need of understanding each other is higher than before.

According to the authors cultural awareness has three main qualities:

- awareness of one's own culturally induced behavior
- awareness of the culturally induced behavior of others
- ability to explain one's own cultural standpoint

In the past decades the study of the target language culture basically meant the studying habits, institutions, way of life, history of British citizens, which in Italian high school system is called "Lingua e Civiltà Inglese". Tomalin and Stempleski's focus on cultural related activities aiming at teaching the basic elements of British, American and Canadian life and institutions in order to foster cross-cultural education. They claim that culture can be expressed by three main categories.

- Products: literature, folklore, art, music, artefacts
- Ideas: beliefs, values, and institutions
- Behaviors: customs, habits, dress, food, leisure

The first two categories, products, and ideas, represent "Big C" culture, while the last one, behavior, is "little c" culture.

Ned Seelye (1984), provides the guidelines for the development of cross-cultural skills:

1. To help students to develop an understanding of the fact that all people exhibit culturally conditioned habits
2. To help students to develop an understanding that social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence influence the way people speak and behave.
3. To help students to become more aware of conventional behavior in common situations on the target culture.
4. To help students to increase their awareness of the cultural connotations of words and phrases in the target language.
5. To help students to develop the ability to evaluate and refine generalizations about the target culture, in terms of supporting evidence.
6. To help students to develop the necessary skills to locate and organize information about the target culture.

7. To stimulate students' intellectual curiosity about the target culture, and to encourage empathy towards its people.

Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) suggest using these seven principles as instructions to keep in mind when teaching cross-cultural awareness in the L2 classroom. Besides, they also add five practical teaching principles:

1. Access the culture through the language being taught.
2. Make the study of cultural behavior an integral part of each lesson.
3. Aim for students to achieve the socio-economic competence which they feel they need.
4. Aim for all levels to achieve cross-cultural understanding - awareness of their own culture, as well as that of the target language.
5. Recognize that not all teaching about culture implies behavior changes, but merely an awareness and tolerance of the cultural influences affecting one's own and others' behavior.

In their article "Is Literature Language? Or is Language Literature?" Burke and Brumfit (1986, p. 173) claim that "we can never divorce literature entirely from concepts... nor can we separate literature entirely from our natural awareness of linguistic form;" this seems to imply that the language, literature and culture are so intertwined that is almost impossible to separate them and therefore we should foster the use of literature to develop not only linguistic skills but also a series of soft skills required by our modern world. In talking about the aims of the language teacher they state that these aims go beyond mere language and fall into three main categories:

1. The promotion of skills, such as: Literacy and oracy, critical and analytical ability, social skills, use of imagination.
2. Encouragement of affective states and attitudes, such as: ethical and humanitarian attitudes, respect for the imagination and the intellect, respect for literary and cultural traditions
3. Provision for information, such as knowledge about literature, knowledge about language (in a wide sense: the English language and language as a human phenomenon).

In reference to multiculturalism McKay (1986, p. 193) claims that “literature may work to promote a greater tolerance for cultural differences for both the teacher and the student”. Also, Northrop Frye (1964, p. 77, as cited in McKay, 1986) supports literature to develop tolerance. He describes the study of literature this way, “So you may ask what the use is of studying the world of imagination where anything is possible and anything can be assumed, where there are no rights or wrongs, and all arguments are equally good. One of the most obvious uses, I think, is its encouragement of tolerance” (p. 193).

Braj B. Kachru, describes the literatures in English of non-native writers as a resource for language teaching (1986) pointing out the importance of broadening the notion of English literature to a wider idea termed “literature in English” (p. 142), to include non-native English writers. He suggests that a syllabus based on non-native writers should consider these elements:

- Variety: including several different countries to expose students to Indian English, Nigerian English, Singapore English and so on...
- Register: such as religious, political, journalistic styles
- Author: the style of different author
- Text: characteristics elements of specific text compared to other

Kachru also underlines the need to contextualize non-native language within the un-English culture, which he calls “nativization” (Kachru, 1980, as cited in Kachru, 1986, p. 143) This process of linguistic nativization develops together with the process of acculturation of English through devices such as:

- Lexical innovation: borrowing of local words into English and hybridization of words from two distinct lexical sources (for instance *policewala* for policeman)
- Translation equivalence:
- Contextual re-definition of lexical items of English in new contexts
- Rhetorical and functional styles

Kachru claims that the use of non-native writers can be useful to provide students with linguistic and cross-cultural explanations to show how English has been modified in non-Western contexts and how these



non-standard forms affect intelligibility, comprehensibility and interpretability and what is meant by “acculturation” of English in non-English social contexts.

Vincent (1986, p. 213) claims that the growth of Commonwealth writers in English provides plenty of accessible reading material for secondary schools overseas and that the widening of English literature to include literature in English has opened a new promising route.

However, in 1986, describing the national school system in Kenya and the teaching of English literature in his country, Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1986) claimed that learning literature would basically mean learning about British imperialist literature, which would bring African students to be confronted with European image in history. He says, “Our children are made to look, analyze, and evaluate the world as made seen by Europeans” (p. 224). In this situation children gain a distorted image of themselves, and their history as interpreted by European imperialist literature. They see Prospero perspective but not Caliban’s, they see Crusoe point of view but do not see Friday’s struggle against his oppressor. Therefore, it is important to create a syllabus that is inclusive and respectful of different perspectives and ways of living.

### *Critical thinking*

Critical thinking is one of the most important skills among the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and literature can be very helpful in developing a critical attitude in the readers’ meaning mediation with the literary texts.

Lazar (1993) claims that literature is very good source of texts which can help students/readers to develop their abilities to infer meaning and make interpretations.

As above mentioned, it is possible to teach culture through literary texts. However, as Brumfit and Carter (1986) state, it is not possible to state that “literature offers pictures of foreign life, or samples of typical excellent language” (p. 28), because there is some sort of distortion, both in language use and in the representation of reality, due to the creativity that writers use to express their vision. It is crucial for students/readers to develop together with “literary competence”, also a level of critical thinking that allows them to grasp the difference between what can be considered as a representation of specific social and cultural context and what is not, what kind of perspective of the world is the writer offering and for what purpose. As Lazard (1993) says “our response to the cultural aspect of literature should always be a critical one, so that the

underling of cultural and ideological assumptions in the text are not merely accepted and reinforced, but are questioned, evaluated and, if necessary, subverted” (p. 17). In fact, literary texts have several levels of meaning and the students are asked to actively participate in making sense beyond the ambiguities. They can do that discussing their interpretations in pairs or in groups and providing evidence from the text in support of their ideas. This kind of activity can help developing the student’s ability to infer meaning, a very useful skill in life that can be used when they need to make an interpretation based on unstated evidence becoming able to make sense from complex contexts and situations.

### Self-awareness

As previously seen, Hanauer (2014) underpins the importance of the guiding L2 learners toward the discovery of their unique voice through the process of creative writing. In this sense, second language acquisition offers a great opportunity to teachers to guide learners through a process of self-discovery and the second language can be used as a medium for personal exploration and expression. The first step is to use simple techniques to recall personal memories in the minds of the learners inviting them to enliven through their senses an intense moment of their lives. The second step is to express that feeling in words describing the moment itself. Students should make a collection of such moments to figure out what is the essence of their life experience, or as Hanauer (2014, p.16). says, “what is it that is uniquely you?” In his intense article “Mourning writing,” Hanauer (2019) describes the mourning process related to the death of his father and the deep wounds that the Holocaust inflicted to his family. In his poetic autoethnography he talks about the fact that his father was given in adoption by his parents when he was just a kid, they did that to save him, but this produced a double conflict in the young boy. On one side, he felt abandoned and obsessed by the idea that his parents did not love him enough. On the other side, he felt guilty because his parents were killed by the Nazis while he managed to survive thanks to their brave gesture. Hanauer describes this process in detail, reporting the last conversation he had with his father just before he passed away and how he had to convince him that his parents had done the right things in separating him from them. In the article he also offers samples of the poems he wrote in that period. The poetic autoethnography follows these steps:

- Taking filed notes and reflective comments in a journal collecting events and thoughts

- Poetry writing, in parallel with the journal he committed himself to write poetry every few days to express the intense emotion of that period
- Poetic Autoethnographic writing concerning with the death of his father and the Holocaust legacy of his grandparents. Discussions were carried out with people who had access to relevant information about his family or were able to express, psychological, historical, and artistic considerations
- Final reflection and discussion, the poems were sent to readers and discussed for final modifications and decision to be made

This methodology is a movement that follows these steps:

1. very personal experiences and feelings
2. a more reflective response
3. Poetic focused description
4. Discussion with others

Although this process is aiming at healing, Hanuer says that in his case the healing was limited to the sense of relief he received from the knowledge that his father and grandparents lived again in the text and in the poems. However, the model can be replicated and used as a way of investigating pain and unsaid emotions of L2 learners and involve their own personal live in the process of learning a new language.

### Creativity

As Nicholes (2016, p. 2) claims “empirical exploration has established that L2 creative writing represents engaging and rewarding classroom activity”. In fact, his study aims at defining which kinds of creative writing assignments may be more or uniquely engaging. He underlines that creative writing in L2 classes offer several benefits for learners. Namely:

- creating potential literacy skills for academic writing
- being engaging and motivating
- raising awareness of the language semiotic values
- developing the uniqueness of the learners’ voice

The scholar (2016) also claims that students of creative writing feel more engaged and emotionally involved when they respond to autobiographical prompts. “The engagement writers feel for autobiographical creative writing is especially striking in terms of attentional focus and narrative presence (or the feeling of being there in the world being imagined)” (p.14).

In his book, *Poetry as research*, Hanauer (2010) explores the possibility of using poetry as a tool to develop self-exploration and creativity. To do that he suggests workshops aiming at developing knowledge of poetic genres through exercises of personal reflection and discussion. In this phase the focus would be on recall of personal experiences and self-analysis. “The aim is to produce self-understandings of what is important to them as human beings in the world and specifically and uniquely how they have experienced the world” (p. 9). The second phase would focus on understanding poetry through library research and analysis of poems. Another important aspect is that the instructor should not provide predefined definition of poetry or ready-made interpretations, the research is conducted by the students themselves in a constructivist approach, they choose the poems that are relevant to them for culture, content, and forms (this could be done in their first language). After this part of the process, they start experimenting with poetry writing about their personal life experiences. As described by the scholar, this process is divided into four steps (p.20):

- Activation, in which an experiential and/or associative process triggers the writing process.
- Discovery, in which the writer finds new underlying meanings and gives new directions to the emerging poem. During this stage the writer decides on the real meaning of the poem, its subject and communicative and emotional insight.
- Permutation, in which the poem develops through a series of rewritings.
- Finalization. Here the poet produces the last version of the poem. It is important to note that the two middle stages are not presented as linear by the participants.

## PART 2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

### Chapter 4 Research design

#### 4.1 Research design

At the base of using literary text is the creation of a syllabus to respond to the needs of the students. Brumfit and Carter (1986) state that is important to distinguish the pure literature syllabus, used for teaching just literature, and the syllabus for the teaching of language or of culture. The former, may involve the history of English literature and can have just informative purposes, or focus on language literary tradition in specific areas. The latter is used for linguistic purposes. In both cases a minimum level of linguistic competence is required (in this case study the threshold level is B1) to allow the students to respond adequately to the text.

Literary syllabi can be exploited in three different contexts:

- students working on literature in their mother tongue
- students with some literary knowledge coming from a country with a well-developed literary tradition and studying through a second or foreign language (as in the case of this study)
- students working through a second language whose culture can be very different from western Europe.

As mentioned before, students can appreciate the experience of literature and respond to the text only if they have adequate reading skills and comprehension fluency. Only with these pre-requisites the syllabus can develop in two stages:

- the “experience” of literature
- the “account for” the experience

As Brumfit and Carter (1986) say, literary texts must be “accessible for serious discussions and personal experience to a particular group of students” (p. 32). To do that the material selected should allow students to respond to texts without the mediation of the teacher. This way the interaction between students and the text can be spontaneous and free from imposition from outside.

These elements are equally valid regardless of the aim of the syllabus, weather it is used for teaching literature *per se*, or in a EFL/ESL classroom. In fact, literary should be considered “as an *attitude* to the text, rather than as a body of texts” (p. 33). This means that events, characters, or ideas expressed in the texts can be

related to the personal (and linguistic) needs of the students in the attempt to define themselves and understand the world, and this proves true especially with teenagers.

Littlewood (1986, p. 180) underlines the importance of selecting the suitable texts for specific classes and objectives and teachers can select materials according to his five level definitions of literary texts. At the level of literature as a linguistic structure, reading material should be of the appropriate level of difficulty and provide students with the structures they need to internalize. When facing variety of styles, at the second level, it is important to avoid archaic or highly formal varieties, favoring materials that provide links with everyday language. The third level, concerning subject matter plot and story, should have interest and relevance for the pupils, and they also should have adequate knowledge of the cultural background to be able to appreciate it. The fourth level concerns the theme of the work and the author's vision, and this stage it is crucial for the students to be able to go beyond the surface of the plot or story and understand the underlying meaning of what is displayed. So, teachers must make sure that the pupils are linguistically, intellectually, and motivationally ready to penetrate the deeper level and to cope with the idea that they find there. The fifth level, related to the history of literature, should be a criterion for selection only at advanced level of linguistic competences for the students to be able to appreciate the development of literary or intellectual movements through history.

Brumfit and Carter (1986), underline the fact that in high school and university syllabus around the world there is an issue of ethnocentric focus, which ends up in identifying "literature" with "English literature" (p. 19). This is certainly true for the Italian high schools, to which this study was originally related to. A typical "Liceo Classico" syllabus would normally include names such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Austen, Defoe, Dickens, Wordsworth, Shelley, Wilde, Conrad, Joyce, Woolf, Orwell and so on. Therefore, no space is usually given to authors coming from the Commonwealth area, names such as: Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, Raja Rao and even Salman Rushdie, cited by Brumfit and Carter (1986) would probably sound too exotic to be regarded as "English Literature" to the average Italian high school student. Another issue is that "contact literatures" may bring not only non-standard linguistic canon but also problems of interpretation connected to cultural references (from the Western point of view).

For this reason, the syllabus in this research, is a combination of both classical authors of English literature studied at high school, such as Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Dickens, Conrad, Orwell, Joyce, Woolf, and a more modern one as Rowling, together with American ones as Hemingway, Dickinson, Bradbury, Poe, Bukowski, Carver, Deitcher, De Lillo, and Afro-American as Maya Angelou, South African as Doris Lessing, Australians as Patrick White and Robert Dreier, Indian as Deepak Chopra, German as Eckhart Tolle, Canadian as Alice Munro. This variety shows the attempt to extend and apply the concept of “English literature” to a larger area of the world, and expose students to a wider range of cultures, genres and points of view. This list of authors is also completed by three essays taken from the internet and three songs by David Gilmour, Ed Sheeran, and Carla Bruni. An extension of the syllabus used in a university course includes also the very famous poem “The pool players. Seven at the Golden Shovel” by Afro-American poet Gwendolyn Brooks, and the poem “If I had known” by American poet Mary Carolyn Davies. The total number of female writers in the syllabus is of eight out of twenty-three (considering the two just mentioned), while there are eighteen non-UK native authors, meaning most of them, including Conrad who used English as a second language and French-Italian singer Carla Bruni who adapted the poem by Emily Dickinson in a song. Since this case the study deals with short excerpts, for language purposes, there was an attempt to avoid excess of complexity and include those authors who share a western culture base but express a critical point of view or a shift in cultural perspective (such as Angelou, Lessing, Brooks, Chopra, and Tolle, for instance).

As mentioned before, this study is based on a new syllabus that uses literary excerpts as models of real language instead of textbooks. In this research the word literature is used in a wide sense (including literature with big and small l) and the syllabus includes classic masterpieces by Shakespeare and Joyce, as well as popular songs and material from the internet. This article is based on the results of the first part of the syllabus (Module One).

To measure effectiveness of the methodology, both quantitative and qualitative analyses have been used. Quantitative analysis has been used to evaluate the results of writing pieces produced by the students attending the course, while qualitative analysis has been used to evaluate the answers of a questionnaire done at the end.

## 4.2 The context

The case study presented here refers to students of two high schools in Sicily involved in the project: 22 students from the high school “Liceo Politi” in Agrigento (Class A), and 27 students from the high school “Liceo Foscolo” in Canicattì, a town near Agrigento (Class B). The data collected so far include (i) the first ten writing pieces produced by the 49 students, who have completed Module One of the syllabi based on grammar and vocabulary, and (ii) the results of the entry test completed by the students, which included two different writing tasks of 100 words each, namely, writing an email (Task 1), and writing an article or a story (Task 2). Students were monitored throughout the lessons delivered by their teachers in a span of time equivalent to a semester. The age range of the participating students is between 15 and 17, and the average level in English is B1 (this is usually the level for students of the second year in high school in Italy, as mentioned above). Before starting the course, students were given a questionnaire with questions about themselves (name, age, gender, town, self-assessed level of English or certifications) and questions focusing on their literary taste and writing skills. As will be shown later, both groups were comparable in many respects, however some differences emerged about preparation and motivation.

As we have seen, these groups were made of two classes from two different state schools in Italy: class A from Liceo Politi in Agrigento, and class B from Liceo Foscolo in Canicattì. The course started in November 2019 and was supposed to finish by May 2020. Unfortunately, the Covid 19 pandemic brought some disruption with consequences on the delivery of the lessons which were slowed down by remote teaching. As Benigno, Dagnino and Fante (2020) say “As in many other countries, Italian teachers have had to face the challenge of moving from face-to-face (F2F) instruction to online activities; this required not only relevant technological skills, but also a rethinking of teaching methodologies (UNESCO, 2020b, as cited in Beningo et al., 2020). Many families, in turn, have struggled with limited availability of suitable digital devices and a lack of adequate Internet connections to accommodate distance learning from home.” (Benigno et al., 2020). This produced delays in the delivery of the lessons. The thirty-lesson course, which was supposed to finish by the end of the school year, was only partially delivered. In details, Class A, the weaker one who suffered more disruption from the pandemic, managed to reach lesson



15, while class B, the strongest one, managed to reach lesson 20, although with many N/A. The project was then suspended during the summer break with the aim to start again in the school year 2020-2021.

At the beginning of the new school year in September 2020, the teacher in class A was moved to another school, so the students could not do the other 15 lessons to complete the course. Students from class B, on the contrary, managed to start the course again and finish it in a few months within the first term. However, the second wave of the pandemic hit Italy at the same time, so the students managed to complete the course but only four lessons were delivered, and the rate of N/A raised again. Nevertheless, the pieces of writing produced by the 27 students in this last part of the course show interesting results worth to be taken into consideration. The teacher's idea was to complete the course with Class B, at the beginning of the school year, and then offer it again to a new class starting in January 2021. The teacher managed to deliver the first five lessons to the new class, called Class C, but then again, the burst of the pandemic third wave forced her to stop. Generally speaking, we have to say that Italy was the European country where state schools suffered a lot from the pandemic, being forced to do lessons online with no previous experience on remote teaching, this explain the large number of absentees in Module three also in the stronger class.

Besides Class A, Class B and Class C, in order to compensate the loss of writing pieces produced by the pandemic, another group of students was involved in the research. This fourth group of students refers to a private language school which has premises in seven different towns in western Sicily. About one hundred students, at B1 and B1+ level, were involved in the data collection, with 12 teachers altogether plus me as the director of Studies of the school and director of the project. In December 2020 all the teachers at the school were given information about the research. Later, the administration was involved in collecting information about the B1 courses to identify the teachers to involve in the project. In January 2021 the twelve teachers delivering courses at B1 level were given specific instructions on how to deliver the lessons to their B1 students. Each teacher was given three lessons to deliver to their B1 classes (in some cases also B2 students at initial stage were included too and some strong A2 students also). The lessons were delivered between January and April 2021. All the seven schools were involved in scattered in a wide area of western Sicily, including the towns of Palermo, Agrigento, Caltanissetta, Favara, Cammarata, Ribera and Sciacca. Contrary to state school

classes, the level of the students is much more homogeneous, students start a course after an accurate entry test. Class sizes range from a minimum of two to a maximum of twelve students and the age range goes from 13 to 35. These students attend different kinds of courses, which go from short course of thirty hours to intensive ones of 60 hours to extensive courses of 90 hours. All courses also include one hour of extra speaking hour per week and a certain number of hours of self-study (exam practice) from ten to twenty depending on the kind of course. Most of them are preparing to take a Cambridge B1 Preliminary exam at the end of the school year (usually between June and July).

Between May 2021 and December 2021 in order to collect more information about efficacy of the syllabus, sample lessons were used in different contexts in other two courses delivered by the researcher. Although data and feedback were collected informally, interesting observations came out of this phase. One of the courses was a 15-hour mixed level creative writing course for seven teenagers delivered online to private students of EuroLingue School. The second course was a 45-hour English and translation course for 37 students at the University of Palermo, where students were part face to face and part online. In both cases the researcher was able to deliver the lessons personally and have direct observation on students' reaction to the literary texts and the lesson plans proposed.

#### 4.3 Methodology

The syllabus includes thirty lessons of thirty minutes each divided into three different Modules: Module One focuses on grammar and vocabulary, Module Two on tone and register, and Module Three on personal growth. The course material also includes entry and final test, a questionnaire, and feedback survey, thirty detailed lesson plans with relevant literary excerpts, and a Cambridge B1 Preliminary new handbook with Assessment Criteria.

The course for group one and two started in October 2019 and consisted of 15 hours of lessons, plus 45 minutes each for the entry test and for the final test and half an hour for the questionnaire and the general feedback survey at the end of each module. Step one includes course presentation and questionnaire. Step two

is the entry test. The entry test is modelled on the new B1 Pet writing test sample in the Cambridge Handbook, where students are required to answer an email and then either write a story or an article (100 words each).

Assessment is done according to the criteria stated in the Cambridge Preliminary Handbook (pp. 16 - 30). The final test is also modelled on a Cambridge B1 Pet sample. The questionnaire includes questions on personal details (age, city), school (state, private or both), English certifications and study abroad (if any), self-assessed English skills (from 1 to 5 marks), evaluation of school textbooks, favorite literary genre(s), favorite book(s) and writer(s). The written materials, entry test, final test and questionnaires produced by students were collected as electronic files and uploaded on a website. Grammar, functions, vocabulary, and topics are the ones defined by the *CEFR* for the B1 level syllabus.

These are the three modules in the curriculum:

- Module One: improving grammar and vocabulary.
- Module Two: enhancing tone, register and style.
- Module Three: boosting personal growth and multicultural awareness.

Texts and activities were chosen keeping in mind the perspectives given by Clandfield (2004) in which literary texts can be considered from the linguistic point of view (TALO), as a means of getting information (TAVI) or as an input for producing writing tasks (TASP).

#### 4.4 Course content

The selection of writers for this curriculum includes classical as well as modern authors and a wide variety of literary genres. Before starting the course, a survey was given to a group of seventy students from both private language schools and state schools including the 49 students involved in the research to identify their favorite authors. The results of the survey show that J.K. Rowling is the most popular English writer among teenagers. She was mentioned by 15 students out of 70, followed by N. Sparks (8), J. Austen (7), S. King (7), O. Wilde (6), G. Orwell (4) and others selected by less than 4 students. This list could be useful when

considering the literary taste of the students as a starting point for further studies. As for literary genres, fantasy is the most popular (20), followed by crime/noir (12), then thriller and horror (9 each) and science fiction (6). Considering that when the task lacks challenging components motivation can diminish (Alderman, 1999; Bandura, 1997; Calder & Staw, 1975, as cited in Sturgeon, 2014), a well-balanced list of authors that includes some of the students' favorite authors can be more engaging and therefore more motivating for the L2 learners. The syllabus of Module One is outlined below. In addition to the selected genre, the title of the text and the author, the list also includes the linguistic feature that is specifically dealt with in each lesson. The grammatical structures are a selection of those included in the B1 Preliminary Syllabus as specified in the Cambridge Assessment English handbook for teachers.

#### 4.5 Data collection

After defining the content of the course and completing the design of the syllabus a few teacher training sessions were organized to inform teachers about the project and involve them and their students in the data collection. The first meeting was held in the premises of Eurolingue School in Agrigento in March 2019. Six teachers from different high schools of the town attended. The training session consisted in showing them two lesson plans from the syllabus based on literary texts. The teachers enjoyed the workshop and the activities presented, and two of them showed interest in participating to the data collection with their students. At the beginning of the new school year in September 2019, these two teachers involved one classroom each and they were given the materials needed to start collecting data among their students. The materials included:

- The syllabus with 30 lesson plans
- A Cambridge B1 Preliminary writing test as an entry test for their students
- The guideline with the instructions for delivering the lessons
- A link to the questionnaire for defining the students' profile
- A link for uploading the writing pieces produced by their students

### Phase one

In October 2019, after delivering the entry test and completing the questionnaire the two classes, (named Class A and Class B), started the course for the first part of data collection. These two groups of students produced a total of 567 pieces of writing in about one year distributed among the three modules of the syllabus.

### Phase two

The second part of the data collection started about one year later, in January 2021. In this second phase, one of the teachers started a new course with 22 students (named Class C). This group produced 103 pieces of writing mostly in response to Module One lessons, plus the entry tests and one lesson in Module two.

In the same period, other twelve teachers (plus me) and about 102 students of the private language school Eurolingue School were involved in the project. These students produced a total of 306 pieces of writing distributed in three lessons per classroom. The data were collected the same way, after the lessons delivered by their teachers, students would upload their writing pieces using the link:

<https://www.eurolingueschool.it/WritingSkillsEurolingue>

#### 1. Number of teachers involved in the project

- Two teachers from state schools
- Thirteen teachers from the private language school

#### 2. Number of students involved in the project

- 71 from the two state schools (Class A, Class B, Class C)
- 102 from the private language school

#### 3. Number of pieces of writing assessed

- 679 from state school
- 306 from the private language school

#### 4. Total number of pieces of writing assessed for general writing skills, creativity, and critical thinking

- 985 in total

#### 4.6 Course guidelines

1. The course has 30 lessons of 30 minutes each to be delivered once a week. The course starts with a test and a questionnaire. All the materials including entry test, questionnaires and detailed lesson plans and a students' profile template and a Cambridge B1 Preliminary new handbook will be sent by email before the beginning of the course. The course starts in October 2019 and must finish by May 2020
2. The course is made of 15 hours of lessons, two hours of entry and final test (45 min each), two hours of entry and final questionnaires (one hour each including general presentation before the course and feedback discussion at the end) for a total of 20 hours.
3. Step one includes a course presentation and questionnaire (about one hour)
4. Step two is the entry test and lasts 45 minutes. The entry test is the new B1 Pet writing test sample in Cambridge handbook.
5. Assessment is done according to the criteria stated in the handbook (from p. 16 to 30).
6. Lessons cannot be changed after the course has started. Amendments and/or improvements can be discussed before the beginning of the course.
7. The course is for students of both state and private schools of different age and classrooms, but they must study English at B1 level.
8. All the written materials produced by the students must be assessed and sent to the link provided
9. The final test will be another Cambridge B1 Pet sample (from new books). The test will be sent before the end of the course.
10. Teachers must provide a detailed list of the students taking part to the course. The list must include personal details (age, gender, city), school (state, private or both), English certifications and study abroad (if any), school marks in English, school course books (state, private or both), favorite literary genre(s), favorite book(s) and writer(s). A students' profile template will be included in the material sent before the course.

## 4.7 Survey

Before the beginning of the course, in October 2019, the two classes, together with other students, were given a questionnaire to have a complete student profile. The questions asked were of different kinds, such as personal information, linguistic profile, literary interests, English skills self-assessment and questions related to the course.

### Personal information

- Name
- Age
- Gender
- Date of entry
- City
- School and/or Language school
- Name of the teacher

### English and other languages

- English certificates (Cambridge or other qualifications)
- Motivation for studying English (for private language school students)
- Linguistic profile (study abroad, other languages, etc.)

### English skills self-assessment (from 1 to 5)

- How would you evaluate your writing skills in English?
- How difficult is writing in English in your opinion?
- How would you evaluate your reading skill?
- How would you evaluate your listening and speaking skills in English?

### Course related questions

- Are the course books used at school interesting and stimulating?
- Are you familiar with the word multiculturalism and personal growth?
- Do you know what tone and register are?

- Could songs, poems, novels, articles, and short stories help you in learning English?
- Do you think that literature in general could support you in your learning process?

#### Literature

- Do you read many books?
- What are your favorite books? Name at least three titles
- Who are your favorite authors?
- What are your favorite literary genres?

The survey was given to the 49 students who took the course but also to other students of Eurolingue School for a total of 78 responses. The results of these survey are available and could provide useful information for further studies on using literary text to develop writing and other skills. For instance, in relation to kind of genres or authors preferred by teenagers, textbooks etc.



## 4.8 Entry test

### Question 1

Read this email from your English teacher Mrs Lake and the notes you have made.

**EMAIL**

From: Mrs Lake

Subject: End of year party

Dear Class,

I'd like our class to have a party to celebrate the end of the school year.

We could either have a party in the classroom or we could go to the park. Which would you prefer to do?

What sort of activities or games should we do during the party?

What food do you think we should have at the party?

Reply soon!

Anna Lake

*Suggest ...* (points to 'What sort of activities or games...')

*Great!* (points to 'I'd like our class to have a party...')

*Explain* (points to 'We could either have a party...')

*Tell Mrs Lake* (points to 'Reply soon!')

Write your email to Mrs Lake using all the notes.

### Question 2

QUESTION 2

You see this announcement in your school English-language magazine.

**Articles wanted!**

**WHAT MAKES YOU LAUGH?**

Write an article telling us what you find funny and who you enjoy laughing with.

Do you think it's good to laugh a lot? Why?

The best articles answering these questions will be published next month.

Write your article.

### Question 3

Your English teacher has asked you to write a story.

Your story must begin with this sentence.

Jo looked at the map and decided to go left.

Write your story.

## 4.9 The syllabus

This syllabus was designed with the purpose of investigating how to use literature to improve writing skills at B1 level. It was designed having Italian high school students in mind (aged 16-17) but is proved to work well also with other groups such as: private language school students, Creative Writing, and university students, as these were the groups that had the chance to use the syllabus. This chapter aims at becoming a guide for all the teachers who would like to try the literary approach but do not know how to start. It can be regarded as a practical tool or a model to follow for other teachers willing to try it for themselves and their students. The syllabus has three modules, for each module there is a list of texts and topics followed by lessons descriptions with excerpts and activities carried out, details about the way each text was used (including relevant acronym for each activity), finally, at the end of each lesson description, is it possible to find some of the most representative writing samples produced by the students, with comments on the outcome and suggestion on how to implement the lessons. The sample have been selected trying to include all the students (or as many as possible) choosing among the best pieces of writing for each of them. The activities have been classified according to Lindsay Clandfield definition: TALI (text as a linguistic object), TAVO (text as a vehicle of information), TASP (text as a springboard for production). However, it is possible to say that more acronyms can be added to Clandfield's list. In fact, the productive phase of the lesson a TASP text (Text as a Springboard for Production) can include different categories depending on the focus given to the writing activities and the skills to be developed. As stated before, this classification is based on:

- Literary excerpts
- Skills
- Text as a springboard for production tasks (TASP)

Literary excerpts are very flexible tools that can be used for different purposes: developing grammar, improving writing skills, enhancing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills... Depending on the focus different lesson plans could be developed from the same excerpt, while TASP writing tasks can be classified in different ways

according to the purpose of the lessons. In this syllabus all TASP tasks only concern the written production and have been classified as follows:

- TASP/TAM tasks use the literary text as a model to reproduce grammar and vocabulary. In these activities students are asked to copy vocabulary and/or sentences from the excerpt to use them in a different written context. This kind of activities are used to develop linguistic skills.
- TASP/TEC tasks use the literary text as a model to reproduce tone, register, style. In these activities students are asked to reproduce some aspects of the excerpt to create a story or a poem similar or opposite to the original text in style, tone, imagery, metaphors....
- TASP/TACT tasks use literary texts as prompts to invite students to express ideas and opinions on a specific topic in a written essay. In these activities students are asked to expand some concepts expressed in the excerpt to create one that can be similar or opposite in content.
- TASP/TAP tasks use literary texts as prompts for written essays based on self-reflections. In this case students are asked to express feelings and emotions on a specific issue or situation.

This syllabus is divided into three modules and considers three different skills, namely: general writing skills, creativity, and critical thinking.

- Module one focuses on linguistic features so in this case the text can be used as a model for grammar and vocabulary.
- Module Two focuses on tone and register, so the texts can be used to develop style and creativity.
- Module Three focuses on topics debated in the world today and can be used to develop critical thinking.

All TASP productive writing tasks have been divided in:

- TAM (Text as a Model) in Module One, where texts have been used as model to practice and memorize linguistic features.

- TEC (Text to Enhance Creativity) in Module Two where texts have been used to expose student to a creative use of language to develop creativity.
- TACT (Text as a Tool for Critical Thinking) in Module Three, where texts have been used as prompts for reflections and critical thinking on different important topics of today's world.

However, even if Module one has mostly TAM productive writing activities, there are also two lessons introducing TEC activities which are the focus of Module two. Also, Module two which has mostly TEC activities includes TACT activities to introduce the next Module. Module three, which has mostly TACT activities, includes two lessons with TEP (Text as a Personal Growth Tool) activities to suggest that further studies could be made in the future in the field of personal growth.

#### 4.10 Feedback

At the end of Module One brief survey was carried out among students and teachers of Class A and Class B. The survey included three questions:

- Did you enjoy the lessons?
- Do you think you have improved? If so in which area?
- What are your expectations by the end of this course?

To let the students feel free to give honest feedback they would answer the questions through the same link they used for their writing pieces that was not accessible for their teachers. An informal interview, carried out online with the students during one of their lessons, confirmed the feedback as many would express the same feelings of satisfaction. The complete feedback of both classes is reported in the Appendix.

#### 4.11 Module one

The focus of M1 was on some of the most common linguistic features required at B1 level. Namely, the linguistic features of the chosen texts were the following: comparatives and superlatives, linking words and idioms, past simple, past simple and continuous, future with Will, past simple and past perfect, passive form, second conditional, punctuation. As mentioned before, in the 21st century, a typical L2 lesson plan should combine the three different ways of dealing with texts as in Lindsay Clandfield (2004) definitions identified by the acronyms: TALO, TAVI and TASP. Which means that the text can be used as a linguistic object, as a vehicle of information and as a springboard for production. In the design of this research syllabus an attempt was made to use all different acronyms in every lesson in different kinds of activities (listening and reading comprehension, writing tasks, grammar revision, vocabulary extension...). In the first Module most of the writing tasks would use TASP/TAM activities where the texts is a models to practice the specific linguistic features that are the focus of the lessons. However, two lessons (7 and 8) focus on enhancing creativity TASP/TEC activities as an introduction to Module two.

#### Module one - Focus on grammar and vocabulary - TASP/TAM texts

1. Poem "Shall I compare..." William Shakespeare. Linguistic focus: Comparatives - TAM
2. Novel "A tale of two cities" C. Dickens. Linguistic focus: Superlatives - TAM
3. Novel "Americana" by D. De Lillo. Linguistic focus: Linking word, Idioms - TAM
4. Poem "I wandered lonely..." W. Wordsworth. Linguistic focus: Past Simple - TAM
5. Novel "1984" G. Orwell. Linguistic focus: Past simple vs Past Continuous - TAM
6. Song "Thinking out loud" E. Sheeran. Linguistic focus: Future with Will - TAM
7. Novel "The old man and the sea" E. Hemingway. Linguistic focus: P. Simple, P. Perfect - TEC
8. Novel "The grass is singing" D. Lessing. Linguistic focus: Passive Form - TEC
9. Poem "If you were coming..." E. Dickinson. Linguistic focus: Second Conditional - TAM
10. Novel "Ulysses" (Molly Bloom's monologue) J. Joyce. Linguistic focus: Punctuation - TAM

## Lesson text sample

William Wordsworth "I wandered lonely as a cloud" (1807)

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
 That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
 When all at once I saw a crowd,  
 A host, of golden daffodils;  
 Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
 Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
 And twinkle on the milky way,  
 They stretched in never-ending line  
 Along the margin of a bay:  
 Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
 Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they  
 Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
 A poet could not but be gay,  
 In such a jocund company:  
 I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
 What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
 In vacant or in pensive mood,  
 They flash upon that inward eye

Which is the bliss of solitude;  
 And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
 And dances with the daffodils.

#### Lesson description

In the TALO activity the teacher elicits the difficult words in the poem, then the focus is on the past simple: students underline the past tense and brainstorm about irregular verbs. In the TAVI reading comprehension students read the poem and discuss in pairs: what is the poet describing? Which image is the most powerful? What is the difference between the first three parts and the last one? Then they talk about their favorite natural landscape and about one day spent in nature. Finally, in the TASP/TAP writing task they must describe a beautiful moment in nature. They must give as many details as possible, describe how they felt then and how they feel every time they think about it.

#### Writing samples

*One of the best memories in nature is about my childhood. I live in the mountains and during my childhood my grandfather always took me away from the smog for a walk among the flowers and streams that reflected the sunlight. I remember that the first time I saw the sheep grazing was during this day, I grazed at them for a while, amazed at how many there were. It's a happy memory and I was euphoric but now, looking back, others to be gay, I'm a bit nostalgic for the lightheartedness that characterized childhood and, in particular, those moments on the top of the hill with my favorite person. VTFEV*

*I can talk about a lot of moments in nature, because I always had the luck to spend a lot of time in there, especially in summer. I have a lot of good memories at the sea, with my friends and by myself this doesn't matter actually, but if i have to describe one in particular I think I'll talk about one day on last summer. It was july I guess, and I was with this friend of mine, it was night and everything was dark but the sea was still shining, we could feel the consistency and coldness of the sand that was humid because of the day, we were feeling the wind moving our hair and the sand. There was no one, she putted on some music, our favourite*

*taste, and we started dancing and singing together, then we took some covers and pillows and she and I started talking about a lot of things and we were laughing a lot. After that we also got into the water and swam until we arrived at a small island where we spent almost 2 hours. Everything was great, I was so happy, I felt free not just because I was with this friend of mine but also because I was in my happy place, in my safe place. When i think at this day I still incredibly happy and I feel a lot of joy in all of my body. LPFEV*

*When I think of a beautiful moment in nature I reminded of the walks I took every Sunday with my father, when I was child. He is an agronomist, so he loves nature in general. I loved walking with him in the woods. He taught me to recognize many type of flowers, trees and plants. We collected flowers, mushrooms, pine nuts. I preferred to go there in spring because there were wonderful colors there: the green of the trees and meadows, the blue of the sky, the colors of the wild flowers. And the birdsong made me feel in peace. I loved being in nature, I enjoyed learning about new paths, new places. Now remembering those days I feel nostalgic because time passes. This also make me feel happy and grateful. I will always remember those moments for the rest of my life. DSFEA*

*The sea was rough and calm at the same time. The waves crashed against the rocks: it seemed like it was raining. I felt like the quiet was inside me and the sea had taken away all my thoughts. It was the first time I felt so relaxed and I will never forget this feeling. I will never forget the immensity of the sea that made me feel so small and fragile. I felt like I was at home and I couldn't be happier. MVFA21*

*A day when I saw a blue sea I felt a free girl, without worries, thoughtless, I closed my eyes, I got carried away by the sound of the waves, as if I were a bird flying free in the sky among clouds, every time i think about that moment i feel just like that bird that flies free without a destination, I feel light as a feather that flies away with a little wind, it's a beautiful sensation it helps you feel better for those few minutes it helps you not to think about nagative things or things that worry you, it helps you understand what is right to do. IPFCA*

*I remember one spring's day, it was afternoon and I was lying on a green lawn, the nature around me seemed to be in harmony. I was having a picnic with my friends when a severe thunderstorm came. We ran for*



*cover, that nature that was previously happy had become sad, it seemed to cry. Luckily we found shelter in a safe place, waited for the rain to stop and went out. There was a beautiful rainbow waiting for us. Those colors seemed to envelop us, we admired it and immortalized it with a photo. In that moment I seem to have seen me a few years ago, the moments of happiness and then the darkness. This period, however, did not make me give up, in fact the rainbow has also appeared for me. It took time and many sacrifices but in the end I was able to find myself just like the rainbow after a storm. APFCA*

*A night in the light*

*The stars were so brilliant in the dark sky,  
so many sparks in a dark heart.*

*I felt protected from the cloak of the infinity,  
the infinity of them light and them eternity.*

*It seemed like I was everywhere and nowhere*

*In the scattered magic of the stars,  
every star enclose our dreams,*

*we are a piece of every star in the light of an emotion.*

*I was lying in the wet lawn,  
the world seemed to sleep.*

*The owls sang the melody of the night,  
the crickets danced in the splendor of the darkness.*

*I remember when the stars kept me company,  
when the immense light of the moon made my eyes shine. SRFCA*

*It was a sunny day of April and the green hills were silent and in the middle of them a flood of colorful flowers. In the distance a little ground-cloud of white sheeps was the only think that wasn't green in that landscape. The sky was clear and of a light blue with no clouds over the orizon. While I was lying on that green carpet I was one with the sky and the birds because my bad thoughts were flying like them and therefore my*

*mind was with no clouds to cover the sun of my tranquility. Now thinking about those hills and the sky I ask: where is that lightheadedness? And those birds? Now there is no flood of flowers and no more green grass. Now there are gray clouds covering my sun. AFMB24*

## Comments

This was one of the most successful lessons in terms of both linguistic features and writings. The past tenses used were regular and irregular. Apart from two cases (putted and grazed) past simple was correctly used: *was, were, felt, seemed, waited, went, made, swam, sang, admired, run, danced, kept, came, got, closed, preferred, enjoyed, crashed, immortalized, taught, loved, took, spent, found*. Besides this, students were also creative in describing a moment in nature. These writing pieces express deep connection with nature and a sense of self awareness that can be linked with personal growth. Students give great value to experience in nature and they think it is a way to overcome anxiety and stress. Once again, despite the focus of the lesson is on grammar, the students' writings show that it is not easy to avoid self- reflection when exposed to literature and poetry. Using the text as a model they were able not only to cope well with the linguistic features of the poem but also to reproduce the feelings, the mood, the vision, and poetic touch through the expression of their own personal feelings and emotions.

## 4.12 Module two

Module two is based on investigating how to improve tone, register and style in writing. Tone and register are important features of Cambridge Preliminary B1 exams but either students or teachers are not always aware of these two important writing skills. Tone and register are often a mystery to anyone attempting any kind of written production. This was confirmed also by the survey done before the course, where most students declared of not being aware of what tone and register were. For this reason, the decision to dedicate a whole module of the syllabus to these elements was taken. Also, in this case literary texts were used as a linguistic object (TALO), vehicle of information (TAVI) and springboard for production (TASP). While in the first Module most of the TASP activities would focus on using the text as a model, as this is the easiest way to

practice linguistic features, in Module Two the focus is on style so, in this case, most of the Texts were used with the purpose to enhance creativity. A Tool to Enhance Creativity (TEC) approach was the focus of the writing tasks proposed to the students. Also in this Module, though, as in the previous one, three lessons (6, 7 and 9) focus on Critical Thinking (TACT) as an introduction to the topic of Module three.

Module two - Focus on tone, register and style - TASP/TEC texts

11. Short Story Edgar Allan Poe “The tell-tale heart” Style, tone - TEC
12. Poem Charles Bukowski “8 Count” Tone - Register - TEC
13. Novel J. Conrad “The secret sharer” Describing people - TEC
14. Short Story James Joyce “The Dead” Describing events - TEC
15. Novel Virginia Woolf “Ms. Dalloway” Describing places - TEC
16. Article “Black Friday” Consumerism - TACT
17. Article “What is meditation?” Is meditation good for you? - TACT
18. Drama William Shakespeare “Macbeth” (monologue) Life metaphors - TEC
19. Novel J.K. Rowling “Harry Potter” Discrimination - TACT
20. Novel George Orwell “1984” Style and tone - TEC

Lesson text sample

Edgar Allan Poe “The tell-tale heart”

It was A LOW, DULL, QUICK SOUND -- MUCH SUCH A SOUND AS A WATCH MAKES WHEN ENVELOPED IN COTTON. I gasped for breath, and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly, more vehemently but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why WOULD they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men, but the noise steadily increased. O God! What COULD I do? I foamed -- I raved -- I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder -- louder -- louder!

### Lesson description

In the TALO activity students in pairs look up the meaning of highlighted words. This is followed by a TAVI Reading comprehension: students read the excerpt and answer the question: what kind of feeling/mood is the author conveying? This is followed by an exercise focusing on tone: students in pairs read the definitions and associate each sentence to an emoji and then they choose one (or more) emoji to describe the tone of the excerpt. Finally, in the TASP/TEC writing task they write a story associated to a tone/emoji of their choice.

- This tone in writing focuses on the positive emotions that are experienced in the moment of an action.
- This tone in writing increases the focus of the readers because the concepts being offered are important.
- This tone makes people begin to think about difficult concepts in a way that feels safe.
- When incorporated in writing, this tone makes the reader sympathetic with the characters or the author.
- This tone is based on the idea that the world can be a better place if we are willing to work for it.
- This tone makes you feel like that bad stuff in the world will only get worse.
- This tone speaks to the core fears that people have and forces them to confront those fears.

Emoji:       

Tone: Sad Serious Horror Optimistic Joyful Pessimistic Humorous

### Writing samples

*Once upon a time there was a girl who had a special talent: she could talk to animals and understand what they were thinking. So she decided to help the animals who needed help, and became a vet in order to give them the necessary care. The animals were very happy when they went to her clinic, because she was always kind and sweet. Thanks to her success, she decided to travel around the world to help all animals.*

*He went to the forest, in the savannah, in the glaciers and even in the ocean. When she grew old, she retired and spent his life surrounded by animals. MVFA21*

*One time a boy which was called Aristocratic Onceball go on a party with all girls and was managing to escape but two girls wich were called Medison and Mia grabbed him and make-up him. The boy was very smile because he played with the girls of war of food and this girls was very funny. DSMAD*

*Every step was heavier. My wet chothes were more of an impediment than a protection. My boots were entirely covered by soft mud created earlier by the rain, the sweat, and the blood of my companions. I couldn't hear nothing but the clash of metal and the terrifying screams of just before. I couldn't take it any more and I fell to the gound; luckily the wet soil deadened the fall. I was lying with the rain beating on my back and I had nothing but my material body. My soul was lost like the shouts of my companions; in the wind. AFMB24*

*She was in the bathtub: the water was cold, the soap bubbles had dissolved, the room was invaded by the silence and a deep darkness, the only light was given by a candle. She continued to caress gently her belly; the thought that until a few weeks ago a creature could be there, was destroying her. Her blue eyes, once full of light, became empty, it seemed she didn't feel anything anymore, not a word came out of those icy lips, but inside her there was a chaotic combination of pain and strong emotions and a continuous silent cry. Shedding bitter tears and sobbing, continued to tremble and in her mind she thought: "My baby, God did not want to give me the opportunity to show you how much I could have loved you, but I will continue to do it forever" EBF25*

*It was the night.*

*Cold, dark frightening and restless.*

*It was the moon.*

*With its pale white and grey spots, its big ghastly eyes and its apprehensive stare. It was my head.*

*Spinning, throbbing, hurting.*

*It was the way my hands shook.*

*Uncontrollably, involuntarily, irrepressibly.*

*Where were my legs taking me?*

*Running and running and running, far away from that dark dot.*

*The ocean was looking at me. Staring at me.*

*The tears in my eyes felt salty, just like its water.*

*My breath was beginning to shorten.*

*Big breaths with loud sighs.*

*Sitting down on a nearby rock, my chest rising up and falling down, I observed my surroundings.*

*It was late, it was peaceful and it was also very far from home. Big breaths and loud sighs.*

*Standing up was easy, I could do it.*

*Walking was also fairly simple, I could do that too.*

*Going back there was not simple, nor was it easy, but I knew I could do it. And I did it. GLFB26*

*Two years ago I went to the cinema, and I saw a film that I had been waiting for a long time, which is the second part of IT. I already knew it was REALLY SCARY! but I thought I could see it, but immediately after starting I already wanted to leave the cinema since I was very curious and I decided to WATCH IT UNTIL THE END. As soon as I got out I was AFRAID OF EVERYTHING! and I was so scared that I didn't want to leave the cinema. Back home I started seeing monsters EVERYWHERE! For several nights I did not sleep and because I was afraid of EVERYTHING! After a few days everything went back to normal but I didn't remember IT was so SCARY. RGMECWA*

*DAD,MUM NO! this is the first reaction of the little Bruce Wayne say when the Wayne's bodies going down.*

*Is very difficult to know the suffering of a little child.*

*So sad!*

*In the years Bruce traveler around the city of Gotham and he was shocked! "THIS CITY IS JUST A MADNESS PLACE WHERE CRIMINALS MAKE EVERYTHING THEY WHANT! And so i decide to become the NIGHT!, THE MAN WHO TERRYFING CRIMINALS!,THE ONLY WHO SAVED THE GOOD PEOPLE OF GOTHAM!*

*HE BECAME,*

*BATMAN! (Epic music at the end) MCMECWA*

#### Comments

The tone of these writings is varied. Students who decided to stick to the horror tone of the model text managed to deliver more convincing stories. Some invented stories, other ones decided to talk about an episode of their life, such as a trip with family, a day spend with friends... In this task they were free to choose the tone they wanted but to make better use of this text it is better to assign a task in which they have to write a story with horror, dramatic or dark tone and suggest avoiding personal experiences.

#### 4.13 Module three

In this module the focus is on Critical Thinking. Students are given articles or texts which can give them the chance to reflect on different issues such as: culture, literature, prejudice, environment and so on. Trough the reading of the literary texts and the questions asked, they can produce writing pieces that help them develop their critical thinking skills. As we know, to achieve this, we must expose students to higher order questions and literary texts are an excellent starting point. The questions asked for their writing tasks should expose them to a degree of uncertainty so that they can stretch out of their comfort zone (Mary Halton on Brian Oshiro Ted Talk Critical Thinking is a 21<sup>st</sup> century essential 24 April 2019). According to Brian Oshiro the questions asked should promote risk taking and include personal experience. Most of the activities proposed here are Text as a Springboard for production / Texts as a tool for Critical Thinking, but as in the previous models also this one include three different ones which can be regarded as a bridge for future research. In lessons 6, 8 and 9, in fact,

the focus is on personal feelings and emotions, so in this case the TASP Activity should be based on Texts as a Tool for Personal Growth (TAP) and include self-reflections and spirituality as main theme.

### Module three - Critical thinking - TASP/TACT texts

21. Essay “How to be an Aussie” Multiculturalism - TACT
22. Novel Ray Bradbury “Fahrenheit 451” Culture - TACT
23. Short Story Patrick White “Sicilian Vespers” Literature - TACT
24. Article “There’s no Planet B” Environment - TACT
25. Biography Maya Angelou “I know why the caged bird sings” Prejudice -TACT
26. Poem Raymond Carver “Fear” Fears - TAP
27. Essay Scott Deitche “Cigar City Mafia” Social issues -TACT
28. Short Story Alice Munro “Amundsen” Love - TAP
29. Essay Deepak Chopra “Synchro-Destiny” Spirituality - TAP
30. Essay Eckhart Tolle “Stillness speaks” Paying attention – TACT

### Lesson text sample

#### Article “there’s no planet b”

Schoolgirl climate activist Greta tells British MPs her future has been ‘stolen’

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/world/schoolgirl-climate-activist-greta-tells-british-mps-her-future-has-been-stolen-919568.html#.XX-vPHSXnnk.whatsapp>

Miss Thunberg visited the Houses of Parliament to speak to opposition leaders and make a speech to MPs. The 16-year-old told a packed room in the Palace of Westminster that her future and those of her fellow children had been "sold". She added: "That future has been sold so that a small number of people can make unimaginable amounts of money. It was stolen from us every time you said *the sky is the limit* and *you only live once*." The schoolgirl said she knew politicians did not want to listen, as she started to experience microphone problems. She asked: "Is this microphone on? Can anybody hear me? Is my English OK? I am starting to



wonder. "She added: "The basic problem is the same everywhere and the basic problem is that nothing is being done. You don't listen to the science because you are only interested in the answers that will allow you to carry on as if nothing has happened." Gove told Miss Thunberg she had been heard as he admitted "we have not done nearly enough". He went on: "Suddenly in the past few years it has become inescapable that we have to act."

### Lesson description

TALO activity: teacher elicits the difficult words (in yellow). Then, students in pairs discuss the meaning of the expressions in red:

1. *the sky is the limit*
2. *you only live once*
3. *start to experience*
4. *start to wonder*
5. *As if nothing has happened*

This is followed by a TAVI reading comprehension: students in pairs answer the following questions:

1. What is the author doing?
2. Use these words to describe tone and register: formal, informal, neutral, ironic, dramatic, informative, poetic,
3. Describe the vocabulary used by the author choosing among these adjectives: sophisticated, simple, exaggerated, normal, plain, articulated, difficult.

Finally, the TASP/TACT writing task (70 words): Do you agree with Greta? What can we do to save the planet? Write your opinion using some of the expressions from the previous exercise.

### Writing samples

*Reading Greta Thunberg's speech, I was really impressed by her truthful and direct words. I'm fully agree with the speech he gave in front of so many words. We must open our eyes and start working to save what remains of our planet that we have neglected and disregarded for years. Each of us in his own small way must*

*commit himself to allow our planet to heal its wounds. We must have respect and begin to observe small "rules" useful for the protection of the planet such as, for example, using water bottles instead of plastic bottles, replacing plastic and using glass. They are small actions that can give a great help to our big house. EFFCA*

*Yes, I agree with Greta. To save the planet we could reduce the waste of water for example when to take a shower we have to wait for the water to heat up instead of letting it flow and then waste it it would be advisable to put a basin underneath so that you can use that water to water the plants: save energy by using suitable energy saving bulbs or unplug household appliances when not in use; to reduce the use of plastic we must use canvas bags instead of plastic ones; instead the old T-shirts instead of throwing them away because then they will end up in landfills it is better to use them as cleaning mats; avoid throwing food waste in bins but use it as fertilizer for plants. If each of us is committed to these small gestures, we can save the planet. EAFCA*

*I agree with everything Greta Thunberg says because the basic problem is that nothing is being done. Reducing consumption is not enough, it is also necessary to activate measures to reclaim very polluted areas, and we must do it now before it can be too late, it is important that each of us do his part. Despite this, I think that our future has not been sold, we must all commit ourselves to lead a more sustainable life, using less energy, recycling and spreading environmental education among the new generations. ASFCA*

*I quite agree with Greta's protest action, in favor of the fight against climate change. But we can't leave this task to just one girl. We all should be activists like Greta. We should think to the environment around us, starting from the little things, for example by using recyclable materials, instead of dangerous ones. Maybe the example of a whole generation could convince the powerful of the earth to afford seriously this problem and that we can't carry on as if nothing has happened, in order to leave a good planet to the future generations.*

MGIFEM

*I agree with greta. I think we are unknowingly harming ourselves as well as the environment. And we do nothing to improve the situation. What is surprising is that a girl of only 16 is fighting for our planet. We could*

*avoid many things. We should respect the environment by avoiding, for example, throwing away paper or any other object. Now the situation has worsened. Every day we talk about pollution or the greenhouse effect or floods. These things were caused by ourselves and our unawareness. If we don't start doing something we'll destroy our planet.* ECFEM

*We MUST save our planet! Some days ago, the 16-year-old activist Greta Thunberg has met the English Parliamentarians in order to discuss about the exigence to intervene to contrast climate changes and global warming. During her speech, Greta has used very touching words to express her frustration and anger: for example, she said that economic leaders just care about their business and that they are "ruining her childhood" and the one of all the other children of the world. I absolutely agree with Greta about the urgency to do something concrete to avoid climate change and all the consequences that it will have on the environment and on our health. While we are waiting for leaders to create a political and economic plan, we could all put some little significative actions into practice: for example, recycling items or avoid wasting plastic would be great. In conclusion, I would say that the phrase "You only live once" doesn't justify all the damage that we are provoking to our health, animals and to our planet. So, we must be responsible and act as fast as possible.*

GLFECWA

*The Environment is in danger , we need to do something now, we have to act. The future is in our hands, especially teenagers' hands who will live in this world for more time, we have to respect it and make sure all the others do it too. We have to recycle, assure to let the streets clean from rubbish, use less cars, don't use too much energy; we do this for us, for our future, for our world.* MSFECWA

Comments

These samples show that students are very aware of environmental issues. They agree with Greta and offer ideas to solve the problems that the world is facing right now suggesting solutions for the challenges the whole world is facing right now:

- *We must have respect and begin to observe small "rules" useful for the protection of the planet such as, for example, using water bottles instead of plastic bottles, replacing plastic and using glass*

- *save energy by using suitable energy saving bulbs or unplug household appliances when not in use; to reduce the use of plastic we must use canvas bags instead of plastic ones; instead the old T-shirts instead of throwing them away because then they will end up in landfills it is better to use them as cleaning mats; avoid throwing food waste in bins but use it as fertilizer for plants*
- *Reducing consumption is not enough, it is also necessary to activate measures to reclaim very polluted areas, and we must do it now before it can be too late*
- *using recyclable materials, instead of dangerous ones.*
- *We should respect the environment by avoiding, for example, throwing away paper or any other object*
- *recycling items or avoid wasting plastic would be great.*
- *We have to recycle, assure to let the streets clean from rubbish, use less cars, don't use too much energy*

These are just a few suggestions offered by the students which show that they can address difficult topics and offer ideas about how to respond to them. Even if not everyone was detailed in giving solutions they all had clear minds about the change of attitude we should develop in order to improve the environment situation.

## PART 3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Chapter 5 Data collection and results

#### 5.1 Module one - Results related to writing skills (Class A and B)

This section refers to the assessment of the 411 writing pieces produced by the 49 students after 10 lessons of the course syllabus. Class A and Class B students attended the course during their regular English classes at school, the lessons were delivered by their English teacher. After each lesson they would upload their writing through a link to be assessed. Assessment was carried out to answer the following questions:

1. Have students improved their writing skills?
2. Have students improved their grammar?
3. Have students improved their motivation?

To answer the first two questions, the result has been evaluated through quantitative analysis, while qualitative analysis was used to answer the last question of the research.

#### Writing skills

- Assessment

The writing pieces were marked according to the Cambridge Assessment Scale (as specified in the B1 Preliminary Handbook p. 25-26) which includes: Content, Communicative Achievement, Organization and Language. Marks for each subscale were allocated from 0 to 5 for a maximum of 20 marks in total for each piece of writing produced by the students. In the tables shown in this study, marks have been reported in a scale from 0 to 10, to make them easier to read.

- Pre-course questionnaire

According to the results of the self-assessment questionnaire, Class A is the weaker of the two classes. In fact, the average mark in the self-assessment questionnaire was 3.02 out of 5, while the highest individual score was

4.30. Class B is the stronger one. The average mark in the self-assessment questionnaire was 3.80 out of 5 while the highest score was 4.20.

- Entry test

Overall, in the entry test both classes performed well in the first task (writing an email) while most students found the second task (writing a story or an article) more challenging. In Class A, 54% of the students were able to perform adequately getting a mark equal to 6 (satisfactory) or above 6 in the email, while only 40% of them managed to perform at the same level in the story or article task. As for Class B, 66% of the students performed adequately in the first task and 51% in the second one.

- Written production

The tables below show the results of the writing pieces produced by the students during the ten lessons of Module One of the syllabi. The lessons were delivered to the two high school classes by the students' teachers from October 2019 to March 2020. The first column presents the code assigned to the students: first letter(s) of their name(s) and surname(s) plus F for feminine or M for masculine, followed by A or B to identify the class, and a number (1 to 22 for Class A and 1 to 27 for Class B). The next two columns show the marks of the entry tests (email plus article or story), while the ten columns show the marks of the writing pieces produced during the lessons (L1, L2...). Marks are expressed in decimals; results are presented in increasing order from the lowest to the highest.

Table n. 6 Results of the Entry Tests (T) and Module One Lessons (L) for Class A (N/A= absentees)

Students	T1	T2	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	L10	Average Test	Average Lessons	Improvement
FRMA1	5	3	N/A	3	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	2.50	-1.50
LPMA2	3	2	3	4	6	4.5	N/A	5.5	4	N/A	5	6	2.50	4.75	2.25
RCFA3	7.5	6.5	5	4	5	5	5	N/A	N/A	5	5	4	7	4.75	-2.25

DSMA4	4.5	5	3	4	6	5.5	6	N/A	5	5	6	4	4.75	4.94	0.19
EBMA5	5	3	4	4	5.5	6.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	6	N/A	5	4	5.28	1.28
MPFA6	6	5.5	2	5	4.5	7.5	6.5	N/A	6	5	6.5	6.5	5.75	5.50	-0.25
FAMA7	5	4.5	4	5	6.5	7	6	6	6	5	5	5	4.75	5.55	0.80
EFFA8	4	5	6	6.5	6	4.5	7	6.5	5	6	5	6	4.50	5.85	1.35
MAFA9	7.5	6	6	6	6	7.5	7	6.5	5	6	6.5	6	6.75	6.25	-0.50
CPMA10	7	7.5	7.5	6	6.5	4	7.5	7.5	6	7	6.5	5	7.25	6.35	-0.90
SMMA11	6.5	5.5	5	N/A	8.5	6.5	N/A	3	6.5	6.5	8	7	6	6.38	0.38
BAFA12	4.5	5.5	4	4	8	9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7	7	5	6.50	1.50
GSFA13	7.5	6.5	7.5	7	8	6.5	6.5	7	6	6	7	6	7	6.75	-0.25
ALFA14	7	5	N/A	N/A	7.5	8	N/A	6.5	6.5	6	6	7	6	6.79	0.79
SRMA15	8	6	6	6	8	7	6.5	8	6.5	7	5	8	7	6.80	-0.20
GFFA16	7.5	8.5	N/A	7	N/A	7.5	7.5	7	6	6	6.5	7	8	6.81	-1.19
JDFA17	5	5	7.5	4	6.5	8	7.5	8.5	N/A	6	6.5	7	5	6.83	1.83
CEFA18	6	6.5	N/A	6	7.5	6.5	7	N/A	8	7	7	7	6.25	7	0.75
CLMA19	7	7	7	8	8	5.5	7	7	8	8	8	8	7	7.45	0.45
FCFA20	6	6	N/A	8	9	N/A	7	9	7	6	7	7	6	7.50	1.50
MVFA21	6	8	6	7	9	9	9	9	8	9	9	7	7	8.20	1.20
LMMA22	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	9	9	9	8	N/A	8.75	N/A
Average													5.79	6.13	0.34

Table n. 6 shows the marks of the entry tests and the ten writing pieces produced from Lesson one to Lesson ten. The last two columns refer to the average marks of the entry test and the lessons while the last column shows improvement (if any). In this class, 13 students out of 21 (with the exclusion of LMMA22 who was absent for most of the lessons as he spent a semester in a high school in Ireland) show improvements in their results, which corresponds to 62% of the total number of students. This improvement is calculated by

comparing the average marks of the entry test with the average marks of the lessons. The class average mark in the test is 5.79 while the average mark in the written production is 6.13 therefore the average rate of improvement for the whole Class A is 0.34.

Table n. 7 shows the distribution of marks in the entry tests and the lessons in Class A, while Table n. 8 shows the students' frequency of improvement in detail.

Table n. 7 Class A Students distribution according to marks range in the entry test and in the lessons

Marks range		Entry test	Lessons
0	0.5	0	0
0.5	1	0	0
1	1.5	0	0
1.5	2	0	0
2	2.5	0	0
2.5	3	1	1
3	3.5	0	0
3.5	4	0	0
4	4.5	2	0
4.5	5	3	3
5	5.5	2	1
5.5	6	1	3
6	6.5	4	3
6.5	7	1	6
7	7.5	6	2
7.5	8	0	1
8	8.5	1	1
8.5	9	0	0



9	9.5	0	0
9.5	10	0	0

In Table n. 7 the first two columns refer to the mark range from 0 to 10, the second column reports the number of students in any specific mark range according to the entry test results, and the last columns report the number of students in any specific mark range according to the results of the lessons. Mark 6, which in the Italian education system corresponds to “satisfactory”, is taken as a reference value for the distribution of the marks. We can see that considering a total of 21 students Table 7 reports: 9 students under 6 in the test column and 8 in the lesson column, and 12 students above 6 in the test and 13 in the lesson column. From these details, we can distinguish 3 areas: the first includes the grade range from 4 to 5.5, where the table reports 7 students for entry test and 4 for lessons. The second area includes students in the mark range from 5.5 to 6.5, which includes 5 students for the entry test and 6 students for the lessons. Finally, the third area includes marks from 6.5 to 8.5, with 8 students for the entry test and 10 for the lessons. The results, therefore, suggest that after attending the lessons more students are likely to receive higher marks in their writing performances.

Table n. 8 Class A Students distribution according to improvement range

Range		Improvement
-5	-4.5	0
-4.5	-4	0
-4	-3.5	0
-3.5	-3	0
-3	-2.5	0
-2.5	-2	1
-2	-1.5	0
-1.5	-1	2
-1	-0.5	1

-0.5	0	4
0	0.5	3
0.5	1	3
1	1.5	3
1.5	2	3
2	2.5	1
2.5	3	0
3	3.5	0
3.5	4	0
4	4.5	0
4.5	5	0

Table 8 reports the students' range of improvement in the first two columns and the number of students in any specific improvement range in the last one. Considering a total of 21 students, we can see that 4 students have worsened their performances (between -2.5 and -0.5), while 7 students do not show any significant changes in their performances (between -0.5 and 0.5). The remaining ten students show improvements ranging from 0.5 to 2.5. The results report that 10 students (47.61%) show significant improvements in their performances.

The results of Class B are reported in the tables below.

Table n. 9 Class B Results of the Entry Tests (T) and Module One Lessons (L)

Students	T1	T2	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8	L9	L10	Average Test	Average Lessons	Improvement
EFFB1	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	N/A	6	6.5	6.5	N/A	N/A	7	6.5	N/A	6.08	N/A
VZFB2	8.5	2.5	6	6	5	8	N/A	6	6.5	6.5	6.5	7	5.50	6.39	0.89
GFFB3	5.5	0.5	6.5	6.5	N/A	7	N/A	N/A	6	6.5	N/A	N/A	3	6.50	3.50
EMFB4	5.5	6.5	6	7	6	N/A	N/A	7	6.5	6	7	7.5	6	6.63	0.63

AMFB5	5.5	7.5	7.5	7	6.5	6	6.5	6	6.5	7	7	6.5	6.50	6.65	0.15
ELFB6	5.5	0.5	7.0	5.5	N/A	6.5	6	6.5	7.5	7	7	7.5	3	6.72	3.72
VCFB7	5.5	4	7	7	6	7	7	6.5	7	6.5	7	6.5	4.75	6.75	2.00
FMMB8	6	5	6	5.5	7	7	6	5	8	9	8	7.5	5.50	6.90	1.40
CGFB9	6.5	5	7	7.5	6	7	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	6.5	7.5	5.75	6.93	1.18
KFFB10	5.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	N/A	7.5	6.5	7	6.5	7	7	8	6	6.94	0.94
STMB11	6	N/A	6	6.5	N/A	6	7	8	8	6.5	7	7.5	6	6.94	0.94
ACFB12	8.5	7.5	6.5	4.5	N/A	7.5	8	7.5	7.5	N/A	7.5	8	8	7.13	-0.88
FCFB13	5.5	4.5	N/A	8	N/A	6.5	8	6.5	7.5	6.5	N/A	N/A	5	7.17	2.17
ACFB14	8.5	7	7	8.5	8.5	7	7	8	7	7	6	6	7.75	7.20	-0.55
ATMB15	8	6.5	6.5	7.5	7.5	8	7.5	7.5	7.5	N/A	6.5	7	7.25	7.28	0.03
GPFB16	5.5	5	N/A	8.5	N/A	6	7	7	7	7.5	8	8	5.25	7.38	2.13
BBFB17	6.5	4	8	8	7.5	7.5	8	7	7.5	7	6.5	7	5.25	7.40	2.15
DTMB18	7	5	7	7	7.5	7.5	8	8	7	8	7	7	6	7.40	1.40
FFFB19	8.5	8.5	8	8	7	8	N/A	7	8	7.5	7	7.5	8.50	7.56	-0.94
VPFB20	9	9	7.5	8	7	8	8	8	N/A	6	8	7.5	9	7.56	-1.44
IGFB21	7.5	5.5	6	8	8	7.5	7	8	8.5	8	8	7.5	6.50	7.65	1.15
ASFB22	9	8	N/A	N/A	8	9	N/A	8.5	N/A	7.5	7	6.5	8.50	7.75	-0.75
EAFB23	8.5	7	8	9	7.5	9	N/A	8	7.5	7	7	7.5	7.75	7.83	0.08
AFMB24	7	5.5	7	7	7	9	8	N/A	8	N/A	9	8	6.25	7.88	1.63
EBFB25	7.5	6.5	6.5	8.5	7	8.5	8	7.5	7	8	9	9	7	7.90	0.90
GLFB26	9	10	7	9	8.5	9	9	8.5	9	9	9	10	9.50	8.80	-0.70
BRFB27	10	9.5	8	N/A	10	N/A	N/A	9	9	9	9	10	9.75	9.14	-0.61
Average													6.51	7.32	0.81

Table 9 shows the marks of the entry tests and the ten writing pieces produced from Lesson one to Lesson ten in Class B. In this class, 19 students out of 26 (with the exclusion of EFFB1) show improvements in their results, which corresponds to 73% of the total number of students. The class average mark in the test is 6.51 while the average mark in the written production is 7.32, therefore the average rate of improvement for the whole Class B is 0.81.

Table 10 shows the distribution of marks in the entry test and the lessons in Class B. Table 6 shows the frequency distribution of improvement in class B.

Table n. 10 Class B Students distribution according to marks range in the entry test and in the lessons

Marks range		Entry test	Lessons
0	0.5	0	0
0.5	1	0	0
1	1.5	0	0
1.5	2	0	0
2	2.5	0	0
2.5	3	0	0
3	3.5	2	0
3.5	4	0	0
4	4.5	0	0
4.5	5	1	0
5	5.5	3	0
5.5	6	3	0
6	6.5	5	2
6.5	7	2	8
7	7.5	2	7

7.5	8	2	7
8	8.5	1	0
8.5	9	2	1
9	9.5	1	1
9.5	10	2	0

In Table 10, as in the case of Table 7, mark 6 is taken as a reference value for the distribution of the marks. As shown, considering a total of 26 students. The table reports 9 students under 6 in the test column and 0 in the lesson column, then 17 students above 6 in the test and 26 in the lesson column. Using this information, we can distinguish 3 areas according to the mark range: the first includes marks from 3 to 5.5, where the table reports 6 students for entry test and 0 for lessons. The second area includes students in the mark range from 5.5 to 6.5, with 8 students for the entry test and 2 students for the lessons. Finally, the third area includes marks from 6.5 to 10, and in this area, there are 12 students for the entry test and 24 for the lessons. Therefore, regarding class B, as in Class A, the results suggest that after attending the lessons more students are likely to achieve higher marks in their writing performances.

Table n. 11 Class B Students distribution according to improvement range

Range		Improvement
-5	-4.5	0
-4.5	-4	0
-4	-3.5	0
-3.5	-3	0
-3	-2.5	0
-2.5	-2	0
-2	-1.5	0
-1.5	-1	1
-1	-0.5	6

-0.5	0	0
0	0.5	3
0.5	1	5
1	1.5	4
1.5	2	1
2	2.5	4
2.5	3	0
3	3.5	0
3.5	4	2
4	4.5	0
4.5	5	0

With regard to the distribution of the students, the range of improvement in table 11 shows that, considering a total of 26 students, 7 students have slightly worsened their performances (between -1.5 and -0.5), while 3 students do not show significant changes in their performances (between -0.5 and 0.5). The remaining 16 students show improvements included between 0.5 and 4. The results show that 10 students (38.46%) have not improved significantly after the lessons while 16 of them (61.54%) show significant improvements in their performances.

## 5.2 Module one - Results related to linguistic features (Class A and B)

As mentioned above, M1 focuses on grammar and vocabulary, specifically on the following linguistic features: comparatives, superlatives, idioms and linking words, past simple and vocabulary, past continuous, future with 'will', past perfect and technical words, passive, second conditional, punctuation/recalling past events.

The tables below show the results of the assessment of these linguistic features as produced in the students' writing pieces. Three marks were allocated: 0 for no improvement, 1 for some improvement, and 2 for

strong improvement. Zero improvement means that in the written production of the student, there is no sign of the linguistic elements that are the focus of the lesson: for instance, the lesson is based on the passive voice, but the students do not use it in their written production. Light improvement (1 mark) means that the grammatical point of the lesson is correctly used at least once. Strong improvement (2 marks) means that the linguistic feature is correctly used more than once.

The next table presents the improvement in linguistic features achieved by Class A. As mentioned before, this is the weaker class. This is confirmed by the fact there is only one lesson that has no zeros, namely, the lesson focusing on if-clauses. On the other hand, the lessons that show weakest improvement are the ones focusing on past simple vs continuous and past perfect where there is majority of marks 1 only.

Table n. 12 Class A Improvement in linguistic features

Students	Comparative	Superlative	Idioms and vocabulary	Past simple	Future with will	Past Simple and continuous	If-clauses	Past perfect	Passive form	Recalling memories
FRMA1	N/A	2	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
LPMA2	1	1	0	1	2	N/A	2	0	N/A	0
RCFA3	1	1	1	1	N/A	1	2	1	N/A	0
DSMA4	0	0	1	0	N/A	1	1	0	1	1
EBMA5	1	0	1	1	1	0	N/A	0	1	1
MPFA6	0	1	2	2	N/A	1	1	1	1	0
FAMA7	1	1	0	2	2	1	2	0	1	1
EFFA8	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	2
MAFA9	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	2	1
CPMA10	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	1
SMMA11	2	N/A	2	2	1	N/A	2	2	2	2
BAFA12	1	0	1	1	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	2

GSFA13	2	2	2	1	0	1	2	2	1	2
ALFA14	N/A	N/A	1	1	2	N/A	2	1	2	2
SRMA15	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	2	2
GFFA16	1	2	N/A	2	2	1	2	1	0	2
JDFA17	2	0	1	2	2	1	2	N/A	2	0
CEFA18	N/A	0	1	1	N/A	1	2	1	0	1
CLMA19	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
FCFA20	N/A	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2	2	1
MVFA21	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
LMMA22	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	1	2	2	2	1

Next table presents the improvement achieved in linguistic features by Class B. In Class B, the stronger of the two, we can see that there are three lessons that show no zeros, namely, the lessons focusing on comparatives, idioms, past simple, and if-clauses. The lessons with the highest rate of zeros are future with “will” (five zeros) while all the other lessons have an average of few zeros.

Table n. 13 Class B Improvement in linguistic features

Students	Comparative	Superlative	Idioms and vocabulary	Past simple	Future with will	Past simple and continuous	If-clause	Past perfect	Passive form	Punctuation
EFFB1	1	N/A	N/A	1	0	1	1	N/A	N/A	0
VZFB2	2	0	1	2	1	N/A	2	1	2	1
GFFB3	2	2	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	0	N/A
EMFB4	2	2	1	N/A	1	N/A	2	2	2	2
AMFB5	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	2
ELFB6	2	1	N/A	1	2	1	2	2	2	1



VCFB7	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	1
FMFB8	1	1	2	1	2	0	1	1	0	0
CGFB9	2	2	N/A	2	N/A	1	2	2	N/A	2
KFFB10	N/A	1	N/A	2	0	1	2	1	1	1
STMB11	1	2	N/A	2	0	1	2	2	2	2
ACFB12	2	0	N/A	2	2	1	2	1	N/A	2
FCFB13	N/A	2	N/A	2	1	1	N/A	2	2	N/A
ACFB14	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	N/A	2
ATMB15	2	0	2	2	1	1	1	1	N/A	2
GPFB16	N/A	2	N/A	1	2	1	2	1	2	2
BBFB17	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	1
DTMB18	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	0	2	1
FFFB19	2	2	1	2	2	N/A	2	2	1	1
VPFB20	N/A	0	1	0	1	1	1	N/A	0	1
IGFB21	2	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	1
ASFB22	N/A	N/A	1	2	2	N/A	2	N/A	2	0
EAFB23	2	2	2	2	2	N/A	2	1	2	1
AFMB24	2	2	2	2	N/A	1	2	2	N/A	2
EBFB25	2	2	2	2	0	1	2	1	1	2
GLFB26	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2
BRFB27	N/A	2	N/A	N/A	2	N/A	2	2	2	2

The results of Tables 12 and 13 are represented in percentages in the next table (Table 14) which shows that throughout the ten lessons Class A has a percentage of 12.50% of zeros while Class B has 8.30%.

Furthermore, in terms of writing pieces, Class A has 75 writing pieces that received 1 as a mark (corresponding to 40.80%), while Class B has 82 (corresponding to 36.12%). More importantly, Class A has 86 writing pieces that received 2 as a mark, (corresponding to 46.70%), while Class B has 126 (55.50%). So, the total general

improvement in linguistic features for each class adding the writing pieces that received 1 and 2 is 87.50% for Class A, and 91.62% for Class B.

Table n. 14 Class A and Class B general improvement in linguistic features in M1

Variations	Class A		Class B	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
0	23	12.50%	19	8.30%
1	75	40.80%	82	36.12%
2	86	46.70%	126	55.50%
	184		227	

Overall, it can be said that there have been improvements both in the writing skills as well as in the selected linguistic features. It must be noted that both classes have shown signs of improvement even though towards the end of this module Italian schools had to shift to online teaching due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As reported by the teachers, the unexpected and stressful change had an impact on students' motivation, especially in Class A.

### 5.3 Module one - Results related to motivation (Class A and B)

To assess motivation, at the end of M1 students were asked to give general feedback about the lessons. In the feedback survey all students said they were satisfied by their progress in grammar and vocabulary as well as in their writing skills in general, and mentioned they expect further improvement by the end of the course. All of them, but one, gave positive feedback about the course and hoped to continue with a similar experience in the future as well. Furthermore, some students underlined the fact that Module One gave them the chance to experience insight of self-awareness. The feedback section in the Appendix contains 40 answers. Nine students did not provide feedback. All the answers but one are positive or very positive. Here are some samples:

*I really liked the work we've done with our teacher. I think it helped me a lot to be more confident in writing. I learned to try harder to understand the meanings and use words that I didn't know before. By the end of the year, I expect I'm going to be more confident in writing and to know many new words and be more adept at using new grammatical structures so that I can write better and better about the things I think and I want to.*

VPFB20

*I think it's a nice initiative that all classes should take! this work helped me to strengthen my grammar and vocabulary, making them better. I hope to gain more confidence in speaking and writing in English by the end of the year and to reach the level I hope to achieve! KFFB10*

*I really Like the job we've done, because I'm learning new words and New ways of writing. And I also found out that I love writing, it makes me relax and think about what I am feeling in that moment, so thank you for everything you are making me discover about myself! Before I had little difficulties in writing, but now everything it's better. And I hope that at the end of the year I'll be able to write better than how I'm doing!*

ASFB22

*It was a good way to improve my writing skills and to learn about English writers. I improved Grammar. By the end of the year I expect to be more confidence with English and to have more command of the language. ACFB14*

Both teachers also expressed satisfaction about Module One. According to the teacher of Class A, although the class suffered the consequences of the pandemic lockdown (general stress, difficulties in rearranging the lessons, adapting to online mode), the results were satisfying. “*Generally speaking, students showed interest in the course. Most of them improved their writing skills. During the pandemic though, since we had to continue online, the organization of the lessons became more difficult and some lost motivation. However, the overall results are satisfying.*”

The teacher of Class B also expressed satisfaction for the writing results of her students in the first ten lessons: *“In my opinion, the largest part of my class has improved their writing abilities and they have boosted their vocabulary, also thanks to the materials and the resources shared like the lesson on punctuation and the list of new adjectives that were provided with the course.”* In particular, the teacher noticed that students were able to offer insights into their feelings and thoughts. *“Reading their thoughts written on the paper allowed me to discover hidden abilities and step-by-step I saw them taking courage and writing even longer compositions in which they exposed their fears, their creativity, their wishes and, sometimes, sad experiences of life.”* Based on the feedback given by this teacher as well as by some of the students quoted above, we can see that learning a second language through literature can also start a passion for creative writing.

#### 5.4 Module one - Answers to objectives

The main objective of this research is to investigate the possibility to develop L2 writing skills, language features and motivation using literary texts as samples of real – and rich – language. To this effect, a new course syllabus that included a wide range of literary texts was devised. The first part of this syllabus (Module One) was trialed with two classes of Italian high school students.

##### 1. Have students improved their writing skills?

Quantitative analysis shows that both classes have improved their writing skills after being exposed to ten literary texts and the relevant writing exercises. Using the information generated from above, we can see that 62% of the students (six boys and seven girls) improved in class A, and 73% (5 boys and 14 girls) in class B, with a general 0.34 improvement rate for class A and 0.81 for class B. If we consider the distribution of marks of the entry test and we compare them with the distribution of marks of the lessons, the data show that fewer students are in the unsatisfactory mark range after the 10 lessons in both classes. In class A there are 9 students in the unsatisfactory range before the lessons and 8 after the lessons, while in class B there are 9 before the lessons and zero after. On the other hand, if we consider the satisfactory mark range and above, there are 12 students in that range before the lesson and 13 after the lessons in class A, while 17 before and 26 after in class

B. With regards to the frequency of improvement, in class A students are included in a span that goes from -2.5 to 2.5, with 10 students (47.61%) showing a significant improvement included between 0.5 and 2.5. In class B students are included in a wider span that goes from -1.5 to 4, with 16 students (61.54%) showing a higher significant improvement, between 0.5 and 4. The data confirm that, although in class B the improvement is more evident, we can see signs of significant positive change in the writing skill performance of both classes.

## 2. Have students improved their grammar?

Quantitative analysis reports improvement in the linguistic features that were the focus of the ten lessons. The total amount of writing pieces assessed in both classes during the course is 411 (excluding 79 N/A) the total amount of writing pieces that show improvement (marks 1 and 2) is 373 corresponding to 90.75%. On the other hand, the total amount of writing pieces that show no improvement (marked zeros) is 42, which corresponds to 10.21%.

## 3. Have the students improved motivation?

As for qualitative analysis, the feedback provided by the learners showed that the use of literary texts enhanced their motivation and personal growth. This mostly happened thanks to the fact that students could find several ways of connecting the texts to their own personal feelings, experiences and thoughts, and this personal connection triggered a process of critical thinking and self-reflection. This was also confirmed by the feedback of one of the two teachers as quoted above. However, it is also important to specify that the data reported in this article refers to Module One only, which is just the first part of the syllabus.

As explained above, the choice of using literature was motivated by the necessity to use real language, so that the learners can be exposed not just to the language but also the style and the mood or thoughts expressed by the author. In this way students can learn by using the writers' patterns, vocabulary, and idioms as models. In fact, as stated by Brown & Yule (1983, p. 52, as cited in Gilmore, 2007) students need to have realistic models of proficient users for them to learn how to manage conversation effectively in the target language, and the same can be said for writing skills.

Although the focus of this part of the syllabus was on grammar and vocabulary, the findings from this study show that learners exposed to literature develop some degree of self-reflection, and when facing their own written production they are more likely to be open and willing to share intimate thoughts and feelings, experiences, including happy memories as well as sad moments, insights of self-awareness, critical thinking about social and environmental issues, love and even traumas in some cases.

### 5.5 Covid 19 pandemic disruption

In March 2020 the pandemic arrived in Italy and Italian schools started the so-called DAD, or distance learning. In that period the 22 students of Class A and the 27 students of Class B involved in this case study were at the end of module one and both teachers, Daniele Modica and Adele Troisi, managed to continue part of the course that they had started in November/December 2019, completing the 10 lessons of Module One plus a few lessons of Module Two. So only the last few lessons were delivered online.

The second and third part of the course, Module two and Module three, were completed starting in October 2020. This time only Class B was involved because the teacher of Class A had moved to a different school. Once again, the pandemic brought serious disruption to the regular development of the syllabus as lessons were sometimes in presence and sometimes online and other time also hybrid lessons were delivered with part of the students online and part face to face.

Nevertheless, between September and December 2020 (Covid-19 pandemic second wave) teacher Adele Troisi managed to complete module two and three with Class B. However, in these two parts the number of absentees per lesson is higher than in Module One while only half of the lessons of Module three were delivered. In January 2021 Class C started to be involved but again the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic reached its peak in that period and the teacher was only able to deliver part of the lessons of Module One.

In the same period, Eurolingue School teachers and B1 students were involved, in this case, it is important to underline that, Covid 19 disruption in the private language school sector was not so strong for several reasons. Firstly, because the transition between face to face and online teaching was far quicker and teachers showed to have more skills and technical resources to face the change. Secondly, private language school classes were much smaller than the ones in the public sector and this allowed a better delivery of the

lessons. Thirdly, private language school students had more access to devices and better connection mostly since lessons were in the afternoon and parents were not using their devices for work. The lessons at Eurolingue School were delivered between January and May 2021 (between the end of the second and the beginning of the third Covid 19 wave). This produced rapidly changing situations on which students were sometimes at schools and other times at home.

The research at Eurolingue School involved 12 teachers and 95 students in 12 classes. Each class had only three lessons of the syllabus, most of the lessons were delivered online but some were delivered face to face too, and they covered all the three modules of the syllabus. Besides this, there was also one class of creative writing conducted by me with 7 students using part of the three-module syllabus for a total of 15 hours. As said, the impact of the pandemic disruption in the private language school was less heavy for the above-mentioned reasons and because each class was involved for a shorter period.

In their recent study Bottaro and Faraci investigated, using an online survey, the impact of Covid 19 pandemic second wave on a group of 353 Italian university students aged between 21 and 22 which never contracted the virus. The research focused on the emotional impact of the pandemic on the students and its effect on study motivation. The findings showed that uncertainty and pessimism predicted worse study motivation and that psychological support should be offered to younger students to avoid that stressful emotional experience might affect their learning goals (Bottaro, & Faraci, 2022). Nicholes (2021) underlines the connection between creative writing and autobiography and the benefits that creative writing experience may bring to students. Wendy Bishop (1993, as cited in Nicholes, 2021), explicitly talks about the therapeutic power of autobiographical creative writing and describes prompts in the creative-writing classroom in order to invite students to write autobiographically (Bishop, 1998, as cited in Nicholes, 2021). For instance, a title like “Autobiography - Past, Present, and Future” can be the right prompt to ask students to fictionalize their lives and see themselves as a character that moves in time and space. These aspects could be better developed in future lines of research in creative writing and text exploitations in L2 classrooms.

## 5.6 Module two - Results related to writing skills (Class A and B)

This section refers to the assessment of the writing pieces produced by the students in the second part of the syllabus M2. As for M1 also in this case Class A and Class B students attended the course during their regular English classes at school, the lessons were delivered by the same English teachers. However, this part of the course was delivered during the first and the second waves of Covid-19 pandemic, for these reasons most of the lessons, between March and November 2020, were delivered online. After each lesson students would upload their writing through a link to be assessed. Assessment was carried out to answer the following questions:

4. Have students improved their writing skills?
5. Have students improved their creativity?
6. Have students improved their motivation?

To answer the first two questions, the result has been evaluated through quantitative analysis, while qualitative analysis was used to answer the last question of the research. Feedback was collected after Module Two.

### Writing skills

- Assessment

The writing pieces were marked according to the Cambridge Assessment Scale (as specified in the B1 Preliminary Handbook p. 25-26) which includes: Content, Communicative Achievement, Organization and Language. Marks for each subscale were allocated from 0 to 5 for a maximum of 20 marks in total for each piece of writing produced by the students. In the tables shown in this study, marks have been reported in a scale from 0 to 10, to make them easier to read.

As mentioned, M2 started in March/April 2020. Both Class A and Class B were involved, however only Class B managed to complete M2 in autumn at the beginning of the new schoolyear (September/November 2020), while students of Class A were only able to complete part of Module Two. The following table shows the results of the general assessment for writing skills in Class A.



The tables below show the results of the writing pieces produced by the students during the ten lessons of M2 of the syllabus. The first column presents the code assigned to each student: first letter(s) of their name(s) and surname(s) plus F for feminine or M for masculine, followed by A or B to identify the class, and a number (1 to 22 for Class A and 1 to 27 for Class B). The ten columns show the marks of the writing pieces produced during the lessons (L11, L12...). Marks are expressed in decimals; results are presented in increasing order from the lowest to the highest. It is important to keep in mind that the satisfactory mark in Italian school system is 6.00.

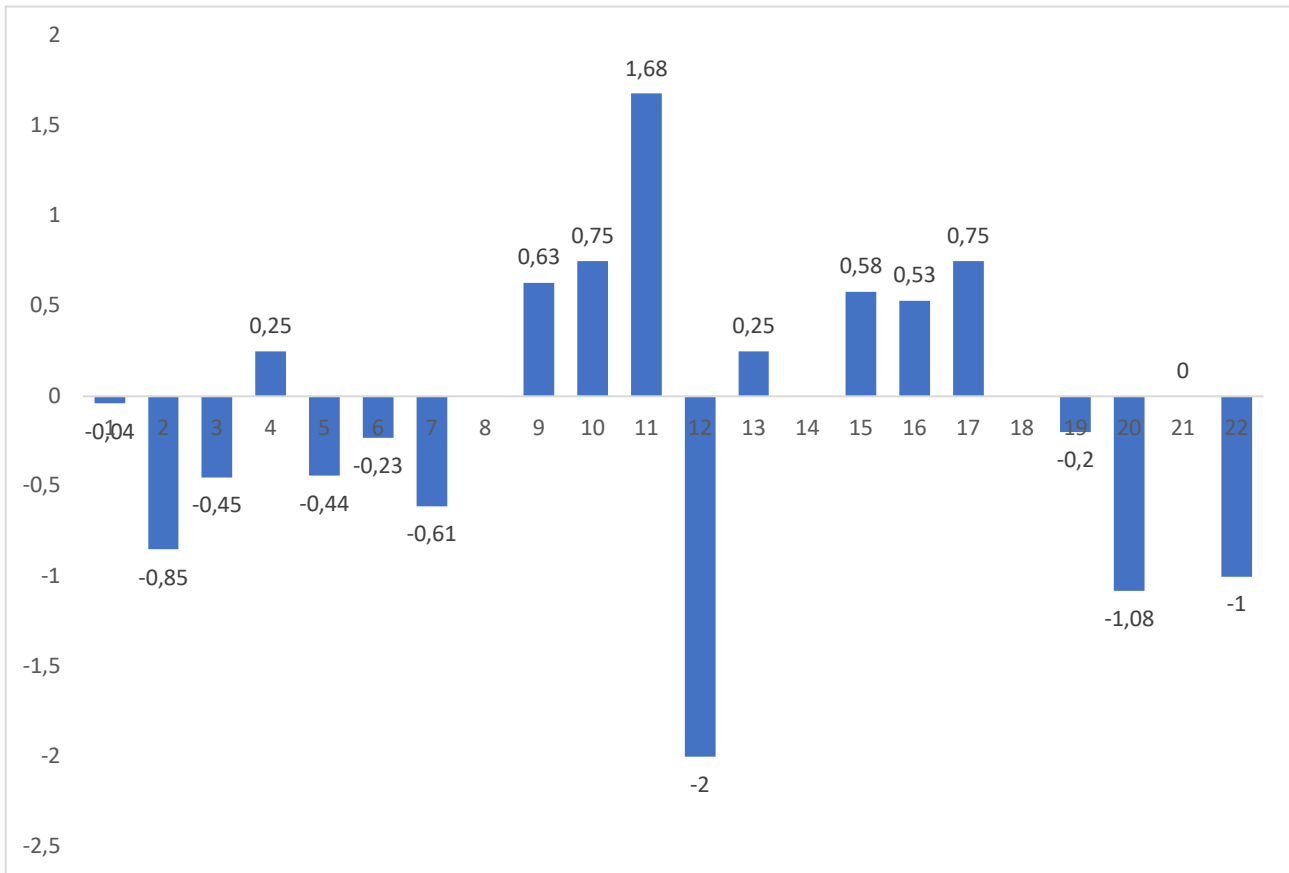
Table n. 15 Class A general assessment results in M2 Lessons (L) (N/A = absentees)

Name	L11	L12	L13	L14	L15	L16	L17	L18	L19	L20	Average Module Two	Improvement Module Two
FCFA20	7.50	7.50	9	8.50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	8,13	0,63
MVFA21	9	7	8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	8	-0,2
LMMA22	6	8	7	10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7,75	-1
GSFA14	N/A	N/A	8	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7,5	0,75
SRMA16	7	7.50	7.50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7,33	0,53
CEFA18	7	8.50	5.50	8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7,25	0,25
GFFA6	7	7	6.50	8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7,13	1,68
SMMA12	6	9	6.50	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7,13	0,75
CLMA19	N/A	7	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7	-0,45
ALFA15	6.50	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6,75	-0,04
MAFA10	7	6	6	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6,5	0,25
BAFA13	6	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	6,5	0
JDFA17	5	6.50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5,75	-1,08
EFFA9	6	5	5.50	6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5,63	-0,23
CPMA11	5.50	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5,5	-0,85

RCFA3	4	6	6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5,33	0,58
EBMA5	5	4	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4,67	-0,61
DSMA4	4	5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4,5	-0,44
LPMA2	2	2	4	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,75	-2
FRMA1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
MPFA7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
FAMA8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

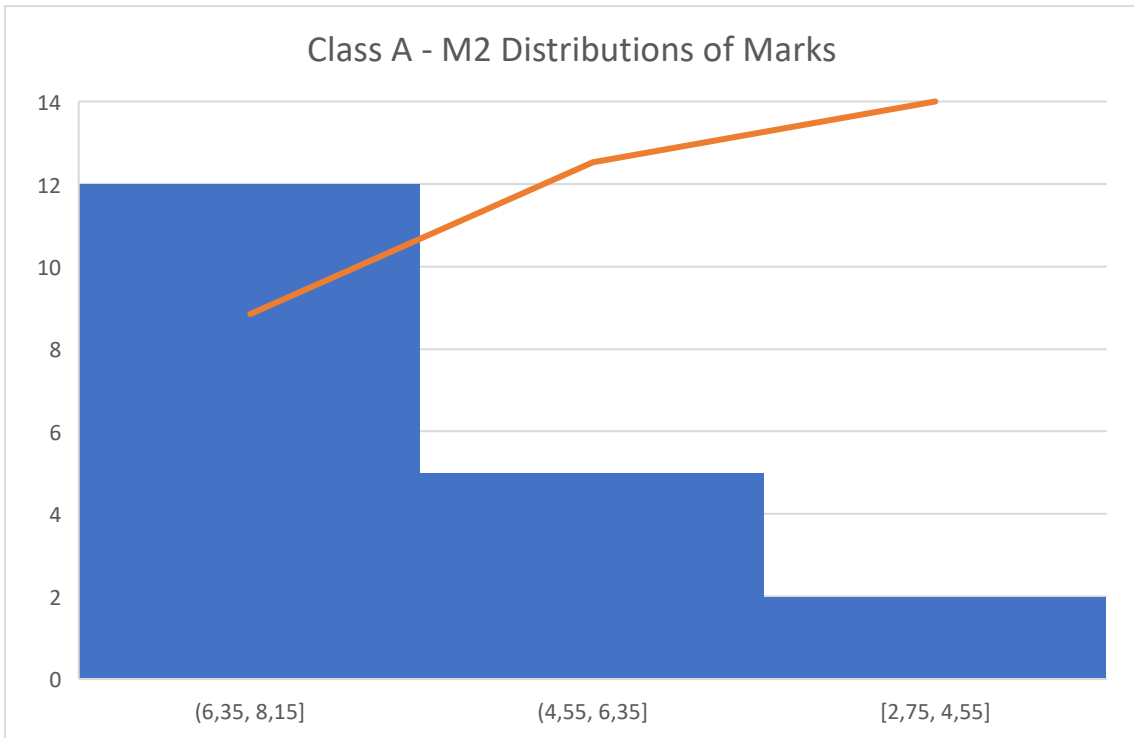
Class A produced 57 pieces of writing in M2. Table 15 shows the marks of the writing pieces produced from Lesson eleven to Lesson twenty. The last two columns refer to the average marks in M2 and the rate of improvement (if any). In this class there are 22 students, 3 of them did not produce any writing (N/A), while 9 students show improvements in their results, and 10 show a worsening of results in comparison to M1. In fact, this variance is calculated by comparing the average marks of M1 with the average marks of M2. The class average mark in M1 is 6,19 while the average mark in the written production of M2 is 6,37. However, although there are fewer writing pieces, and a general worsening there is still a slight improvement in the class general mark average equal to 0,18.

Graph 1 Distribution of improvements in Class A in M2

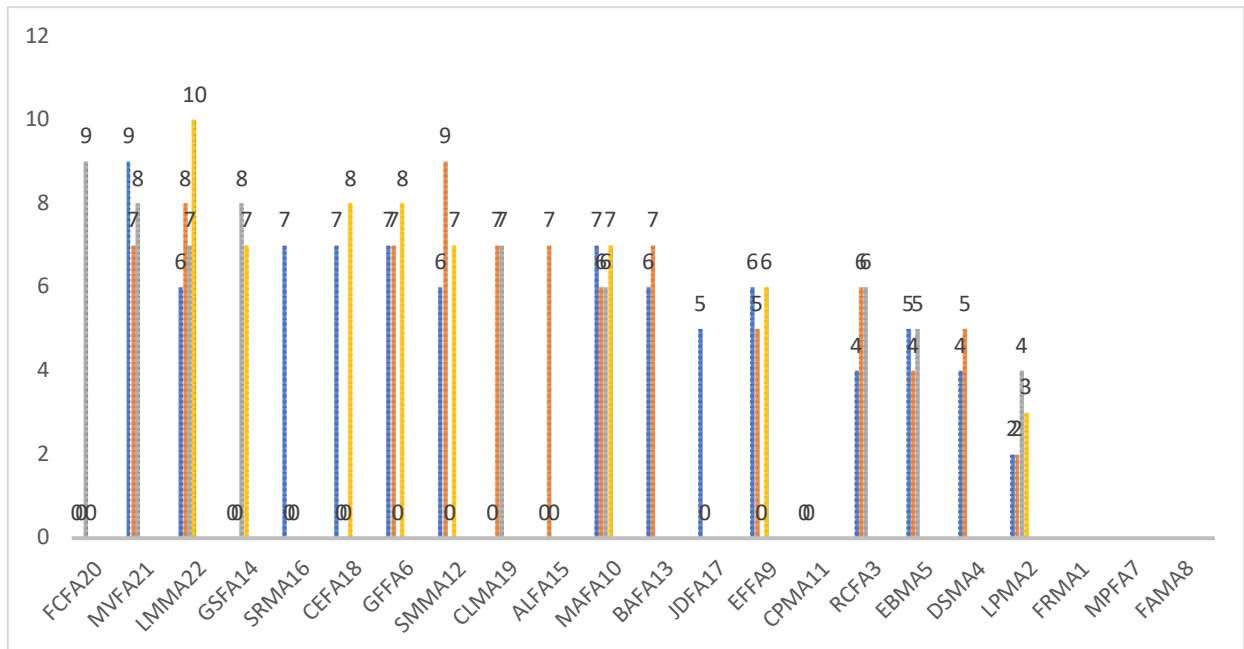


From the table it is possible to see that the variance between improvement and worsening in Class A M2 is included in the two peak values 1,68 and -2. There are 6 students showing a variance included in the area between 0,25 and -0,23 while 14 students show higher degrees of variance included between 0,75 and -1,08.

Graph 2 Class A distribution of marks in M2



Graph 3 Class A distribution of marks in M2

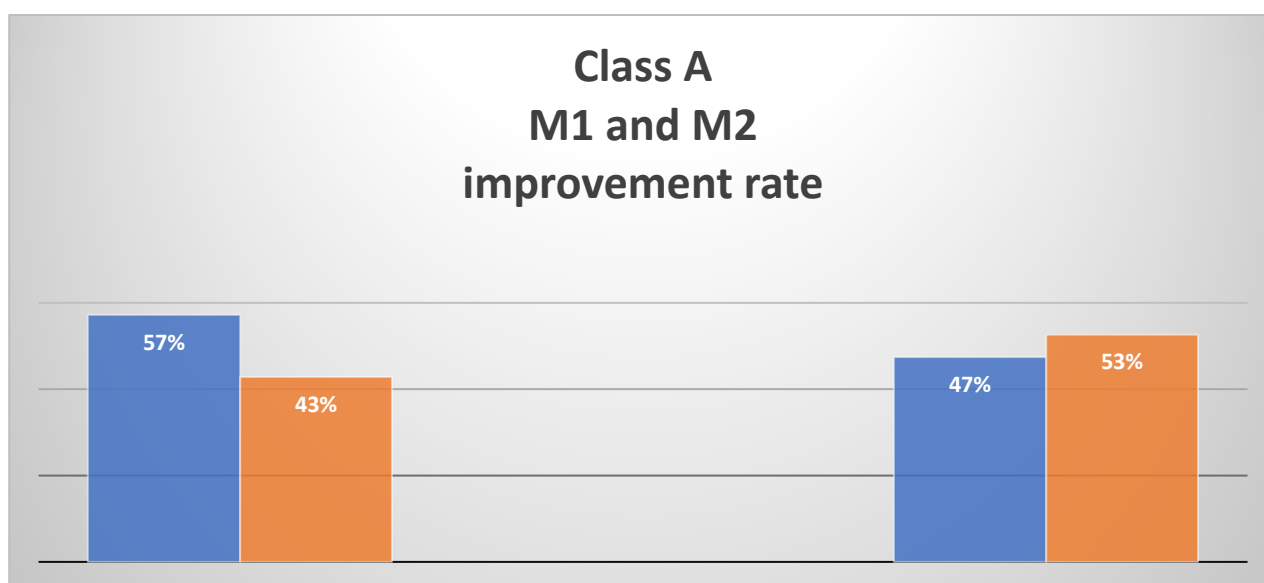


Graph 3 shows the distribution of marks of Class A in M2 according to the general assessment of the writing skills for the writing produced in four lessons from L11 to L14. As shown in the table, nineteen students out of twenty-two attended the four M2 lessons. Considering six as the benchmark for a satisfactory

performance (according to the Italian school system), it is possible to see that, apart from four students who performed below satisfactory in all four writing pieces, the majority of the students performed at satisfactory level or above in most or in all their writing.

Nevertheless, if compared with M1 the results of M2 show a general decreasing of the improvement as shown in the graph below.

Graph 4 Class A M1 and M2 improvement rate



In this graph the first two columns refer to M1 and the last two to M2. The blue columns represent improvement while the orange columns refer to worsening. The results show a decrease in the improvement and an increase of the worsening values. This can be justified by the fact that the class only completed four lessons of M2 and, most of all that the students attended these lessons at the very beginning of the pandemic, between March and May 2020. So, these results may be influenced by the disruption brought by Covid 19 in both the lives and the school system of Italian students. These four M2 lessons in Class A were all delivered during the very first wave of the pandemic between March and April 2020.

Class B M2 results are analyzed in the following paragraphs. Class B M2 lessons were delivered during the second wave of the pandemic, between September and November 2020. Also, in this case we can see that attendance dropped significantly, with a high percentage of absentees. It is worth underline that the lessons

were delivered during the regular English hours as provided by the state school timetable.

Table n. 16 Class B General assessment results in M2 Lessons (L)

Student	L11	L12	L13	L14	L15	L16	L17	L18	L19	L20	Average	Improvement rate
BRFB27	10			10	10						10	0,86
EBFB25	9	7	9	10	7,3	8	8,3	10	10	10	8,86	0,96
GLFB26	9	7	9	9		9,3					8,66	-0,14
BBFB17	6	7	9			8	7,3	8	10	9	8,04	0,64
GPFB16	6	8		7,3	7,3	8	8	7	10	10	7,96	0,58
AMFB5	7,3	7		7	8	8	6,3	6	10	10	7,73	1,08
EMFB4		6,3	8				7		9		7,58	0,95
KFFB10	7	6,3		6,3	7,3	7	7	7	10	9	7,43	0,49
AFMB24	9	7	6	7,3		7,3	7		7	8	7,33	-0,55
ACFB12	7	7	6	6,3	7	6	7		10		7,04	-0,09
FCFB13		7,3	6	6	6,3	7,3	7	9			6,99	-0,18
FFFB19		7	6,3	5,3		6,3	6,3	7	8	9	6,9	-0,66
ACFB14	8	6	7,3	7,3		7,3	6	8	6	6	6,88	-0,32
EAFB23	8	7	6,3	7		6,3	6,3				6,82	-1,02
DTMB18	5,3	7	7	5	7,3	6,3	6,3	8		9	6,8	-0,6
ATMB15		7	7	6	6,3	7,3		7			6,77	-0,51
ASFB22	6	6		7,3		6	8				6,66	-1,09
VPFB20	6	8		6,3	5	7,3	6	7			6,51	-1,04
CGFB9	5,3	6	6			7	7,3	7			6,43	-0,5
ELFB6	7	6	6	6	8	6	6	6,3			6,41	-0,31
VCFB7	6,3	6	7	7	6,3	6	6	6	7	6	6,36	-0,39

GFFB3		8		5	6	6,3					6,33	-0,18
VZFB2	6	6		6		7		6	7,3	6	6,33	0,58
FMMB8		7	6,3	5,3	6,3	7	5,3	6,3	5,3	8	6,31	-0,59
STMB11	5	6,3	6	6	7,3				6	6,3	6,13	-0,82
IGFB21	6	6		6	6,3	6,3					6,12	-1,53
EFFB1											N/A	N/A

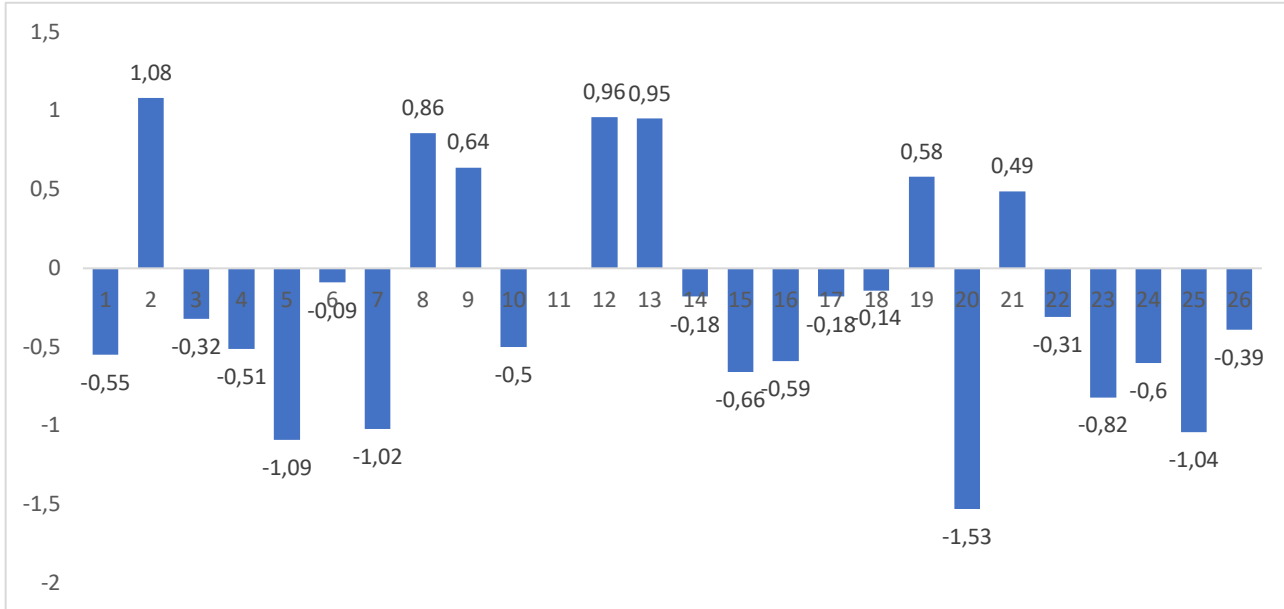
Table 16 shows the marks of the writing pieces produced by Class B from lesson eleven (L11) to lesson twenty (L20). The last two columns refer to the average marks in M2 and the rate of improvement (if any). In this class, only 9 students out of 26 (plus one N/A) show improvements in their results, which corresponds to 35% of the total number of students. The improvement rate is calculated by comparing the average marks of M1 with the average marks of M2. The class average mark in M1 is 7,25 while the mark average in the written production of M2 is 7,13, so there is a decrease of 0,12 in the mark average of the class.

Class B produced 184 writing pieces in M2, while Class A produced 57. In total, 241 pieces of writing were produced by the two classes in M2 during the first and the second wave of the Covid -19 pandemic. Comparing this to the number of pieces of writing produced in M1 before the pandemic, is it possible to see the impact of Covid disruption in the regular development of the course. In fact, there are 411 pieces in the pre-pandemic M1 against 241, produced by both classes in M2 during the first and second wave of the pandemic.

As above-mentioned, Class B is stronger than Class A. This worsening of the students' performance can be attribute to the impact of Covid-19 pandemic. In fact, lessons from 11 to 20 started being delivered at the beginning of the pandemic (March 2020) which in Italy produced massive issues of students' attendance and dropout, as the New York Times headline said in April 2021, "Italy's Problems with Schools dropout goes from bad to worse during the pandemic". According to the journalist Emma Bubola (2021), Italy had already one of the highest rates of dropout in Europe, and this rate become even higher during the pandemic. Although none of these students did dropout school, and only one was absent for all the lessons, they experienced a series of problems in dealing with closed schools, missing social life, and having to share technological devices, rooms, and connection with the other members of the family who were all at home for the same reasons. This produced

the fact that the ten lessons in Module B could only partially be completed, and the results are lower than in the previous module. The effect of the pandemic on this part of the course will be discussed below.

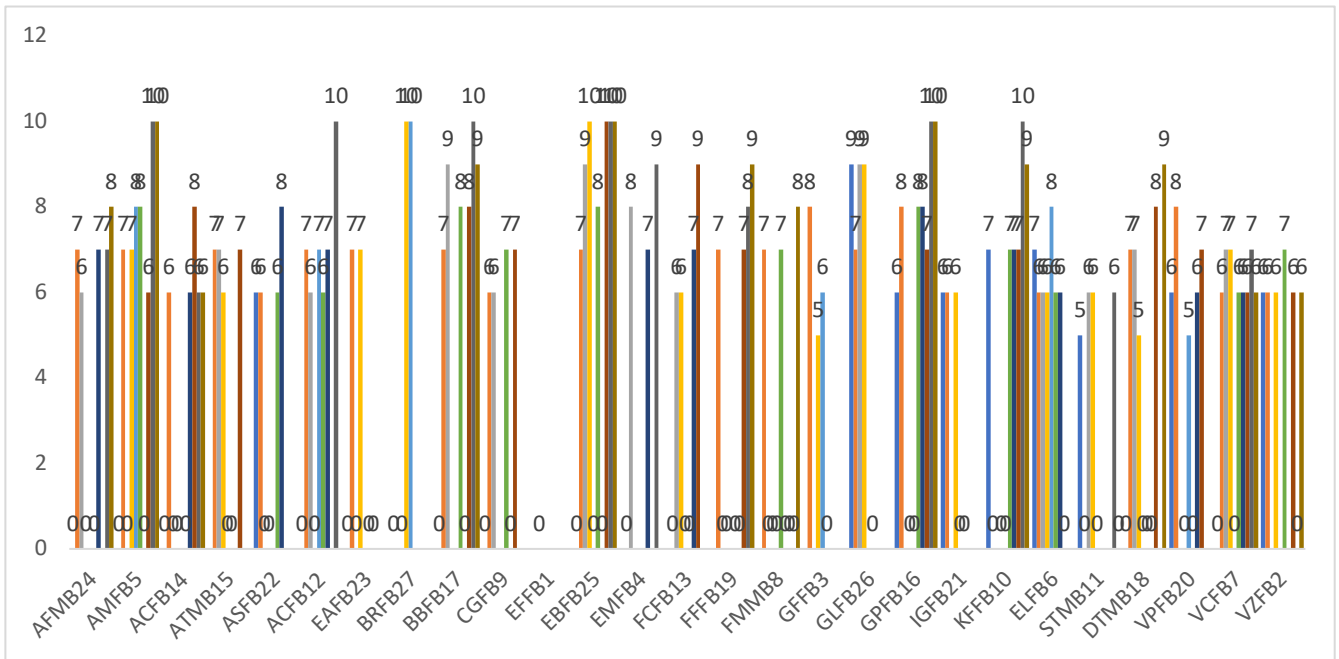
Graph 5 Class B variability of improvements in M2



From the graph it is possible to see that the variance between improvement and worsening in Class B M2 is included in the two peak values 1,08 and -1,53 (1,68 and -2 for Class A). The majority of the students (19 in total) show a variability included in the area between 0,86 and -0,82, while five show higher rates. The data seem to suggest that in Class B there is less variability than in Class A and therefore that the performance in class B is more consistent than in Class A.

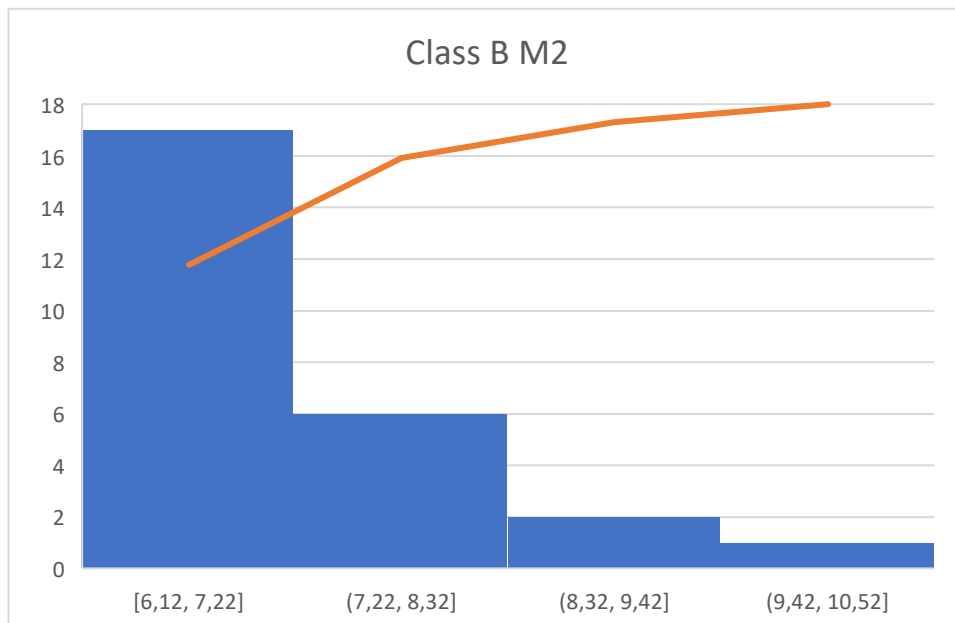


Graph 6 Class B marks distribution in M2 (with students' codes)



The graph shows that most students in Class B M2 performed at satisfactory level and above in all or most of their writing pieces. Only four of them performed below the range six.

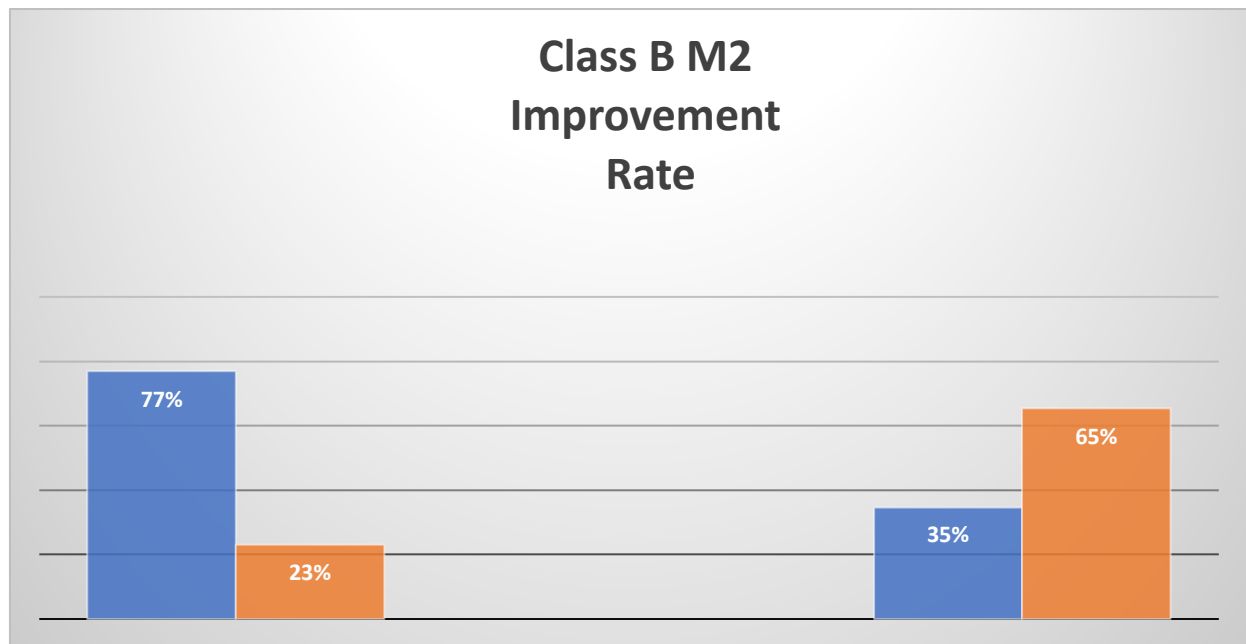
Graph 7 Class B marks distribution in M2



In Class B, only one student out of twenty-seven did not attend any of the ten lessons in M2. In this graph, 16 students (59% of the total) performed at satisfactory level and above (6,12 – 7,22). Six students, 22%

of the total, performed in the more than satisfactory range (7,22 – 8,32), while three of them are in the excellent range (9,42 – 10,52). Once again, Class B confirms to be the stronger of the two class. It must also be said that the teacher of Class B delivered longer lessons (usually around 40/50 minutes) while the teacher of Class A kept the lesson to the half on hour suggested in the syllabus guidelines.

Graph 8 Class B improvement rate in M2



In this graph the first two columns refer to M1 and the last two to M2. The blue columns represent improvement while the orange columns refer to worsening. As for Class A, also in Class B the results show a decrease in the improvement and an increase of the worsening values. In the case of Class B, the improvement percentage has reduced from 77% to only 35% while the worsening percentage increased from 23% to 65%. Comparing these results of Class B with the results of Class A (57% M1 vs 47% M2 for improvement and 43% M1 vs 53% M2 for worsening) we can see that for Class B the worsening value in M2 is even more evident than for Class A. This comparison between average results in M1 and M2 shows that the difference expressed in graph is even more appalling.

As mentioned before, this can be justified by the fact that while Class A only completed four lessons of Module Two at the very beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, while students of Class B attended part of these lessons during the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic (March/May 2020), and part between second wave of

the pandemic (September/December 2020). So, since they were more exposed to the pandemic impact these results may be influenced by the disruption brought by Covid-19. In a recent article Alessandra Romano (2021) from the university of Siena describes the impact that the pandemic had on life and education showing how Covid -19 is producing epochal transformation on society and higher education system, especially in Italy where the pandemic was much stronger than in other countries. Her investigation focused on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on schoolteachers, on their reactions, feelings, and resistance to the changes imposed by the lockdown, and also their reaction to the shift from in presence classes to distance learning. More than 400 in-service teachers answered the on-line survey, the majority of which reported emotions of sadness, melancholy, and sense of loss during the experience of lockdown. Negative or positive feelings were affected that external factors such as the conditions of the home environment, the number of people at home and the type of job. The research concludes with recommendations for supporting teachers to increase their knowledge and familiarity with technological tools for online distance learning. This is a crucial element to address digital divide and technological poverty in students, and guarantee equity and accessibility of digital contents for all students.

Digital divide and technological poverty of the students may have an impact also on motivation and willingness to respond adequately to the input provided, as in the case of this case study conducted in Class A and B of two different public schools facing similar problems in a very difficult period.

### 5.7 Module two - Answers to objectives

The main objective of this part of the research was to investigate the possibility to develop L2 writing skills together with creativity. To this effect, this texts in this part of the course syllabus were used with the intention to explore and exploit creativity. As mentioned above, M2, as M1, was trialed with the same two classes of Italian high school students named Class A and Class B.

#### 1. Have students improved their writing skills?

The data presented above show that 9 students out of 19 (plus 3 N/A) improved in Class A meaning 47% of the total; and 8 students out of 26 (plus 1 N/A) improved in Class B, meaning the 30%. Considering the distribution of marks in M2, the data show that in Class A 13 students, which correspond to 61%, are in the

satisfactory mark range (six is regarded as the benchmark for satisfactory performance), while for Class B 100% of the students are in or above the satisfactory mark range. Comparing the class average mark of M2 with M1 it is possible to see the general improvement rate, which correspond to 0.18 improvement rate of the average mark for class A and a decrease of -0,12 of the average mark for class B.

Let's compare these data in M2 with the same data in M1.

#### M1 Class A

- 0,34 improvement rate of the class average mark (0,18 in M2)
- 62% showed improvement (47% in M2)
- 61% in or above benchmark 6 (61% in M2)

#### M1 Class B

- 0,81 improvement rate of the class average mark (- 0,12 in M2)
- 73% showed improvement (30% in M2)
- 100% in or above benchmark 6 (100% in M2)

From this data it is possible to say that due to Covid-19 pandemic disruption there has been a non-significant improvement in M2 for Class A, and a slight worsening in Class B. However, at the same time, the data suggest that, although the number of students showing improvements has decreased in comparison with M1, the number of students in or above the benchmark 6 is the same in M1 and M2 in both Class A and Class B. From this information it may be possible to infer that the improvement produced in M1 is robust and not transitory.

### 2. Have students improved their creativity?

The results about the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (creativity and critical thinking) will be evaluated in a dedicated chapter in Module Three.

### 3. Have the students improved motivation?

The feedback provided by the learners of both classes showed that the use of literary texts enhanced their motivation. The feedback was positive for both classes and for all the students but one. They all gave a several different reasons: some students mentioned creativity, other ones mentioned critical thinking, other grammar and vocabulary, but also multiculturalism, literature, culture in general and many related the work with their personal experience. Another important element is the possibility to express themselves without being judged which gives students willingness to be open and talk about their lives and personal experiences. In order to avoid the feeling of constraint or being judged, the feedback was delivered to the author of the research directly through a link, so the schoolteacher had no access to it, while the marks and the assessment was given to them long after the end of the course and they know it would have no impact on their school marks. Here are some samples (full students' feedback report in appendix):

*Working with literature is one of the most effective ways to learn and improve your English.*

*Even though I have not encountered any difficulty in writing the texts, they have shown me a wider range of vocabulary that can be used to better my speaking and writing abilities. I expect to continue learning more and more words and maybe be more passionate about English literature and its beauty. GLFB26*

*I believe that all of these assignments have helped to improve my writing skills and especially my vocabulary. It's very useful because we have been working on poems and famous novels, so next year, when we study the English literature, we will be a step ahead. However, I would like to be more creative by the end of the year. BRFB27*

*I think that the work I have done in this months helped me to expand my vocabulary and now I think I can speak and write English better. I have improved my grammar and my writing skills. By the end of the year I aspect to learn new words and improve my texts with a better grammar. ACFB12*

*In my opinion I think that the work we have done was important to improve our skills and I think it was*

interesting. I have improved many areas like writing skills and reading comprehension. By the end of the year I expect to achieve better writing skills. VCFB7

### 5.8 Module three - Results related to writing skills (Class B and Eurolingue School)

Module Three lessons were carried out toward the end of 2020, during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the difficulties of delivering online lessons efficiently, only Class B carried out the project course and only for four lessons. Also, student participation in these last four lessons dropped drastically.

Nevertheless, the outcome of M3 is quite interesting as shown below.

Table n. 17 Class B General writing skills assessment in M3 Lessons (L)

Students	L21	L22	L23	L24	L25	L26	L27	L28	L29	L30	Average	Improvement rate
EBFB25		9			10						9,5	0,64
GLFB26		9								10	9,5	0,84
ASFB22		9	10		8						9	2,34
ACFB12					9						9	1,96
BRFB27					9						9	-6,82
FFFB19		9								9	9	2,1
BBFB17										8,3	8,3	-1
KFFB10	7	8			9					9	8,25	0,82
AMFB5	7		8		9						8	0,27
ATMB15			8								8	1,23
EMFB4		8								8	8	0,43
AFMB24			8,5		7						7,75	0,43
DTMB18		7			8					8	7,67	0,87

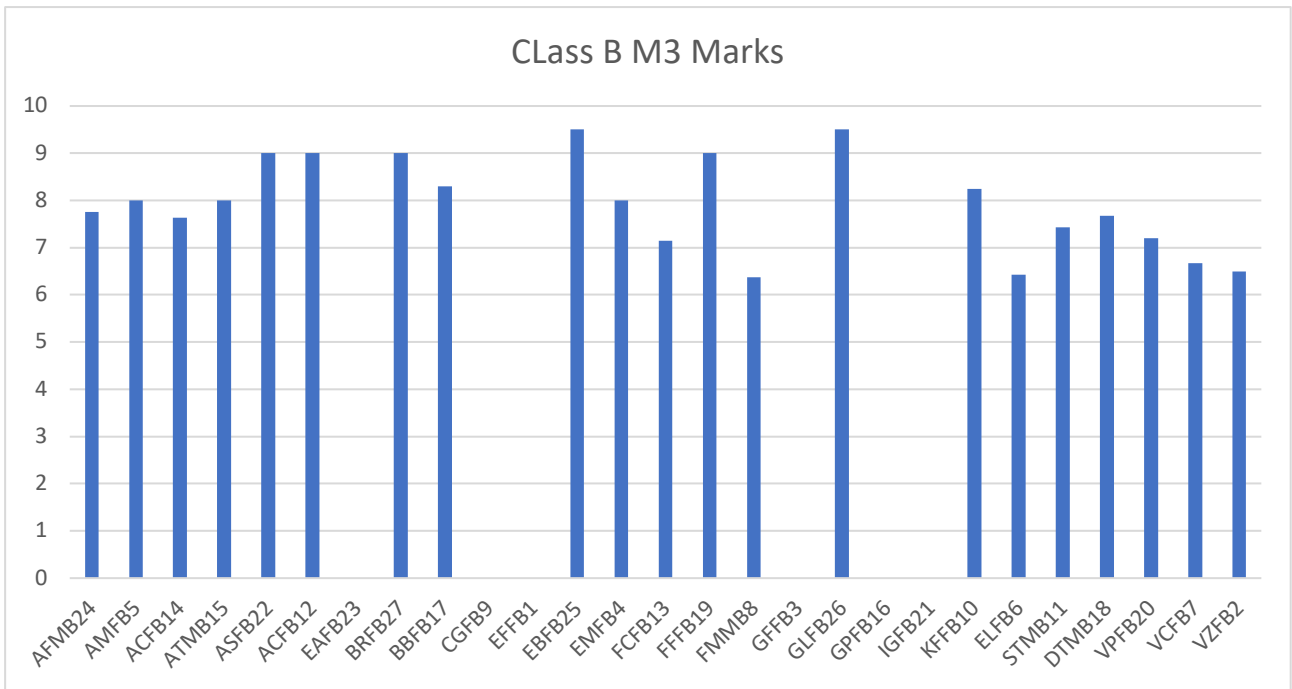
ACFB14	6		7,5		8				9	7,63	0,75
STMB11	6,3	8							8	7,43	1,3
VPFB20		8,3			7,3				6	7,2	0,69
FCFB13		7			7,3					7,15	0,16
VCFB7	6				7				7	6,67	0,31
VZFB2	5	6			6				9	6,5	0,17
ELFB6		7			6,3				6	6,43	0,02
FMMB8		6,5			6,3				6,3	6,37	0,06
EAFB23											
CGFB9											
EFFB1											
GFFB3											
GPFB16											
IGFB21											

Table 17 shows the marks of the writing pieces produced by Class B in M3 from lesson twenty-one (L21) to lesson thirty (L30). The last two columns refer to the marks average in M3 and the rate of improvement or worsening. The table shows the huge number of N/A, in fact M3 was the most effected by the effect of Covid 19 pandemic. Class B produced 51 writing pieces in M3, while Class A produced 0 and. In total, as previously specified for M2, also these four lessons and relative piece of writing were produced during the second wave of the Covid -19 pandemic. Comparing this to the number of pieces of writing produced in Module One before the pandemic, is it possible to see the impact of Covid disruption in the regular development of the course. In fact, there are 411 pieces in the pre-pandemic M1 against 241, produced by both classes in M2 during the first and second wave of the pandemic and only 51 produced during the second wave by only one class.

In this class, only 7 students out of 26 (plus one N/A) show improvements in their results, which corresponds to 26% of the total number of students. The improvement rate is calculated by comparing the

average marks of M2 with the average marks of M3. The class average mark in M2 is 7,13 while the mark average in the written production of M3 is 7,17. The results seem to show that there is a slight improvement in the mark average of the class equal to 0,04.

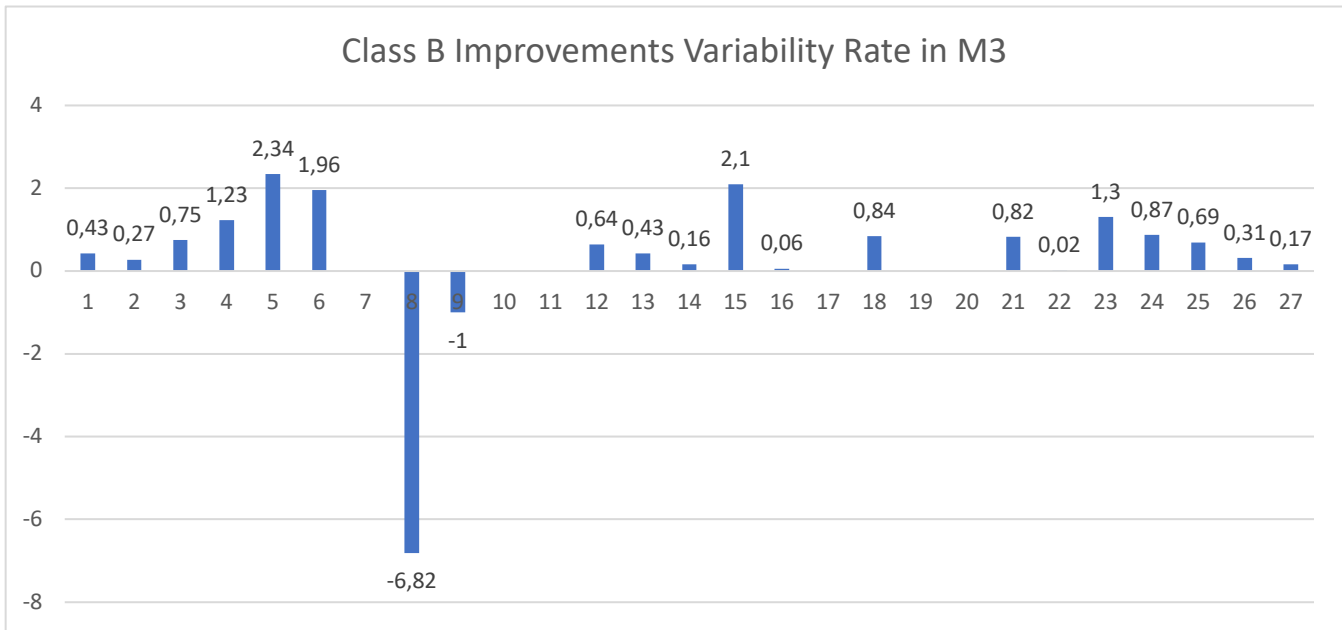
Graph 9 Class B writing assessment results in M3



The little improvement rate is due to the lack of writing pieces in most if the M3 lessons. However, looking at the distribution of the marks, as shown in this table, it is possible to see that students' performance of Class B in M3 is quite good. In fact, many the 21 students who attended the four lessons and produced pieces of writing received high marks, besides all of them are above the satisfactory mark. This is encouraging results seem to suggest that if both classes A and B had attended all the three modules regularly the improvement in general writing skills would have been rather high.

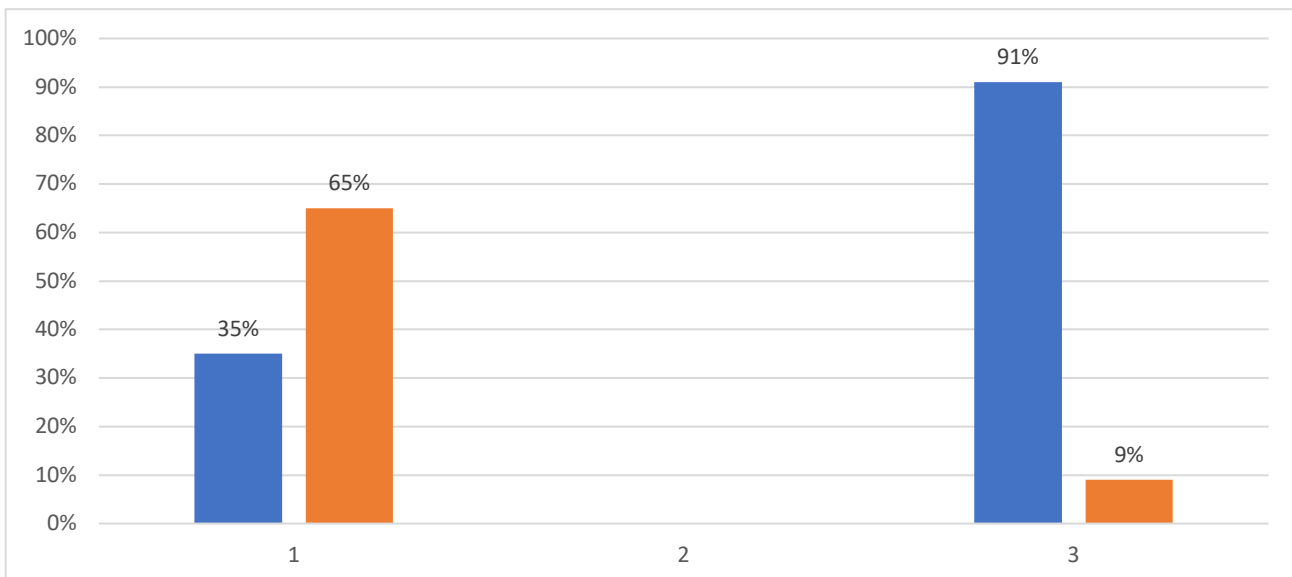


Graph 10 Class B improvement variability rate in M3



From the graph it is possible to see that, excluding the peak value -6,82, the variance between improvement and worsening in Class B M3 is included in the range between the values 2,34 and -1,00. However, all the values, apart from two, are positive and 15 show rates above 0,25, and 5 show a rate above 1,00. Also, these data seem to suggest that Class B the performance in class B becomes more consistent with practice.

Graph 11 Class B M3 Improvement rate



The graph shows a comparison of the results of Class B M2 and Class B M3. The results are quite encouraging, in fact the blue column represents the improvement rate in both modules and the orange column shows the worsening percentage of M2 and M3. From the graphic it is possible to observe that the improvement percentage in M3 reaches 91%. This means that, in spite Covid 19 pandemic and the difficulties it brought in the Italian school system, the course managed to improve the quality of the writing skills of these students.

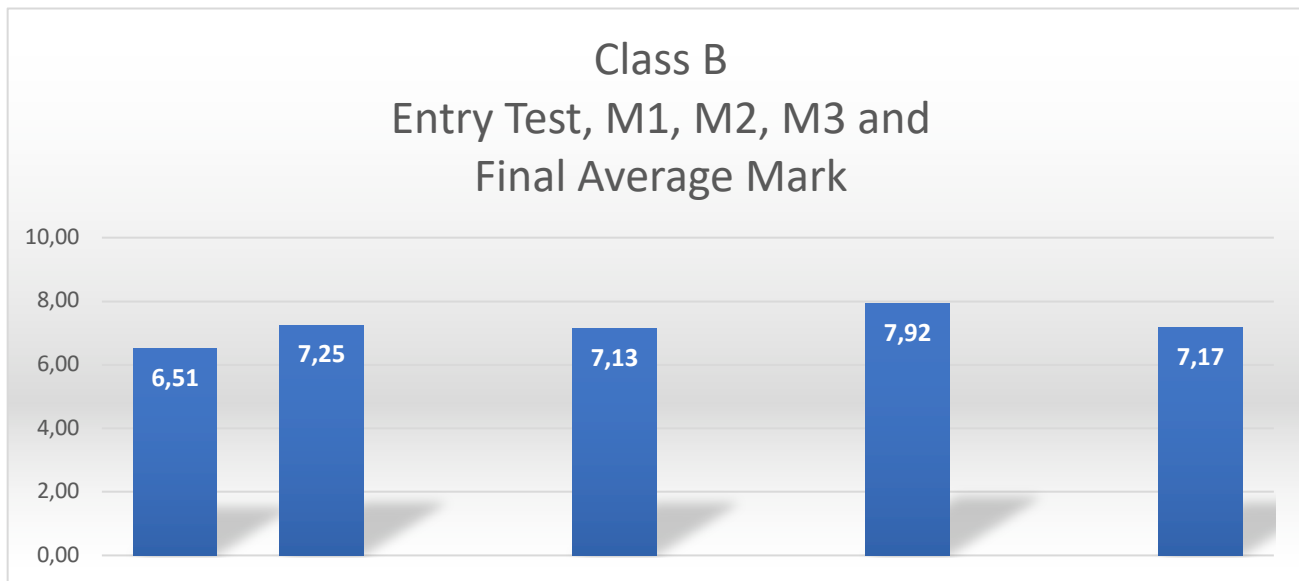
### 5.9 Module three - Answers to objectives

As mentioned before, this part of the course was delivered during the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, for this reason the lessons, were delivered online. As in M1 and M2 after each lesson students would upload their writing through a link in order to be assessed. Assessment was carried out to answer the following questions:

- Have students improved their writing skills?

The data collected in M3 seem to confirm the trend seen in M1, before the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, and partially also in M2, namely that students can improve their writing skills through being exposed to literary text and being engaged in related activities. This trend seems to be confirmed also by the qualitative analysis carried out through written interviews in order to collect the feedback by both teachers and students. Although the research focused mostly on the pieces of writing collected in Class A and Class B, in the following paragraphs the results of Class C will also be reported together with the other two state school classes, as they help in having a complete picture of the whole project.

Graph 12 Class B average marks in entry test and M1, M2 and M3.



This graph shows the results of Class B in all the modules and the entry test. The first column shows the results of the average mark in the two entry tests (the email and the story or the article). The second column shows the result of the pieces of writing produced in M1 (pre-pandemic), the third column refers to the average mark of M2 (first and beginning of the second wave of the pandemic) and the fourth column shows the average mark of M3 (end of second wave of the pandemic). The final columns show the general average mark 7,17, comparing this value with the mark of the entry test, 6,15, it is possible to say that the improvement rate is equal to 0,66.

1 Have students improved their critical thinking?

The answer to this question will be given in the dedicated section of the next chapter.

2 Have students improved their motivation?

Judging from the feedback provided by the students the outcome of this project is very positive. In fact, students gave several reasons in support of this kinds of syllabus based on literary excerpts (the complete feedback of Class A and Class B is included in the appendix).

*About the work done, I think it's an excellent activity, which is making me learn bits and pieces of*

*authors that I didn't know, for example I was very impressed by the book by George Orwell "1984" really rich in meaning! I still have some difficulty in understanding and not having a polished vocabulary I have difficulty in finding the right words, at the end of the year I hope to be able to improve things where I have difficulties and to enrich my cultural background AMFB5*

*I think that this work is really useful because of the fact that you can learn new words and you can read some of the classics of literature. But I am not happy of the fact that these passages should be modern for the students who have to study them. These lessons should be simple also for the fact that they have to pave the way for studying English. Regardless, I am of the opinion that this project helps me so much because I found out that my vocabulary is so improved. Thank you. ATMB15*

*I think that these lessons based on literary texts have increased my interest and motivation in studying English because literary texts offer a rich source of linguistic input and help me to practise the four skills - speaking, listening, reading and writing. Literary texts help me to develop my understanding of other cultures, awareness of difference and develop tolerance. I think literature can help me develop critical thinking and self-awareness because give me the opportunity to express my own ideas about life, values, beliefs, interests and dislikes. Literature let me practise expressing opinions, explaining cause and effect relationship and comparing facts and ideas. I can develop my thinking skills over time by reading more literary texts because reading stimulates my brain, allowing me to think in new way. GPFB16*

#### 5.10 General results (All groups: Class A, B, C and Eurolingue School)

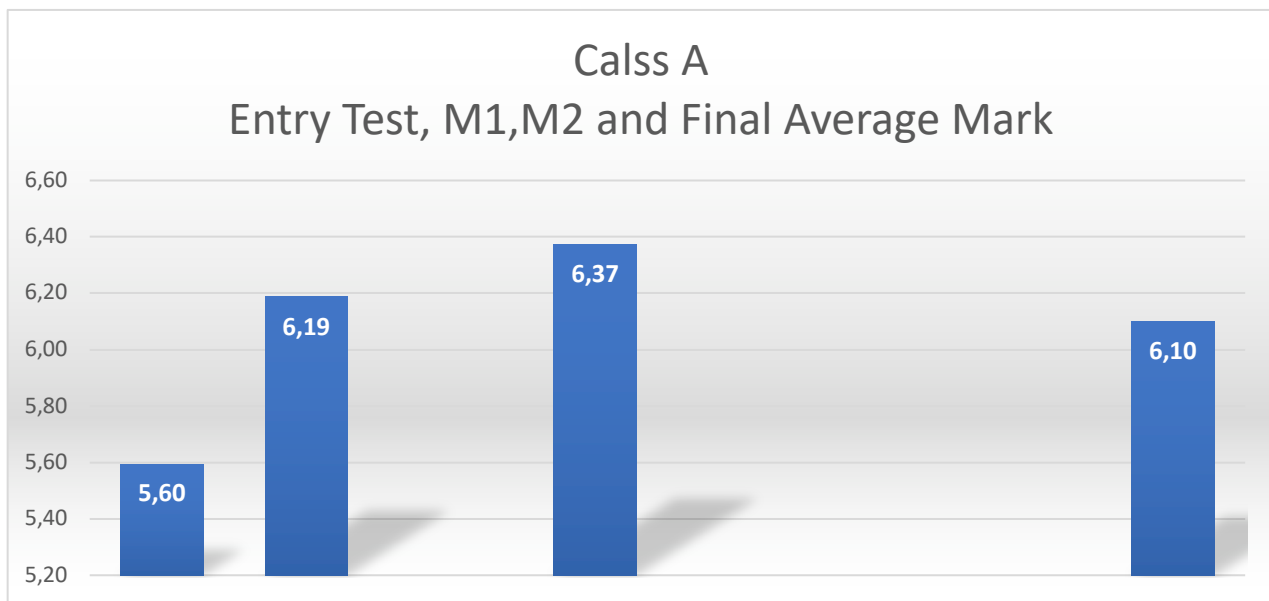
In this section the results of the general average marks of all four groups, Class A, B, and C from state schools and Eurolingue School students will be reported.

##### *Class A*

The first group is Class A; these students completed the entry test and M1, but they only did half of M2.

The graph shows the average marks of the entry test in the first column, the class average mark of M1 in the second, the class average mark of M2 in the third column and the final class average mark in the fourth column. From the data reported in the graph, it is possible to say that, despite the disruption brought by Covid-19 pandemic, Class A shows a general improvement from 5,60 to 6,10 equal to 0,50. It is worth to notice that in M2 Class A students show their best performance in a positive trend that would have probably grown more if they had continued the course with M3.

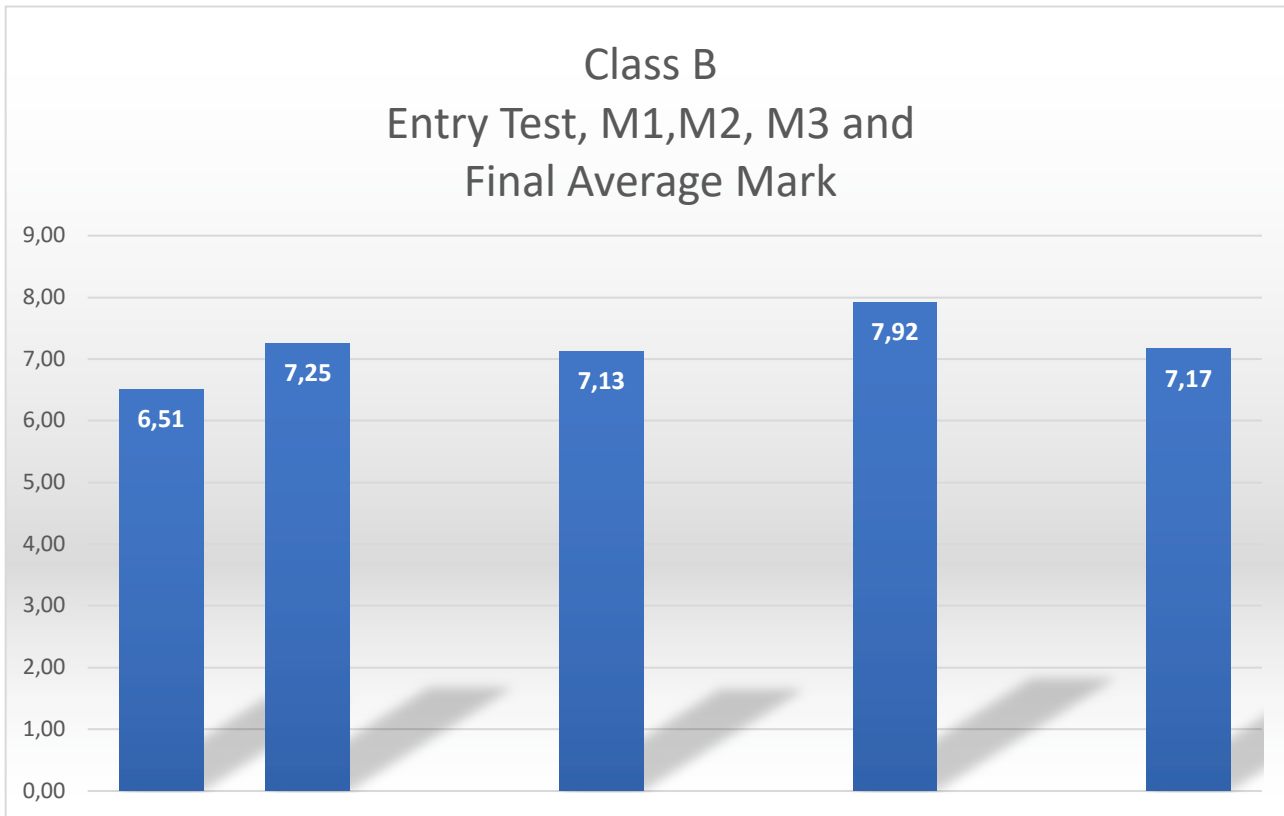
Graph 13 Class A general results



### *Class B*

The second group is Class B, these students completed the entry test, M1, M2 and half of M3. The graph shows the average marks of the entry test in the first column, the class average mark of M1 in the second column, the class average mark of M2 in the third column, the class average mark of M3 in the fourth column, and the final class average mark in the fifth column. From the data reported in the graph, it is possible to say that, despite the disruption brought by Covid-19 pandemic, also Class B shows a general improvement from 6,51 to 7,17 equal to 0,66.

Graph 14 Class B general results

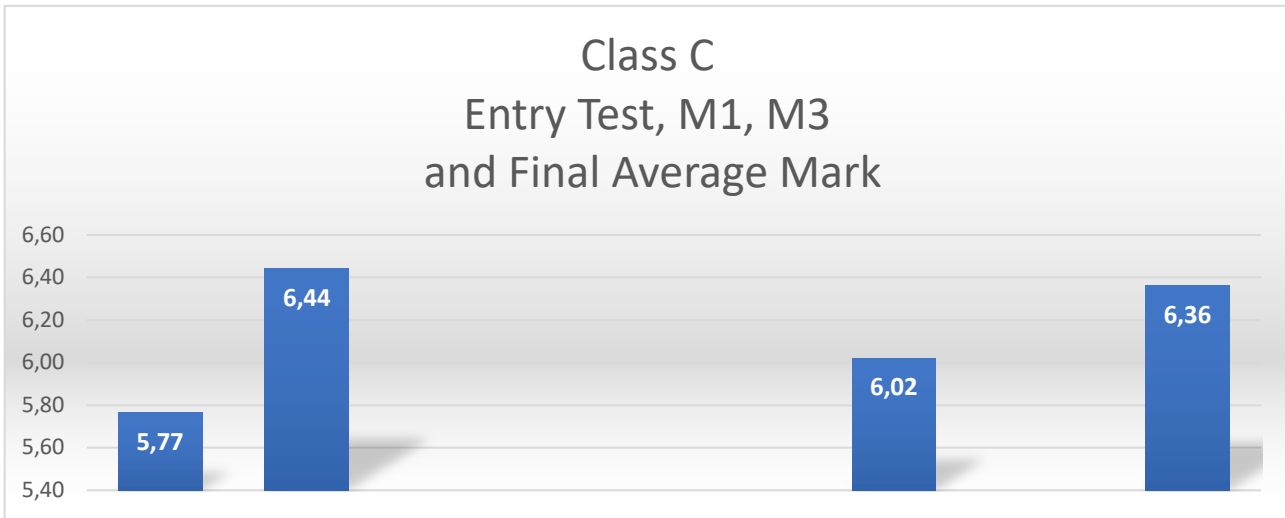


The results and the marks are coherent with the general performance of both classes. In fact, as stated before Class A is the weaker of the two while Class B is the stronger. It is worth of notice that in M3 Class B students managed to have their best performance.

### Class C

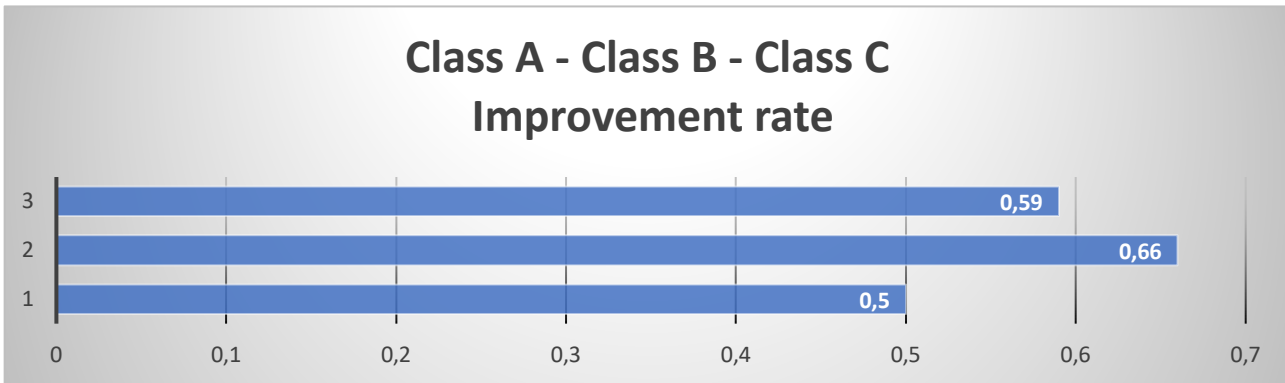
The third group is Class C, these students completed the entry test, M1, and only part of M3. The graph shows the average marks of the entry test in the first column, the class average mark of M1 in the second column, the class average mark of M3 in the third column, and the final class average mark in the fourth column. From the data reported in the graph, it is possible to say that, despite the disruption brought by Covid-19 pandemic, also Class C shows a general improvement from 5,77 to 6,36 equal to 0,59.

Graph 15 Class C general results



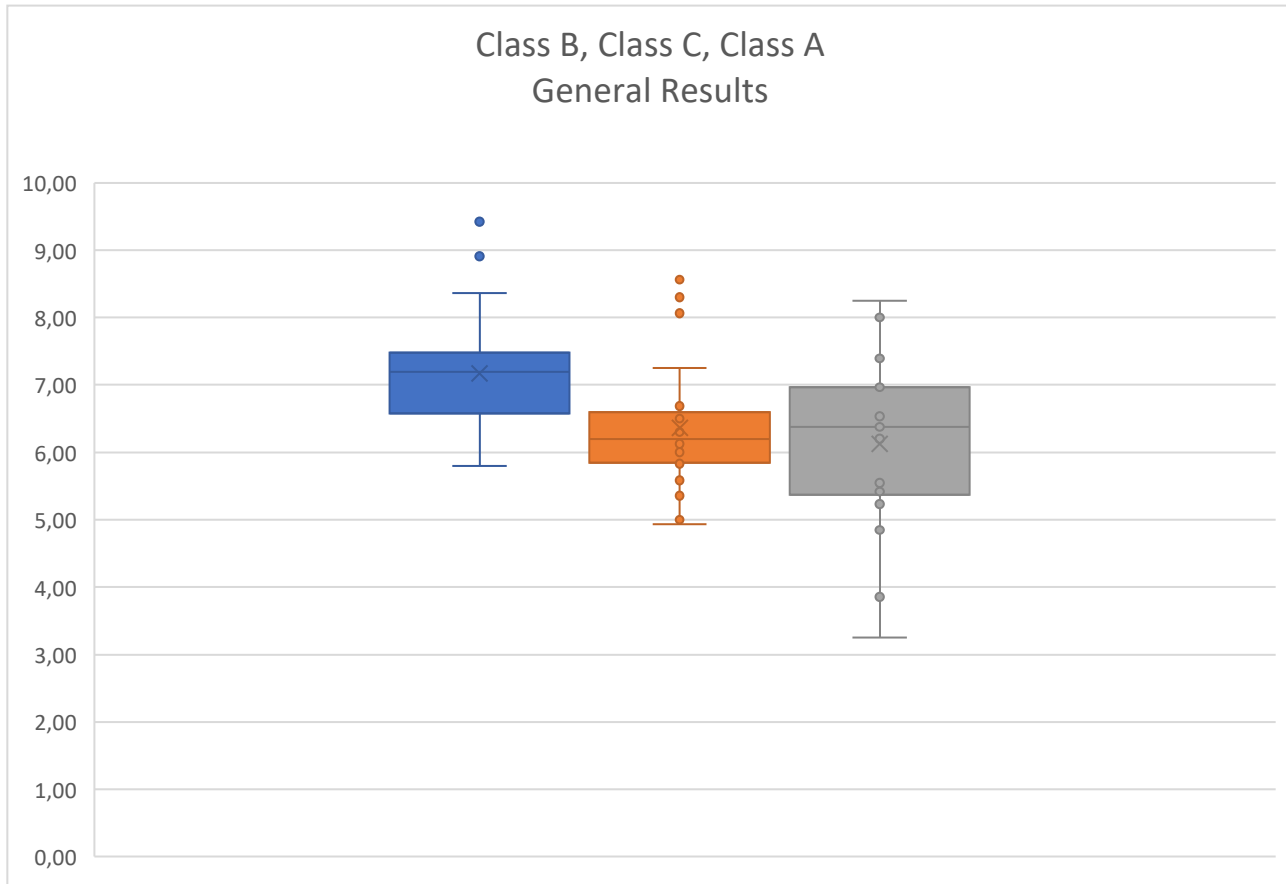
The average improvement rate of each class is given by the comparison between the entry test class average mark and the final class average mark. The results are shown in the graph below.

Graph 16 Average improvement rate of all three state school classes



In this graph, n 1 corresponds to Class A, n 2 corresponds to Class B, and number 3 corresponds to Class C. So, Class B students are the students that show the highest improvement rate.

Graph 17 Class A Class B and Class C general results Boxplot



From the analysis of the performance of the three state school classes (Class A, Class B, and Class C), it is possible to see that Class B, the class that has completed all the three modules, shows the highest average mark and the least coefficient of variability. Besides, in reference to the percentages of improvement, the data show that 91% of the students improved in M3. Class A and Class C, on the contrary, show lower performance average rates and higher coefficients of variability. This is especially true for Class A, whose coefficient of variation is 20%. It is relevant to consider that the least performing classes (Class A and C) have only attended part of the syllabus. Namely, Class C did not attend M2, while Class A did not attend M3. Considering the three modules plus the entry test as a discreet variability with mode from 1 to 4, it is possible to notice that Class B, which completed M1, M2 and M3 shows a very strong connection between the average assessment mark and the progression of the level of difficulty of the modules. This correlation is, in fact equal to 91,7%, which means that is very strong. On the contrary, in Class A and Class C, whose students did not attend all the three



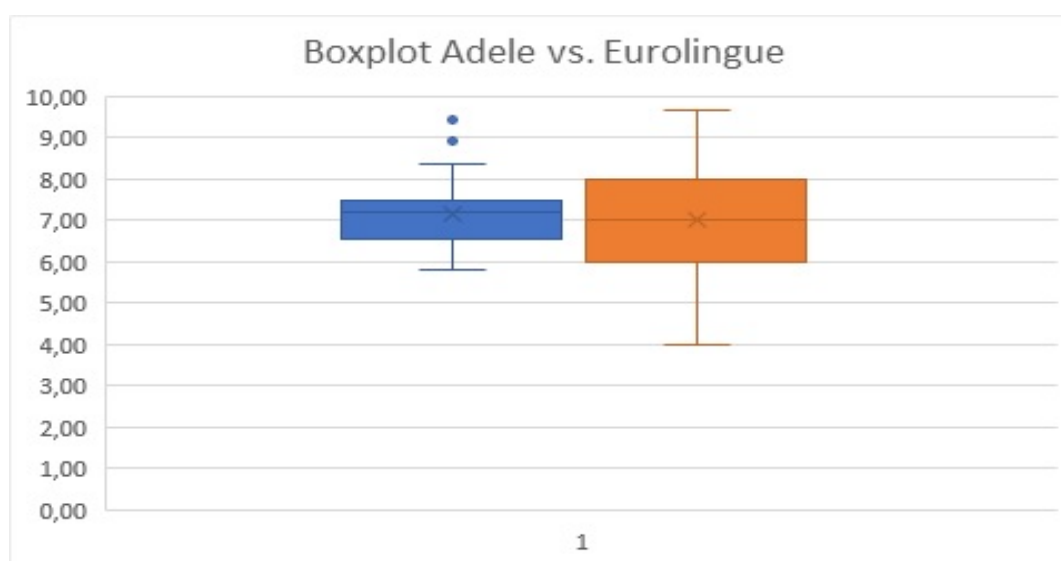
modules, the coefficient is negative. This values then confirm the very close correlation between performance of the class and number of the lessons attended. The boxplot confirms, what has been previously said about the performance and the coefficients of variation. It also shows the 3 outliers in Class C that have higher values in relation to the maximum theoretical.

#### *Class B and Eurolingue School Students (M1, M2, M3)*

As above mentioned, the first stage of the data collection involved Class A and Class B, it started in October 2019 and finished in December 2020. The second stage involved Class C and Eurolingue School, it started in January 2021 and finished in May 2021. The purpose of this second stage was to have to more data involving a larger number of students and teachers from a different context. For this reason, about one hundred students and twelve teachers from a private language school were included in the project. At the same time another class from a state school was added too, Class C. However, since students from Class C could only complete a very limited number of lessons, a decision was made to make a comparison between Class B (the best performing of the three state school classes) with Eurolingue School students. In this case the 30 lessons of the syllabus were delivered in a different way, in fact, each of the twelve teachers only delivered three (in some cases four) lessons to their students in a random order.

This paragraph shows the results of the comparison between two groups, namely: Class B and Eurolingue School. The focus of this comparison will be the development of writing skills as well as 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, creativity, and critical thinking.

Graph 18 Class B (Adele) and Eurolingue School writing skills results Boxplot

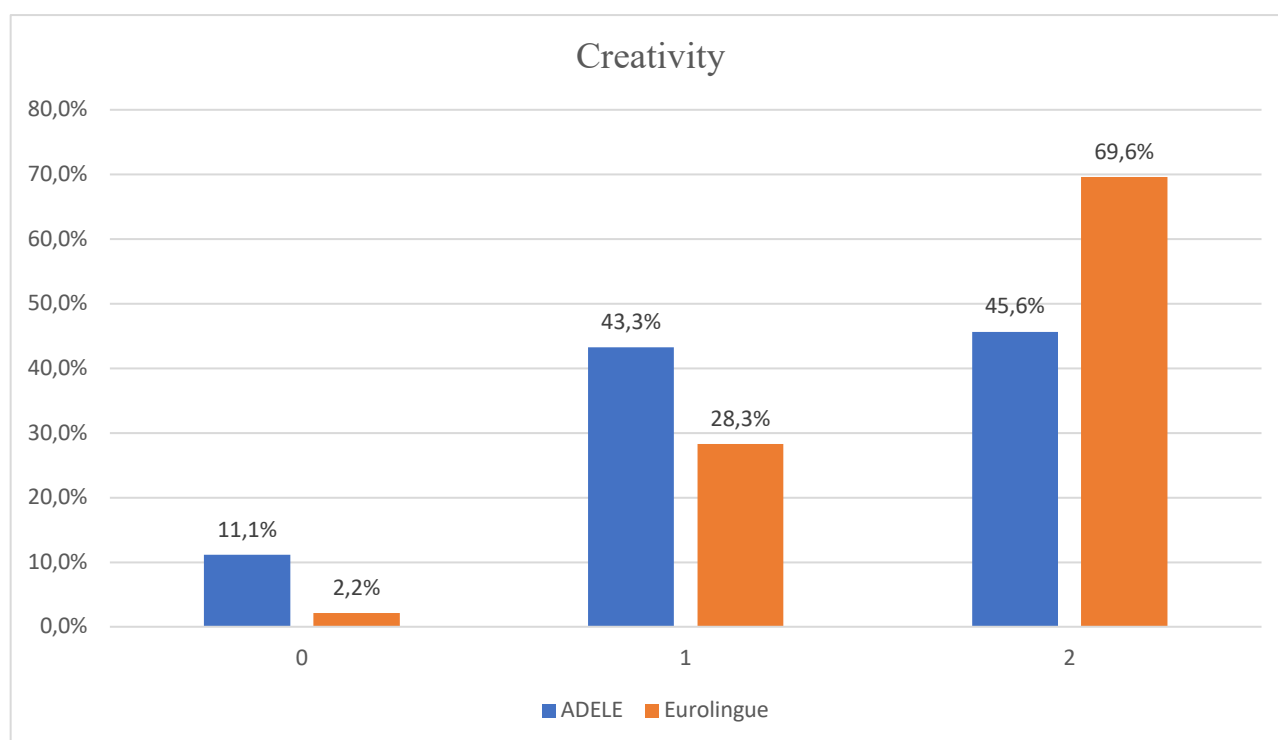


In reference to general writing skills, it is possible to see that in all three modules, students in Class B (teacher Adele), show better performance with higher marks. These data are confirmed by the general average marks. Besides, as it is possible to see from the coefficient of variability, this group of students show less variability. However, less variability could also be the consequence of the fact that this group has less students than Eurolingue's group. For this reason, to assess the degree of dispersion of the values around the standard parameters, it is possible to see in the boxplots that Class B (teacher Adele's students), although show less variability, they also show outlier values which are both beyond the theoretical maximum value. These results seem to confirm, once again, the fact that longer exposure to the lessons of the syllabus produces better outcomes. In fact, also in this case Class B, whose students attended 25 out of the 30 lessons of the syllabus, proved to be stronger than the students of Eurolingue School, who only attended three random lessons. As for general improvement in writing skills then, Class B is still the strongest group, although students attending private language schools are usually more prepared and motivated and inserted in smaller and more homogeneous classes. In considering the length of the course and the exposure to the literary texts, for instance, this outcome is coherent with the fact that Class A and Class B had better results in the final parts of their courses: Class A had the best performance in M2, while Class B had the best performance in M3. Further research in this field could produce interesting information on the connection between exposure to literary texts, writing skill practice and results.

### 5.11 21st Century skills – Creativity and critical thinking

As previously stated, the aim of this research was to investigate whether it is possible to use literature to improve writing skills as well as 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. For this reason, while module one focus was on linguistic features and vocabulary, the other two modules of the syllabus were designed with the purpose of developing creativity and critical thinking. The comparison in this case was done analyzing the data of Class B, the most consistent of the state school groups, and Eurolingue students. The graphs below show the results of the data analysis.

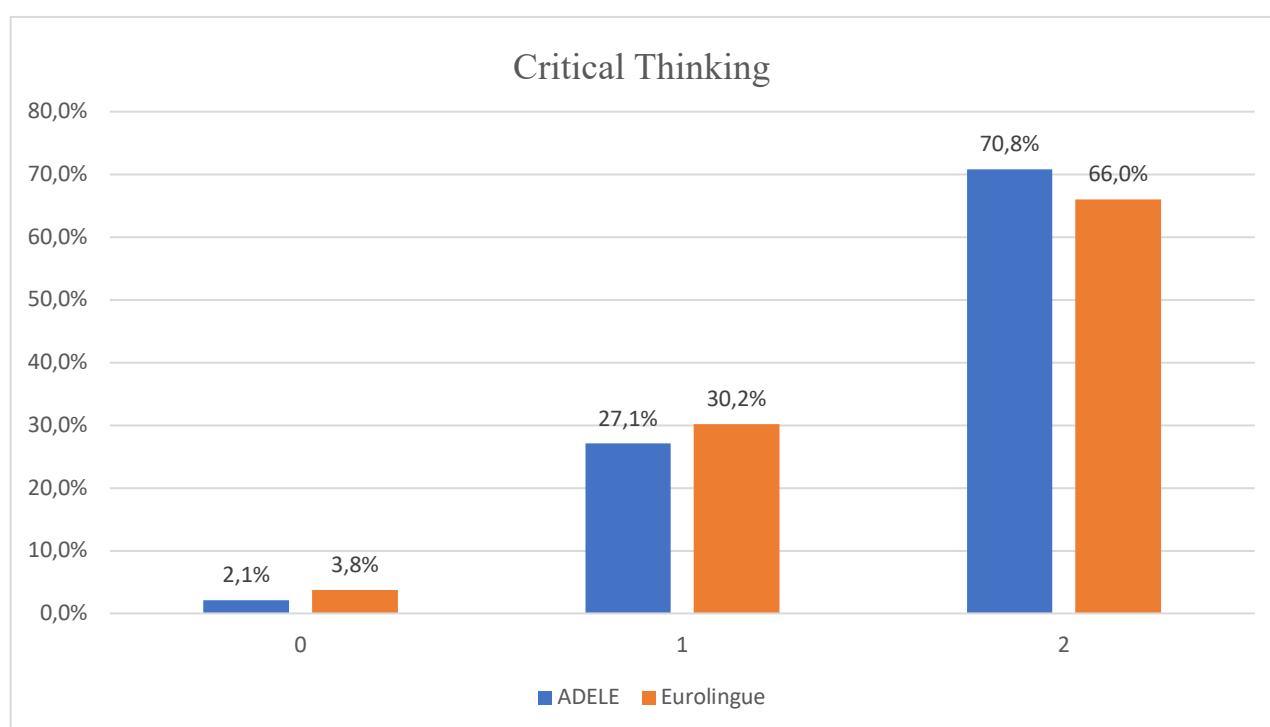
Graph 19 Class B (Adele) and Eurolingue School creativity results



The columns in the graph show the results of creativity assessment. This assessment was carried out through rubric evaluating the capacity of the students to recycle vocabulary, idioms and literary devices as presented in the literary texts in a new context. The marks given were 0 for no show, 1 for used at list once and 2 if used twice or more times. The first column represents 0, the second 1 and the third 2. The blue color represents Class B (Adele) and the orange column represents Eurolingue School students. The graph seems to

show that Eurolingue's students (69,6%) developed more creativity skills than Class B (45,6%). Nevertheless, the data seem to confirm that most of the students in both groups were able to perform creatively. In fact, if we join the mark 1 and mark 2 percentages almost the totality of students in Eurolingue show creative skills (97,9%), and a very high percentage of Class B students do the same (88,9). The fact that private language school students seem to be able to write more creatively than state school students could be related to different approach toward writing, this issue could be maybe addressed by other investigations in the future.

Graph 20 Class B (Adele) and Eurolingue School critical thinking results



The columns in the table show the results of critical thinking assessment. This assessment was carried out through rubric evaluating the capacity of the students to express their ideas and opinions related to the topic of the literary text presented. The marks given were 0 for no show, 1 for expressing opinion at list once, and 2 if they were able to express their opinion two times or more. The first column represents 0, the second 1 and the third 2. The blue color represents Class B (Adele) and the orange column represents Eurolingue School students. The table shows that Class B (Adele) developed slightly higher percentage of critical thinking skills than Eurolingue's students (70,8% vs. 66%). Nevertheless, the data seem to confirm that most of the students in both groups were able to express opinions and ideas. In fact, if we join mark 1 and mark 2 percentages, almost

the totality of students in both groups show critical thinking skills: 97,9% Class B, and 96,2% Eurolingue School. In this case state school students performed better than private language school students, and this could be related to the fact that critical thinking skills are probably more addressed and appreciated in state schools. On the contrary, as shown before, creativity skills seem to be more addressed in private language schools. This would make sense, considering that in private language schools students perceive learning English as part of their general education, which they do for fun or passion and not just as their duty as in state schools. So, they probably perceive being creative as part of the learning process. However, these can be regarded as personal reflections of the researcher, more data would be necessary to claim that with certainty.

#### 5.12 Eurolingue School teachers' feedback

Audrey, Eurolingue Cammarata: *I found it beneficial as it was something different for us to teach, not just the usual writing tasks but poetry etc. I found it interesting, and I was able to learn from it as well as the students. I was pleasantly surprised by how much they enjoyed it and put so much effort into it. They didn't question why they were doing it either, they just got on with it and enjoyed the materials so much. I think it was a breath of fresh air for teachers and students alike. I would like to add that although one or two found it a little challenging, they still did their best to complete it.*

Ewa, Eurolingue Agrigento: *I had three lessons assigned, all of them were online. The planned timing was too tight, it took me much longer than the time stipulated in the lesson plans to deliver the lessons, as the students' real level was more A2 than B1. The students stayed online while writing their answers, either directly on the website (on the link you provided) or in their notebooks and transferring the answers to the site. I managed to link the lessons (grammatically or thematically) to course work. The lessons were useful in that they provided a creative extension to the lexical and grammar items included in the course (e.g., descriptive adjectives, comparisons, 2nd conditional), but students struggled a bit as their actual level was lower than the*

*level of the target audience stipulated by lesson plans. This made the explanation as well as execution much more time-consuming than originally assumed.*

*Fran, Eurolingue Ribera: Writing project experience. Lessons were delivered to a group of B1 teenagers and a group of adults. All lessons were delivered in presence. Writing extract involved use of contrasting comparatives and superlatives. We went through adjectives known by students and added opposites. They found the reading slightly over their level but with vocabulary adapted to their level and extra thinking skills, they managed to produce good writings Response was good. Most of the students completed the task.*

*Antonio, Eurolingue Caltanissetta: I delivered all the lessons in the classroom. Both in Caltanissetta and Favara. The three lessons I delivered were n. 21, 22 and 27. While lesson 21 worked well due to a less challenging text and appealing topic, in lesson 22 and 27 the students were exposed to some less manageable vocabulary/subjects. I noticed that lesson 21 worked well with younger students as the topic lends itself to a conversation and the students needed very little help from the teacher because they felt at ease with the vocabulary and subject in the text. However, I had to modify the lead-in and pre-task to make the lesson more suitable for my students, allowing them to activate passive knowledge before they started reading. On the other hand, the vocabulary and subjects in the other two lessons were beyond their current level. For this reason, I had to make sure the students were given enough context and vocabulary support, so that they could deal with the excerpts autonomously. I noticed that the vocabulary I had to teach was much more than just the highlighted target language in the lesson plan and yet, it was necessary for them to understand the whole text. I also felt that, when it came to express their opinion, the students were intimidated by the topic in relation to their age (13 to 15 years old). I think teaching English through literature is possible, but if B1 teens is the target level, the texts should be more relatable and the subjects within a B1 syllabus. That's why lesson 21 worked well, whereas lessons 22 and 27 would be more suitable for young adults and their level being no lower than C1. I also think these lessons would work best if included in a long term multi-disciplinary project where*

*students could spend more time on building their awareness of the topics. Therefore, I think this project could work best in public schools, as I believe the subjects are relevant in this day and age.*

*Agnese, Eurolingue Caltanissetta: my B1 and B2 classes were involved in the project and the lessons were taught online. As for the topics, students showed curiosity and interest. All students were engaged and participated in the conversation. Regarding the selection of texts, my suggestion is to expose B1 students to this type of lessons towards the end of their course, as the materials might be too challenging for them at the beginning of the school year. Meanwhile, B2 students responded more readily to the texts and could read deeper into them with little support from the teacher. I also noticed that age might play a role in the background information and “scaffolding” needed to be done prior to following the steps in the lesson plan. Younger students (13-15 years old) might have to be guided and introduced to the social, historical, and literary context (plot) of some texts, especially for extracts like Macbeth and Maya Agelou’s. I did that through preparatory activities to precede the lesson plan (collaborative information research, vocabulary brainstorming and mind maps, speaking pair work). Once that was done, all students made valuable contributions to the discussion both in class and through their writing work. The text that student responded quite quickly to was Alice Munro’s extract, I noticed they could easily identify with the narrator and imagine themselves in the same situation without any scaffolding or preparation activities needed.*

*Federico, Eurolingue Palermo: Focusing on the application of English literature in order to develop my students' grammar, writing and vocabulary skills was stimulating, mainly because they had never heard about interesting topics such as "Joyce and the stream of consciousness" and they felt encouraged to express their points of view. As a teacher I enjoyed the lessons since the use of literature in my English class encouraged more thoughtful and purposeful language learning. In this regard, Students were not only exposed to the real use of the English language, but they also tried to develop their critical thinking. Basically, extensive, and subtle vocabulary usage helped students to improve their creative writing skills. As a matter of fact, they tried to use complex and correct syntax.*

Mel, Eurolingue Agrigento: *the levels in my classes ranged between A2 and B1. The students found the project interesting in that it integrated the words and meanings from famous articles of sure interest, and they all appreciated the new vocabulary found in the article. Additionally, I found it valuable because it allowed students to pursue reading in a different way. The opportunity to expand their view of reading and give their own opinions using their level of English. They hope in the future to read more to further expand their English skills.*

Phoebe, Eurolingue Palermo: *I delivered my writing lessons online to two B1+ adult students. I experienced that the student who was more creative in general had a better time with writing whereas the more 'rational' type didn't want to participate as much especially initially, but he did submit a written work the second and third time. It was more comfortable for them to either write at home or, in the case of something short, to come up with it together whereas leaving them time to write during the lesson was more difficult. It may also have been a matter of habit. I think if implemented regularly this would change. It was a bit difficult to insert the lessons without disrupting the pre-existing course plan since I had only a short period of time (also due to my own scheduling issues), but I think during two-three months I believe they could be inserted without problems and be a supplementary tool to pre-existing course materials and books. The murder mystery story, for example, almost always has a correlating section in the Empower book series. In this way it might become a fun outlet, especially as students usually have to produce only exam-focused written work, which may not harness their creativity in the same way. I do think this would work better in an in-person class with more students, since it would offer more opportunities to either collaborate at the initial stages or share after the work has been completed. I did my best to encourage them, however, to share and collaborate using a shared google doc which ended up working well. Since the lessons were given online it was a little more difficult to collect the texts produced by the students. However, something nice was the ability to share our writing together in the same google doc. In this way the students were able to see simultaneous progress as well as see one another doing error correction or revising their own work. My class was comprised of only two students,*



*so they were very open to sharing and seeing one another's work. It's possible that in a larger class this would be more difficult to do, but with a smaller class using a google doc can be very rewarding during online writing lessons.*

*Val, Eurolingue Palermo: I was involved in the project with my B1 and B2 students. Lessons were delivered online and most of the students found it enjoyable. Also, they had former knowledge of the authors from their own school, so they were pleased to discuss it in class with the others. Overall, the pieces of writing were good and easy to approach by following the guidelines.*

*Veny, Eurolingue Ribera: I had one B1 course participate in the writing project, with them I did 3 different lessons. The lessons were delivered in presence to a group of 6 students. I tried integrating these lessons with the program as much as possible. For the grammar lessons I waited for us to reach that part of the program and delivered the lesson as a follow-up open class practice, where at the end they had to write independently. The vocabulary lesson was integrated in a more of an open class discussion followed by the writing part of the project. The lesson plans were well thought out and easy to follow. The students were interested, especially because it gave them a chance to look away from the course books. In all it was a fun and different experience for both teachers and students. I think it could be a stimulating way to approach the language.*

## Chapter 6 - Conclusions

### 6.1 Answers to the objectives

This last chapter will focus on the conclusions that is possible to draw from the collection of the data. The aim of this study was to investigate whether it is possible to use literary texts to improve writing skills at B1 level. For this purpose, in Spring 2019 a syllabus was designed and proposed to two state schoolteachers and twelve private language schoolteachers, involving 177 students in total, with the aim of collecting writing pieces from the students to be assessed and evaluate as data for this study. This part of the research was carried out in two phases and, as shown before, only the first part was not affected by Covid-19 pandemic. The first part of the investigation was carried out between October 2019 and December 2020. This phase involved two groups of state school students named Class A and Class B, and the first part of the data analysis mostly refer to the comparison between the results of these two groups after being presented with the thirty-lesson syllabus, divided in M1, M2 and M3. Besides, these two groups also a third group of state school students, named Class C, was partially involved in the data collection with a limited number of writing pieces.

The first objective of the research was:

- To investigate any improvements in writing skills, grammar and vocabulary in the students' written production using literary excerpts as models. This investigation was carried out through quantitative analysis of the data collected in two steps: general writing assessment on all modules and assessment on grammar in module one.

The final results of M1, M2, M3 in relation to the two state school groups that were the object of this analysis, Class A and Class B, show that Class B, that means the class who attended most of the thirty lessons of the syllabus, reached the highest rate of improvement, proving that there is a very strong correlation between the number of lessons attended (and therefore the writing pieces produced) and the mark average rate. The data analysis, in fact, shows that the higher the number of lessons attended, the higher the value of the average mark. Nevertheless, even those students who attended only part of the syllabus managed to improve their writing skills, namely Class A, and even those students who only attended a very limited number of lessons, like Class

C, where comparison with average final marks and entry test marks was made. The second step of the investigation was carried out between January and May 2021 involved one of the above-mentioned groups of state school students, Class C, and students from Eurolingue School, a private language school. However, Class C managed to complete only the first module of the syllabus, namely M1, so the data analysis was done using Class B results, the best performing of the state school groups, in comparison with the results of Eurolingue School students. The focus of the analysis in this part of the research were, general writing skills and two 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, creativity, and critical thinking. As for general writing skills, once again Class B, proved to be the best performing group, especially as regard variance value, confirming again the close connection between number of lessons attended and average mark rate. In fact, Class B is the only class who managed to complete all the ten lessons in M1, all the ten lessons in M2 and 5 of the ten lessons in M3, in total 25 lessons out of 30 (plus the entry test) meaning 83% of the syllabus. For the group of Eurolingue students a choice was made to deliver them three lessons per class and then compare their results with Class B results with the due difference but in a coherent way. For this purpose, the method of data analysis used was Anova.

The second objective of the research was:

- To investigate any improvements in creativity and critical thinking in the students after having been exposed to selected literary excerpts. This investigation was carried out through quantitative analysis of the data collected in module two and three.

As for 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, creativity, and critical thinking, also in this case the research shows encouraging results. In fact, both groups, Class B and Eurolingue, whose data were collected and analyzed for this purpose, show good results in both skills. Even if Eurolingue school teachers only delivered three lessons each per class, a comparison between the two groups written production was possible (considering the differences), also in this case the outcome was encouraging, as showed in the results section of this study.

Finally, to answer the third objective of the investigation, written feedback from both students and teachers was collected according to qualitative analysis. In this case, a selection was made to collect feedback from students who had attended at least 50% of the syllabus so only students from Class A and Class B were

involved, plus all the teachers from both private and public schools. The answers collected were 38 from students and 14 from the teachers. Students were asked three questions: did you enjoy the lessons? Do you think you have improved? What are your expectations by the end of the course? These questions were delivered after the 15<sup>th</sup> lesson. Another in formal feedback was collected in Class B at the end of the course during an online meeting with the whole class, which confirmed that the results of their first feedback.

- To investigate any improvements in motivation, in the students after having engaged with selected literary excerpts. This investigation is carried out through qualitative analysis of the answers given to a feedback questionnaire by both students and teachers taking part to the research project.

Feedback from the students who have attended at least half of the lessons, Class A and Class B, 38 students (out of 49) and fourteen teachers, collected in written interviews confirmed the positives results of the quantitative analysis (see appendix). It is possible to say that literary texts can be used with the aim of improving writing skills as well as other skills.

- Observations form other course contexts

More information about the effective use of the syllabus was collected informally during other two courses delivered by the researcher between May 2021 and December 2021. This could be regarded as the third part of the research, although data and feedback were collected informally. Nevertheless, the researcher managed to draw other conclusion on the use of the syllabus in different contexts based on her own personal experience of teaching through literary texts. One of the courses was a 15- hour mixed level creative writing course for seven teenagers delivered online to private students of Eurolingue School. The second course was a 45-hour English and translation course for 37 students at the University of Palermo, where students were part face to face and part online. Comments to these two other courses have been incorporated in the following paragraphs.

- Course for the University of Palermo

As above mentioned, in the final part of the research, the syllabus has been used for teaching other groups of students in different contexts. Lessons proved to be motivating for students, and improvement in language and communicative skills were visible, especially when they could connect learning English with their own personal experiences and lives.

This is an activity proposed to university students to practice third conditional. The text offered as a model was by poet Alice Dunbar-Nelson

*If I Had Known*

If I had known

Two years ago how drear this life should be,

And crowd upon itself all-strangely sad,

Mayhap another song would burst from out my lips,

Overflowing with the happiness of future hopes;

Mayhap another throb than that of joy.

Have stirred my soul into its inmost depths,

If I had known.

If I had known,

Two years ago the impotence of love,

The vainness of a kiss, how barren a caress,

Mayhap my soul to higher things have soarn,

Nor clung to earthly loves and tender dreams,

But ever up aloft into the blue empyrean,

And there to master all the world of mind,

If I had known

The TASP/TAM (Text as a Model) task given to the students was: use the poem as a model to describe a moment of your life expressing the same feelings

The following is a poem written by one of the students:

*If I had known what feelings had in you mind, I would have been more patient*

*and more gentle with you .*

*I would have talked to you about these dark thoughts,*

*if I had known....*

*If I had been more vigilant, I would have taken care of you, fragile soul.*

*I would have tried to understand and to help you.*

*Forgive me my dear but I was caught up in my own stuff.*

*If I could turn back, I wouldn't make again this big mistake.*

*If you were here, everything would be different....*

The response of this student shows that, even if the focus is on linguistic features, poems always give the opportunity for self-expressions, dealing with personal feelings and emotions, which are a fundamental element of the learning process. In fact, the possibility to relate the language acquisition to real and meaningful communication allows students to be emotionally involved with the content and engaged with the activity at hand. Generally speaking, this holistic approach was widely appreciated, and students reacted well, especially the ones face to face and at B1 level or above. It must be said, though, that some of the weakest students (A2 level or less) felt were not given enough support in grammar and linguistic features. These students were online and showed very little or no interaction at all, so maybe they felt intimidated using literary excerpts, and/or they had different expectation about the course. Besides, the university context was a rather difficult one due to a complex situation:

- A very large class
- Mixed level (from A2 to C1)
- Multicultural students

- Diverse previous exposure to literature
- Hybrid lesson
- Technological issues in delivering the lessons (students at home could hardly communicate with students in class)
- “Lecture” type lesson expectations

More formal investigations in this context could provide interesting information, especially as regard to multiculturalism and exposure to literature in English.

The following is the feedback of the best student of the course who shows appreciation for the fact that the linguistic features of the lessons were included in a specific context, and the possibility to write stories.

*Speaking of the course lessons that I appreciated the most, I would like to say, to be honest, that I enjoyed each of them because not only was I given the possibility to practise the English language that I already knew, but also I was given the chance to learn new concepts and notions by relying on new teaching methods. I particularly appreciated the fact that our lessons started with the reading of the excerpts in such a way to have all the grammar notions already inserted within a specific context, but, above all, I enjoyed the speaking lessons taken in the last month of the course, thanks to which I got to talk and know some of my colleagues and we also helped each other in the preparation for the English I exam. To my mind, the skills in which I have improved the most are reading and writing. Reading was one of the key elements of the course that we, as students, first encountered and with which I got to learn new words but, thanks to the writing tasks, I was given the possibility to write down stories in English, and I hope to spare some time to bestow upon it on my own. I would surely like to take another course with the same kind of teaching because the various methods that our Professor proposed to us in order to learn English (such as, for instance, Carla Bruni’s song “If you were coming in the fall – no promises”, English grammar videos, questions at the end of the excerpts which encouraged me to reason about what I read, and the unmissable speaking lessons), fostered the learning through and through and motivated me in the searching of new tools and methods for self-study.(SIFUNIPA)*

- Creative writing course

This course was for a limited group of private language school students, seven in total, who attended the lessons entirely online. The syllabus used was the one designed for the B1 level students of the research but some extra lessons on tone and register were added. Some of the excerpts were perceived as easy, other ones as challenging. However, in the creative writing course, rather than a limitation or lack of coherence this proved to be an added value which allowed the lessons to be delivered to students of different levels ranging from A2 to C1 and each of them managed to work and respond well at their level of language skills. So, in this case the course was effective in meeting the different needs of the students.

This short poem was written by a young A2 level student. This student was very shy and insecure and refused to write for a few lessons. In his case being able to open up and start writing was probably the best result, and once he started, he never stopped. The task was a TASP/TEC (Text for Enhancing Creativity) in response to this poem by Bukowski called 8 Count.

8 Count

from my bed

I watch

3 birds

on a telephone

wire.

one flies

off.

then

another.

one is left,

then

it too

is gone



*From a year,  
I'm yet here.  
I stay in a cage  
who everybody call home,  
with nobody to see  
but with more and more homeworks to do.  
I've just a phone to call my friends,  
who help me to free me of the stress. (PSEMCWA)*

Generally speaking, also in these two courses the observations seem to bring positive, encouraging outcome. However, the observations also seem to suggest that further attention must be placed in differentiating activities when lessons are delivered to large non-homogenous groups as in the case of the university students. Another input that comes from these observations is that specific attention must be placed in the assessment of writing pieces. In fact, often the only criteria for assessment seems to be based on grammar control, while the aim of this research is also shifting the attention from grammar to self-expression. In the above sample, for instance, grammar mistakes do not impede communication of personal feelings and emotions linked to a very difficult moment in the life of the learner. The reader can easily sense connection and true communication, for this reason this sample is representative of the successful writing pieces produced by the students. Further on, in the next paragraphs a more detailed description of the assessment guidelines will be discussed as a tool that can be used by teachers when dealing with creative writing.

## 6.2 Linguistic conclusions drawn from the research

At linguistic level the conclusions that can be drawn from the research involve several aspects of the syllabus. First, as mentioned in the introduction, the Italian school system introduces the study of English literature in the third year of secondary high school. This is true for high schools like “Liceo Classico”, “Liceo Scientifico” and “Liceo Linguistico”, which means very popular schools among the Italian student population.

Students attending these schools start studying literature without any previous exposure to it while their level of English often does not match the ability required to learn about literature or even less to understand it. A different approach that can integrate language and literature together would be beneficial for both the linguistic and literary skills of these students.

Combining literature and language acquisition can be done through the syllabus. If we consider M1, for instance, the focus of this module was on grammar and vocabulary, however it is important to note that, although the focus of each module is on a specific topic, the general holistic approach allows the development of more skills at the same time. Several students would respond to linguistic inputs talking about their lives and feelings creating real communication. It is worth to have a look at some of the writings produced by the students to better understand what has been above said.

The TASP/TAM activity of the first lesson, for instance, is based on the famous Shakespeare's sonnet 18<sup>th</sup>, "Shall I compare thee...". The focus of the lesson is on grammar, namely comparatives and adjectives. At the end of the lesson students are asked to write at least three new comparisons similar to the first verse of the sonnet using the following structures: *Spring's/Winter's/Autumn's – day/fruit/landscape* – and choosing adjectives from this list: Sight Sound Touch Taste Smell - 34 Kiwis.

One student of Class C, decided not simply to write sentences of comparisons but to write a whole sonnet instead. In writing the sonnet, using Shakespeare's one as a model this student managed to show good command of the grammar as well as the ability to communicate her feelings in through a love poem.

- *Shall I compare thee to a Spring's landscape?*

*Thou art more brilliant and more enchanted.*

*The hot sun heats the roses of May,*

*and the breeze of Spring shakes the leaves of the trees. As the sun is gold so are your hair. As the sun will continue to shine, your beauty as well.*

*And every flower sometime declines,*

*but your eternal presence will breathe forever.*

*The shiny colors of the lawn, of the sky, of the fruits enclose your youthful beauty. You will live in every Spring's day, in every enchanted purple rose, in every moment of my life. (RSFC)*

Hanauer (2014) investigates the possibility to evaluate and appreciate non-professional poetry written by creative writing students, offering specific instructions and clarifications in this field. In the case of the above-mentioned sonnet, it is enough to consider the capacity to comply adequately with the requested task (using comparatives), and the ability to communicate well (feelings and emotions), recycling part of the language used in the model text in a creative way. The student was successful in both cases, in fact, even though the rhymed and the metric is not always effective, nevertheless the communication is clear as it is the intention of the author.

We can find more samples of perfect balance between linguistic features and self-expression in M1 lesson two, focus on superlatives. The text used is an excerpt from Dickens' "Tale of two Cities" (see appendix). At the end of the lesson, in the TAM writing task, students are asked to describe a strange place or awkward situation using the excerpt as a model and choosing opposite adjectives from the list: Sight Sound Touch Taste Smell - 34 Kiwis.

Also, in this case students did not simply show good command of grammar and linguistic features (superlatives, adjectives, contrasts), but they used the writing task as an opportunity for self-expression, as in the samples provided here (see appendix for more samples):

- *The first kiss*

*It was a blurry sight, it was a radiant sight.*

*It was the iciest of nights, it was the warmest of nights, it was the softest of fabrics, it was the stickiest of fabrics, it was a twinkling sky, it was a shadowy sky.*

*They were affectionate teenagers, they were indifferent teenagers, it was a delicate kiss, it was a rough kiss. It was the most loving of times, it was the most unresponsive of times. (GLFB26)*

- *It was the best day of my life, it was the worst day of my life, it was the most painful moment, it was the most enjoyable moment. When it started it was the purest friendship, when it ended it was the impurest*

*friendship. I hoped it was the longest, but I knew it was the shortest. I pretended it was the strongest, but clearly it was the weakest. I was the saddest, I was the happiest, I was dead, I was born. My emotion were confused, all I know is that I don't want to feel anymore this way. (EAFB23)*

- *Mirror me. I was in front of the mirror. I saw the prettiest and ugliest girl, the smarter and the most stupid who lives in the greatest carelessness and in the moment most delicate in her life. She laughed outside and cried inside, her eyes were the darkest but I can see the light in them, her smile was the most radiant and the saddest. She was the strongest and the most fragile. She would like more friends but she is fine alone. She was perfectly imperfect. I'm the person who I love and hate most. (EBFB25).*

These samples are only a very small part of the writing pieces produced during this investigation, but they are very representative. They testify that an approach which combines language acquisition and self-expression together is not only possible, but also highly advisable.

### 6.3 Pedagogical conclusions drawn from the research

Drawing on Wellek and Warren's (1956) classification, texts could be used in two different ways: either extrinsically, by asking specific students questions aiming at giving input for self-reflections and personal growth (e.g. do you think meditation can be good for you?) or intrinsically, by offering students texts where the characters cope with feelings or situations students could relate to (e.g. have you ever been in that situation? Have you ever felt this way?). In using literary excerpts, teachers should have a similar approach as in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) where non-linguistic subjects and foreign languages are learnt simultaneously. This process takes place not "in" but "through" the foreign language in an integrated model that uses language as a vehicle for information (Pavòn, 2014) where teachers play their role as facilitators of the teaching and learning of content

This research aims at developing writing skills using literary texts as a springboard for written production (TASP). A proposal has been made to distinguish different usage for TASP. Three definitions have been added: TAM, TEC and TACT.

- TAM is the acronym for Text as a Model, which was used in M1 for offering linguistic models for the students to copy. In this case, literary texts are used with the purpose to develop grammar and expand vocabulary.
- TEC is the acronym for Text to Enhance Creativity, which was used in M2 for offering literary devices for students to use and adapt creatively in other contexts (different from the original text)
- TACT is the acronym for Texts as a Tool for Critical Thinking, which was used in M3, for give students inputs and topic to allow them to express their own opinions and ideas.

The pedagogical conclusions of the study involve the possibility to extend the use of texts of different literary genres to develop a wider range of skills.

It could be possible to start from the following inputs in associating genres to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills:

- Poetry / personal growth (TAG)
- Articles / critical thinking (TACT)
- Crime stories / problem solving (TAPS)
- Science Fiction / imagination (TIM)
- Novel and short stories / creativity and/or critical thinking (TEC/TACT)
- World Literature in English / Multiculturalism (TWM)

Every skill can be developed in a specific syllabus with related genre and TASP activities.

- Poetry / personal growth (TAG)

In his book *Poetry as research* (2010) David Hanauer develops the idea of using poetry as a way not just as a way for self-expression but as a system for researching and discovering more about human nature. The scholar's use of autoethnography is a framework in which writing, expression and reflection are strictly intertwined. In this kind of approach poetic texts can be used as the springboard for self-awareness through the expression of personal experiences and memories. As Hanauer says, even though the use of writing as a research method may seem unusual, literary research writing as a method of inquiry within applied linguistics may prove to be more successful than expected and the results of these investigation seem to go in that

direction. The scholar sees poetry writing as “a form of therapeutic self-discovery that allows strong emotions to be explored, explicated and expressed” (Hanauer, 2010, p. 16). Apart from this healing functions poetry also offers the possibility to do many revisions, which suggests that “the process of poetry writing is directed by awareness of language and explicit consideration of how language functions in creating its meanings” (Hanauer 2010, p. 16).

As Tara McIlory (2013) suggests, knowing the types of texts that teachers use in the language classroom and why they use it is very important. And in this sense, poetry and creative texts have a great potential for language teaching and learning and for this reason they should be included in the curricula.

- Articles / critical thinking (TACT)

In this investigation a series of excerpts from articles were used to develop lessons based on different topics:

- Environmental issues
- Consumerism
- Meditation
- Attention
- Literature
- Culture
- Multiculturalism

- Crime stories / problem solving (TAPS)

One of the writing activities in the syllabus, M1 lesson 8, was creating a crime story. Crime stories are a very popular literary genre, in fact, most of the fiction stories seen in television, or in book shops nowadays are about crime. Having said that, cultivating the ability of writing crime story could be a value on its own.

However, there is more to that. Writing a crime story could be a good way to develop problem solving

skills as well as the ability to draw consequences from facts, analyzing connection to arrive to logical conclusion, which are all useful skills in life. In the sample below it is possible to see that in just about one hundred words, the student manages to create a convincing crime story, solving different problems:

1. Presenting a character: *behind that angelic face of a desperate widow was hidden a terrible lie*
2. Offering a fake justification for the crime: *A thief entered in the house*
3. Giving a different perspective on the crime scene: *The cop looked carefully*
4. Defining a logical sequence of actions: *no property had been stolen and there was nothing to suggest an irruption, moreover her injury was too superficial (she provoked it herself).*
5. Discovering the guilty: *The woman bursting into lewdness went to her knees and exasperated said...*
6. Finding a reason for the crime: *you chose her*

*The woman was found with a knife full of blood in her hand, she was injured but not died and she could call the police:" A thief entered in the house, killed my husband and he caused me a cut on my leg." The cop looked carefully at the crime scene and the woman's words and it was clear that behind that angelic face of a desperate widow was hidden a terrible lie: no property had been stolen and there was nothing to suggest an irruption, moreover her injury was too superficial (she provoked it herself). The woman bursting into lewdness went to her knees and exasperated said: "sorry Mike, I loved you so much but you chosed her (EBFB25)*

For this reason, it is possible to say that that the use of crime stories can be benefit for the developing of problem-solving skills. A syllabus can be designed with the purpose of helping students in developing strategies and supporting them in thinking out of the box, to come up with creative solutions to difficulties.

- Science Fiction / imagination (TIM)

Imagining and predicting future scenarios is a skill that would benefit a lot from the practice of writing Sci-Fi stories.

- Novel and short stories / creativity and or critical thinking (TEC/TACT)

Creativity has a lot to do with the capacity to use the language to express ideas, emotions, and feelings and novels and short stories always offer materials for reflection, self-awareness, class discussions and debates on controversial issues. In fact, many of the topics developed with articles could be addressed using excerpts from novel and short stories. In this syllabus for instance, several topics like love, racism, prejudice, meaning of life were raised through literary excerpts. Using novels and short stories for creativity or for critical thinking, or for both, it would be just a matter of personal choice depending on the needs of the students. In the following piece of writing written by a student using an excerpt from 1984 by Orwell, M2 lesson 20, it is possible to notice how the student successfully recycled part of the vocabulary in the excerpt to develop his own creativity, addressing at the same time, the topic of freedom and beauty against oppression in a very poetic way.

*A white and small daisy is waiting for the sun to rise on the railroad but time is coming. The hard metal surface of the train moves the air that roughly blooms on the petal and separates them from their home. So they cross a wonderful and lovely creek, but they can't stop there. Carried by the wind they pass through the holes of the fence and then into the chaotic spires of the barbed-wire entanglements. Now they fall in a square where a new order divides the empty space. Tiny and grey isolated buildings stand up weakly, threatened by the main building in the centre. (FDPMEV)*

- World Literature in English / Multiculturalism (TWM)

In our global and always changing world multiculturalism deserves to be developed as a crucial skill. This would support students facing the challenges of personal and cultural identity, as well as respect for the others and empathy. “Many English literary texts employed in ELT reading classrooms are saturated with Western cultural values which, if not explicated well, can confuse students who may come from very different backgrounds” (Widdowson, 1990, as cited in Addison 2013, p. 19). Although the value of authors such as Dickens, Shakespeare, Woolf, Austen is undeniable, at the same time they cannot be the only representative of literature written in English as they only represent the Western cultural canons (Addison, 2013).

Nevertheless, as Addison underlines, they still pervade the content of many ELT textbooks. In fact, as the scholar says, stereotypes of civilized Western characters in opposition to savage others can be found in the



works of authors such as: Defoe, Melville, Conrad, and London. At the same time stereotypical depictions of Africa and Asia as exotic and mysterious can be found in Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1850/1996), Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* (1816/1996), in Orwell's *Burmese Days* (1934/1967), and in Gide (1902/1960) and Kerouac's (1965/1995) accounts of North Africa (Addison 2013). In other words, Addison suggests that ELT classroom syllabi such be enriched by different perspective of the world, to avoid contributing to linguistic and cultural imperialism and its "perceived hegemonic properties" (p. 21). The use of literature becomes a way to "facilitate the expression of individualized human experience in a new linguistic and cultural system and allow the entrance into the language classroom of diverse human experience and points of personal, cross-cultural contact" (Hanauer, 2003, p. 85). Hanauer criticizes the instrumentalist positions which sees applied linguistic research and language teaching just a form of methodological implementation, while the learners' cognitive system is totally decontextualized from culture, history, and their own life. On the other side, humanizing the language classroom means recognizing the individuality of consciousness, subjectivity and historical contextualization, and self-exploration using literary research writing can be applied by language teaching faculty in the attempt to understand themselves. The scholar underlines the fact that learning a language is a significant human activity, and within this activity literary text can be used to develop self-consciousness and culture. The focus should be on the student as the main agent of content-related learning. As Maley (2012) says, students who are exposed to literature develop a more critical understanding of themselves and of others in a rapidly changing world.

#### 6.4 Limitations of the research

As previously stated, Covid 19 pandemic was a disruptive element in the Italian school system and brought a setback in the collection of the data. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, through a Decree of the President of the Council of Ministers (DPCM) all schools were closed, and distance learning, called DAD (Didattica A Distanza), was adopted. Students would attend lessons from home using computers or other devices (cell phone or iPad). As mentioned, teachers were not prepared to deliver lessons online, nevertheless they were forced to do it in a very short time. This event had a great impact on students' motivation while teachers struggled in getting the skills

they needed to teach online. However, from another point of view it also pushed some of the students to express their feelings of sadness and frustration for the difficult experience they were having during the lockdown.

*What a day! Perhaps a little different from the typical quarantine days spent at the moment. It was a Sunday afternoon. I had already studied subjects for Monday the day before. That day I felt inspired. I sat right in front of the table in the terrace. sitting somewhat rudely, I took a sheet of paper and started looking at the landscape. That walk showed my town. That for me was very far these days, not being able to go out, not being able to live ... taken by a strange desire to draw, (and plus I'm not even very good at drawing) I began to draw what I saw. I drew with the pencil. I decided not to colour my drawing. Why? Because this is how I see my town right now see it gray. I see it off (AMFB5)*

*From the side*

*Of the school*

*3 dogs*

*on the green Park.*

*One is Barking,*

*one is Running,*

*one is Dead.*

*I'm the third.*

*I can't watch.*

*I'm the third.*

*I can't write. (SMMA)*

Many studies are currently addressing the issue of the pandemic disruption in the school systems, this case study was affected too, in the sense that both teachers and students had to struggle with many issues which were not simply pedagogical but included their own safety at school and in the family, their social life, and most of all, their health. Samples of writing where students express their feelings during the lockdown can be found in the appendix. Using writing to express feelings and thoughts could be an approach to keep in mind when students are forced to face difficult moments in their social or personal life to humanize the language learning process. As a matter of fact, this autobiographical aspect of creative writing could be exploited in times of crisis, to help students overcome difficult moments. This investigation focused on linguistic skills, creativity, and critical thinking. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to investigate the use of literary texts also for the development of other skills as suggested below. Two other skills were originally included in this investigation, multiculturalism, and personal growth but the amount of data required would have been too difficult to handle. Therefore, a decision was made to put at the core of the research just the three skills that are the object of the investigation (writing, creativity and critical thinking skills) while multiculturalism and personal growth skills could be considered in the future.

Apart from the pandemic and the skills that were not included in the research, other limitations refer to the kind of students chosen. In this case study the writing pieces were produced by students from two Italian “Licei”, one university and one private language school (all regarded as strong students). Students from other kinds of schools, for instance vocational or intermediate schools, could offer a more articulated outcome. Also, geographical position of the schools was limited to schools located in Sicily, southern Italy. Including students of other areas or countries could produce interesting results in terms of linguistic skills associated to different social contexts. Besides this, cultural background was limited to Italian high school students, because the syllabus of this research was designed for them. Since some of the university students informally involved in the research were first generation immigrants (mostly from Africa), they had different literary and cultural background and it was more difficult for them to perform well. Therefore, syllabi to be used in mixed classrooms should address the specific and varied cultural background of the students.

## 6.5 Future lines of research

In 2018 the Italian Ministry of Education published a document called “Indicazioni Nazionali e Nuovi Scenari” (National Guidelines and New Scenarios). This document contains the guideline for the teaching development in elementary and lower intermediate school in an always changing world. In the chapter “Cultura, scuola, persona” (Culture, school, person), there is a description of the role of the state school in the new global scenario, “La scuola nel nuovo scenario”. In this chapter the document describes the role of the school according to the following principles:

- helping students to give meaning to the variety of their experiences (dare senso alla varietà delle loro esperienze)
- assisting them in developing knowledge together with life skills to give them the ability to be in the world (la scuola è perciò investita da una domanda che comprende, insieme, l’apprendimento e ‘il saper stare al mondo’)
- fostering multiculturalism (l’intercultura è già oggi il modello che permette a tutti i bambini e ragazzi il riconoscimento reciproco e dell’identità di ciascuno).
- supporting active citizenship
- developing autonomy and critical thinking
- respecting differences and disabilities
- being committed in removing all the obstacles that can impede the full development of the human being (impegnandosi a rimuovere gli ostacoli di qualsiasi natura che possano impedire “il pieno sviluppo della persona umana”).

According to the document, a good school must be able to foster meaningful learning and guarantee success to all the students. For this purpose, an alliance among all the disciplines is crucial for defining the scenario of a new humanism. It is not a matter of adding new disciplines and topics but rebalancing the ones that already exist. The principles underlined by the ministry seem to give more relevance to other life skills to be developed together with knowledge in a holistic view of the students as a human being.

In reference to the teaching of English as a foreign language, in the Italian school system students in high school study grammar and language the first two years, then, from the third year they start English for specific purposes, which in the case of “Licei” high schools, means studying literature. This way language and literature are kept separated, which is in contrast with the guideline proposed by the ministry suggesting interdisciplinarity among different school subjects. In this case, though, it is one subject, namely English language, and culture, that is split in two different syllabi as if they were two different subjects instead of one. Another important issue is that studying literature basically means studying English literature, rather than literature written in English. This element is also in contrast with the ministry guidelines aiming at fostering multiculturalism and respect of diversity, like the one suggested in this investigation, would support the development of linguistic and non-linguistic skills together with multicultural skills, as foreseen in the ministry document. With this in mind, teachers should aim at designing specific high school syllabus for Italian “Licei” that could combine language and literature together in a holistic approach with the aim of fostering students’ personal growth.

Apart from following the ministry guidelines, future line of research could include designing new syllabi to analyze the impact of literature on students’ linguistic proficiency at different levels. Primary or lower secondary school students, for instance, could offer different perspectives on the impact of literary texts. Other lines of investigations could focus on how literature affects communication among students coming from different social and/or cultural backgrounds. Besides this, another area of investigation in the future could involve designing new techniques to develop literary competence among students who are not very much exposed to literary texts in the L2 classroom. For instance, vocational school students could use specific kinds of texts in reference to the subject studied. Finally, other research could include designing new syllabi for CLIL teachers to develop language and subject related competences using literary (with small l) texts.

## 6.6 Teacher training

In this current study an attempt has been made to underline the importance of creativity and self-expression in the L2 classroom, with the aim of making the language learning process more meaningful and engaging for the students creating real communication. However, when dealing with creative writing, teachers may feel the difficulty of assessment. For the purposes of these research each piece of writing produced by students was assessed twice. The first assessment was done according to the assessment criteria specified in the Cambridge B1 Preliminary Handbook for teachers and reported in marks from 0 to 10. The second assessment was done according to a rubric created for the purposes of assessing progress in linguistic features, creativity, and critical thinking, with marks from zero (no evidence) to two (two or more samples of evidence). Nevertheless, it would be not correct stating that the problem of assessing creative writing is not a difficult issue. In fact, as Carter (2016) states in teaching and learning second or foreign languages the difference between errors and creative uses of language by learners is not always clear. As teachers, we tend to ignore mistakes in speaking if they do not impede communication, but the same does not happen with writing. In fact, when it comes to writing teachers tend to have a more rigid attitude and seem to lose their flexibility.

This century is witnessing a greater opening and interest on the topic of creativity. Creative language is seen not as standing on its own, but as part of the social conditions in which it is produced, as well as the people who use it, and the technologies necessary to produce it:

Creativity it is now seen as something that is co-constructed in interaction and dialogue, as operating in groups as well as in individuals, as involving the receiver as well as the producer of creative entities and as occupying a place not simply in artistic, aesthetic, or literary realms but in a wide variety of different forms of communication. (Jones, 2012, as cited in Carter, 2016, p. 18).

It is possible to identify a lot of creative elements in everyday interactions, metaphors, puns, idioms... As mentioned before, this kind of creative language and literariness are not exclusive to literature. It must also be taken in due consideration the great amount of creativity in everyday interaction through emails, telephone texts, tweets, Facebook posts... “it is estimated (very conservatively) that 100 billion emails, 300 million tweets and 6 billion SMS messages are sent and received each day” (Carter, 2016, p. 21). This huge quantity of written

e-language which has many features of speech (immediacy, turn-taking, fluency) can offer a lot of material for exploration of creativity in everyday interaction, and stresses the importance that creative writing has reached in modern life. It is not easy to define creativity, or the beauty it may produce. For this reason some reflections and discussion should be started by teachers on written language and creativity and as Carter (2016) suggests "instead of dismissing much of second or foreign language creative production as error", it would be advisable to start thinking to those context-related elements that can have an influence on the creativity of a language learner and recognize and/or accepted them as non-standard forms, just like it is possible to do with literary texts.

Hanauer (2015) showed that non-professional creative writing perception can be assessed in correlation with some features such as:

- Poem beauty judgment
- Quality of writing
- Emotional response
- Authorial attribution

Indeed, the ability to produce emotional response from the reader is a crucial element of any kind of writing. In this research study, several samples of creative writing pieces produced by students have been shown as successful writing. In this case, it must be considered the fact that writing, just like any other linguistic skill, is basically an act of communication. For this reason, the crucial element for a piece of writing to be successful is communication. Whenever feelings, thoughts and moods are perceived as truly and clearly expressed this is when writing pieces have reached their goal.

It is possible to make an attempt to define an outline of assessment for teachers to use when dealing with creative writing:

1. Does the writer reach his/her communicative goal (inform, entertain, express personal feelings and opinions)?
2. Is the general use of linguistic features (grammar and vocabulary) correct?

3. Are there any creative elements (non-standard forms) and if so, is there awareness in the use of the creative elements?
4. It is possible to associate mistakes/creative elements with:
  - local usage
  - specific contexts
  - Use of technological tools or social media
  - Literary model in the prompt text
  - Influence of L1
5. Is there evidence of the specific 21<sup>st</sup> century skill(s) involved in the writing (e.g., critical thinking, self-awareness, multiculturalism, creativity)?
6. Do mistakes impede communication?
7. Are feelings, emotions, actions, and thoughts clearly expressed?
8. Is the reader emotionally or intellectually engaged with the piece of writing?
9. Is there personal, cultural, or literary awareness in the piece of writing?
10. Are there any literary devices (and if so, are they correctly used)?

These questions can be regarded as a starting point for assessing pieces of writing based on the TASP model described before. They are the kind of questions that have guided the assessment of the writing in this current investigation, and they proved to be useful. Nevertheless, teachers could add more to the list depending on the focus of their own lessons. What is important to underline here are two crucial elements. The first one is that teachers should start to develop a more open and flexible attitude in assessing writing pieces instead of the judgmental approach that has always been a key element of writing assessment in Italian high schools. The second element is that creative writing should be included in any high school curriculum as a fundamental part of the cultural and human development of L2 learners. In other words, in this investigation, there has been an attempt to create a path and show what a language classroom could look like. It is an approach that invites teachers to be engaged with their students in actively explore their own consciousness, personal history and culture and get involved in a process of writing and dialogue with their language students. In this kind of



context there is space for real communication through meaningful and emotive writing in which students are engaged in understanding themselves discovering the connection between culture and language. In this kind of classroom human beings meet other human beings to learn language as a meaningful resource for developing personal expression.

## Chapter 7 - References

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## Appendix 1 - The Syllabus

### Module one - Focus on grammar and vocabulary - TASP/TAM text

1. Poem “Shall I compare...” William Shakespeare. Linguistic focus: Comparatives -TAM
2. Novel “A Tale of two cities” C. Dickens. Linguistic focus: Superlatives - TAM
3. Novel “Americana” by D. De Lillo. Linguistic focus: Linking words, idioms - TAM
4. Poem “I wandered lonely...” W. Wordsworth. Linguistic focus: Past Simple - TAM
5. Novel “1984” G. Orwell. Linguistic focus: Past simple vs Past Continuous - TAM
6. Song “Thinking out loud” E. Sheeran. Linguistic focus: Future with Will - TAM
7. Novel “The old man and the sea” E. Hemingway. Linguistic focus: P. Simple, P. Perfect - TEC
8. Novel “The grass is singing” D. Lessing. Linguistic focus: Passive Form - TEC
9. Poem “If you were coming...” E. Dickinson. Linguistic focus: Second Conditional -TAM
10. Novel “Ulysses” (Molly Bloom’s monologue) J. Joyce. Linguistic focus: Punctuation -TAM

### Lesson one - William Shakespeare “Sonnet XVIII - Shall I Compare...” (1609)

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate.

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And summer’s lease hath all too short a date.

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimmed;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance, or nature’s changing course, untrimmed;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow’st,

Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,

When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st.

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee

### Lesson description

The lesson starts with a TALO listening activity. This sonnet has inspired many singers including David Gilmour, Pink Floyd, who wrote the music of this beautiful song <https://youtu.be/S8Osse7w9fs> The comprehension of the text goes on with a cloze test. Based on these words 1. *Lovely* - 2. *Temperate* - 3. *Darling* - 4. *Rough* - 5. *Short* - 6. *Hot* - 7. *Gold* - 8. *Fair* - 9. *Eternal* - 10. *Possession* - 11. *Death* - 12. *Time* - 13. *Long* - 14. *Breath* - 15. *Life* After that there is a TAVI activity: students elicit the meaning of the sonnet focusing on the last two verses and talk about the meaning of the sonnet: 'So long...' Before the writing task, there is another TALO activity in which students must complete the comparison: *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art...* using the comparative form of the following adjectives: *joyful, hot, good, lively, bold, cheerful, soft, calm, gentle, delightful*. Finally, in the TASP/TAM activity they have to write at least three new comparisons similar to the first verse of the sonnet using the following structures: *Spring's/Winter's/Autumn's – day/fruit/landscape* - choosing adjectives from this list: *Sight Sound Touch Taste Smell* - 34 *Kiwis*

### Writing samples

- *Shall I compare thee to a Winter's landscape ? Thou art more shadowy and icier.*
- *Shall I compare thee to a Spring's fruit ? Thou art more sugary and sweeter.*
- *Shall I compare thee to a Fall day ? Thou art shinier and more cooler.* CLMA19
- *Shall I compare thee to a Spring's flower? Thou art more perfumed and more dazzling.*
- *Shall I compare thee to an Autumn's tree? Thou art more cheerful and bolder.*
- *Shall I compare thee to a Winter's sea? Thou art warmer and more cuddly.*
- *Shall I Compare thee to a Summer's fruit? Thou art sweeter and more fragrant.* AMFFC 1

- *Shall I compare you to a Winter's morning? You are icier and more shivery.*
- *Shall I compare you to an Autumn's fruit? You are more delicious and appetizing.*
- *Shall I compare you to a Spring's afternoon? You are more radiant and more sparkling. BBFB 17*

*Shall I compare thee to a Spring's landscape?*

*Thou art more brilliant and more enchanted.*

*The hot sun heats the roses of May,*

*and the breeze of Spring shakes the leaves of the trees. As the sun is gold so are your hair. As the sun will continue to shine, your beauty as well.*

*And every flower sometime declines,*

*but your eternal presence will breathe forever.*

*The shiny colors of the lawn, of the sky, of the fruits enclose your youthful beauty. You will live in every Spring's day, in every enchanted purple rose, in every moment of my life. RSFC 2*

#### Comments

These samples show that students used the first verse of the sonnet to reproduce a similar comparison with different adjectives belonging to different semantical areas and different senses. Namely, sight: *dazzling, radiant*; smell: *perfumed, fragrant*; taste: *sweeter, delicious, appetizing, sparkling*; touch: *warmer, cuddly, icier, shivery*. Two students decided to keep the original middle English words: *thou art*, while one decided to use modern English words. Some of the adjectives used belong to a higher level than B1 syllabus: *dazzling, fragrant, shivery, appetizing, radiant*. It can be said that students show to have reached several goals like learning a new literary structure, revising their grammar, expanding their vocabulary, familiarizing themselves with the middle English words used by Shakespeare. They have also learned how to create metaphors, which is one of the most important literary devices, inventing creative comparisons elements: *Winter's landscape, Spring's fruit, Fall's Day, Spring's flower, Autumn's tree, Winter's sea, Summer's fruit, Winter's morning, Autumn's fruit, Spring's afternoon*.

The last sample shows that the student used the sonnet as a model to write her own poem. As we can see she was successful in recycling different elements such as: structure, language, metaphors and meaning.

Structure *Shall I compare thee to a Spring's landscape?*

*Thou art more brilliant and more enchanted.*

Language *The hot sun heats the roses of May,*

*and the breeze of Spring shakes the leaves of the trees.*

Metaphors *And every flower sometime declines,*

*but your eternal presence will breathe forever.*

Meaning *You will live in every Spring's day, in every enchanted purple rose, in every moment of my life*

## **Lesson two - Charles Dickens "A tale of two cities" (1859)**

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

### **Lesson description**

The lesson starts with a TAVI reading comprehension. Students focus on the general meaning and elicit the contrastive elements (e.g., best/worst, wisdom/foolishness, belief/incredulity...). Then, there is a TALO activity in which they practice contrasts using the superlative form of the following adjectives and their opposite (like in the first sentence of the excerpt): great, favorable, incredible, sunny, propitious, good, tasty,

delicious, delicate, soft, delightful, calm. Before the writing task there is a general TASP activity about weird places and uncomfortable situations (e.g., sitting at the dentist chair, waiting for a life changing answer, going to a job interview...) and express feelings associated with them. Finally, in the TAM writing task they have to describe a strange place or awkward situation using the excerpt as a model and choosing opposite adjectives from the list: *Sight Sound Touch Taste Smell - 34 Kiwis*

### Writing samples

#### *The first kiss*

*It was a blurry sight, it was a radiant sight.*

*It was the iciest of nights, it was the warmest of nights, it was the softest of fabrics, it was the stickiest of fabrics, it was a twinkling sky, it was a shadowy sky.*

*They were affectionate teenagers, they were indifferent teenagers, it was a delicate kiss, it was a rough kiss. It was the most loving of times, it was the most unresponsive of times. GLFB26*

*It was the best day of my life, it was the worst day of my life, it was the most painful moment, it was the most enjoyable moment. When it started it was the purest friendship, when it ended it was the impurest friendship. I hoped it was the longest, but I knew it was the shortest. I pretended it was the strongest, but clearly it was the weakest. I was the saddest, I was the happiest, I was dead, I was born. My emotion were confused, all I know is that I don't want to feel anymore this way. EAFB23*

*It was a coldest of places in a very hot day, it was an oasis of tranquillity in a desert of confusion, it was the best place to think and reflect and in its darkness there was the brightest of truth. And there, in the absolute silence, I could hear the screams of my thoughts. But when a sunshine reached my face I was taken back from the longest but shortest of journeys to this little and uncomfortable reality where there is no space for silence and reflection. AFMB24*

*Mirror me. I was in front of the mirror. I saw the prettiest and ugliest girl, the smarter and the most stupid who lives in the greatest carelessness and in the moment most delicate in her life. She laughed outside and cried*

*inside, her eyes were the darkest but I can see the light in them, her smile was the most radiant and the saddest. She was the strongest and the most fragile. She would like more friends but she is fine alone. She was perfectly imperfect. I'm the person who I love and hate most. EBFB25*

*Last day I took an important mathematic test at school and I was feeling very scared for the last five days. While I was going to school with my mum she said it was the sunniest day of all month but, for me it was the cloudiest one I have never seen because my mind was just thinking about the test. Although I wasn't the calmest person in the world, I did the best result of all class. Then I was the happiest person in the country and I finally saw the light of the sun which was shining in the sky. BSMEF*

*After I fell down from the cliff and became conscious again, I saw a weird landscape all around me: there were streams with colorful waters, unusual plants and animal species that I had never seen before: it was like a magic landscape. I was confused, scared and even disturbed, but at the same time I felt somehow attracted to that special scenery. I felt fascinated, curious, but also relaxed, happy and in peace with myself. It was all really similar to those idilliac worlds that you only see in fantasy films, but this time it was real, and I couldn't wait to explore the whole area and discover its wonderful secrets. GLFCWEA*

## Comments

These samples show that, using the text as a model, students were able to use superlatives and contrasts.

Linguistic features were accurately dealt with to produce intense writing:

- *It was the iciest of nights, it was the warmest of nights, it was the softest of fabrics, it was the stickiest of fabrics*
- *It was the best day of my life, it was the worst day of my life, it was the most painful moment, it was the most enjoyable moment.*
- *It was a coldest of places in a very hot day, it was an oasis of tranquillity in a desert of confusion, it was the best place to think and reflect and in its darkness there was the brightest of truth*

- *I saw the prettiest and ugliest girl, the smarter and the most stupid who lives in the greatest carelessness and in the moment most delicate in her life.*
- *it was the sunniest day of all month but, for me it was the cloudiest one*
- *I felt fascinated, curious, but also relaxed, happy and in peace with myself*

Students described different situations and most of them seem to come from personal experiences. The first one describes the turmoil of the first kiss, the second one the disappointment due to the end of the friendship, the third one talks about a moment of solitude, the fourth describes an intense moment of self-awareness, the fifth is about the stress caused by a test, while the last one is a science fiction story. All of them depict in depth the varied world of teenagers. They also show that both positive and negative personal feelings and experiences can be used creatively and transformed in beautiful writing pieces.

### **Lesson three - Don De Lillo “Americana” (1971)**

Quincy’s wife and my date smiled at each other’s peace earrings. Then I took B.G. into the living room. We waited for somebody to approach us and start a conversation. It was a party, and we didn’t want to talk to each other. The whole point was to separate for the evening and find exciting people to talk to and then at the very end to meet again and tell each other how terrible it had been and how glad we were to be together again. This is the essence of Western civilization. But it didn’t matter really because one hour later we were all bored. It was one of those parties which are so boring that boredom itself soon becomes the main topic of conversation. One moves from one group to group and hears the same sentence a dozen of times. “It is like an Antonioni movie.” But the faces were not quite as interesting.

#### **Lesson description**

First activity is a TAVI Reading comprehension. Students are asked to answer three questions: What is this excerpt about? What does “date” mean? What does “like an Antonioni movie” mean?



The second activity is a TALO activity on Vocabulary. Students must complete the following sentences: The whole point was..., And then at very end..., How terrible..., How glad..., It didn't matter really because..., ... a dozen of time, ... not quite as... Finally, the TASP/TAM Writing task (100 words). Students write a story that starts with the sentence: "It was one of those parties which are so boring that..."

### Writing samples

*It was one of those parties which are so boring that not even the music was able to involve the different types of people that tried to make conversations but in reality had nothing in common to talk about. I would have much preferred remaining at home and eating a pizza with my close friends, but instead I was with some people I didn't know and that apparently didn't even want to have fun. It was like the tv series "Chilling adventures of Sabrina", but the conversations were far less captivating. GCFB26*

*It was one of those parties which are so boring that I preferred to be at home watching Netflix, but my boyfriend insist because it was his grandmother's birthday. I heard all night comments as "Oh my dear, how glad to see you again", how terrible is to fake a smile. The whole point is that I did not feel welcome, the food was terrible, the funeral music are funnier; and I can continue to complain... GRFECWA*

*It was one of those parties which are so boring that I thought to go away! I was waiting Simona, but She was extremely late. All people were talking with each other and I was really embarrassed... but then at the very end Simona arrived. I said how terrible the situation was and how glad I was to see she. Finally we left the party quickly and we went to the cinema. Fortunately we saw a beautiful movie and the evening was saved! SLFEV*

*It was one of those parties which are so boring that you'd rather stay a school, go to the dentist or even study. Nobody was smiling, dancing or even approaching the buffet. There were a few people who were talking, but the main topic of conversation was other people, and you'd better stay away from gossip. You'd hear the same*

*thing over and over “Look at her dress” or “Have you seen her shoes? They’re horrible!” It was like a Gossip Girl party, but it wasn’t even half as entertaining. BRFB27*

*It was one of those parties which are so boring that I thought to leave a dozen of times and then at very end I decided to return at home. But, while I was driving, I met Jennifer, who was in front of a café. We went together into the café and I took a cup of tea and some biscuits. I can't describe how terrible the party was, but it didn't matter really because I had fun with my best friend. GSFA14*

### Comments

In this lesson students used a variety of different expressions and idioms among the ones given. In most cases they only used one or two (besides the given sentence at the beginning), but they managed to use them correctly. Parties are a very familiar situation to teenagers so they were able to describe the situation and related feelings easily giving reasons, such as: *people that tried to make conversations but in reality had nothing in common to talk about, I did not feel welcome, the food was terrible, All people were talking with each other and I was really embarrassed... Nobody was smiling, dancing or even approaching the buffet, I can't describe how terrible the party was.* Students also talked about alternative ways to spend the evening in a more pleasant way, such as: *I would have much preferred remaining at home and eating a pizza with my close friends, I preferred to be at home watching Netflix, Finally we left the party quickly and we went to the cinema, you’d rather stay a school, go to the dentist or even study, then at very end I decided to return at home.* Despite the focus of this lesson was on grammar and vocabulary, this kind of text can also be exploited for self-reflection and critical thinking.

### **Lesson four - William Wordsworth “I wandered lonely as a cloud” (1807)**

I wandered lonely as a cloud

That floats on high o'er vales and hills,

When all at once I saw a crowd,

A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.

## Lesson description

In the TALO activity the teacher elicits the difficult words in the poem, then the focus is on the past simple: students underline the past tense and brainstorm about irregular verbs. In the TAVI reading comprehension students read the poem and discuss in pairs: what is the poet describing? Which image is the most powerful? What is the difference between the first three parts and the last one? Then they talk about their favorite natural landscape and about one day spent in nature. Finally, in the TASP/TAP writing task they have to describe a beautiful moment in nature. They must give as many details as possible, describe how they felt then and how they feel every time they think about it.

## Writing samples

*One of the best memories in nature is about my childhood. I live in the mountains and during my childhood my grandfather always took me away from the smog for a walk among the flowers and streams that reflected the sunlight. I remember that the first time I saw the sheep grazing was during this day, I grazed at them for a while, amazed at how many there were. It's a happy memory and I was euphoric but now, looking back, others to be gay, I'm a bit nostalgic for the lightheartedness that characterized childhood and, in particular, those moments on the top of the hill with my favorite person. VTEFV*

*I can talk about a lot of moments in nature, because I always had the luck to spend a lot of time in there, especially in summer. I have a lot of good memories at the sea, with my friends and by myself this doesn't matter actually, but if i have to describe one in particular I think I'll talk about one day on last summer. It was july I guess, and I was with this friend of mine, it was night and everything was dark but the sea was still shining, we could feel the consistency and coldness of the sand that was humid because of the day, we were feeling the wind moving our hair and the sand. There was no one, she putted on some music, our favourite taste, and we started dancing and singing together, then we took some covers and pillows and she and I started talking about a lot of things and we were laughing a lot. After that we also got into the water and swam until we arrived at a small island where we spent almost 2 hours. Everything was great, I was so happy, I felt free*

*not just because I was with this friend of mine but also because I was in my happy place, in my safe place.*

*When i think at this day I still incredibly happy and I feel a lot of joy in all of my body. LPFEV*

*When I think of a beautiful moment in nature I reminded of the walks I took every Sunday with my father, when I was child. He is an agronomist, so he loves nature in general. I loved walking with him in the woods. He taught me to recognize many type of flowers, trees and plants. We collected flowers, mushrooms, pine nuts. I preferred to go there in spring because there were wonderful colors there: the green of the trees and meadows, the blue of the sky, the colors of the wild flowers. And the birdsong made me feel in peace. I loved being in nature, I enjoyed learning about new paths, new places. Now remembering those days I feel nostalgic because time passes. This also make me feel happy and grateful. I will always remember those moments for the rest of my life. DSFEA*

*The sea was rough and calm at the same time. The waves crashed against the rocks: it seemed like it was raining. I felt like the quiet was inside me and the sea had taken away all my thoughts. It was the first time I felt so relaxed and I will never forget this feeling. I will never forget the immensity of the sea that made me feel so small and fragile. I felt like I was at home and I couldn't be happier. MVFA21*

*A day when I saw a blue sea I felt a free girl, without worries, thoughtless, I closed my eyes, I got carried away by the sound of the waves, as if I were a bird flying free in the sky among clouds, every time i think about that moment i feel just like that bird that flies free without a destination, I feel light as a feather that flies away with a little wind, it's a beautiful sensation it helps you feel better for those few minutes it helps you not to think about nagative things or things that worry you, it helps you understand what is right to do. IPFC3*

*I remember one spring's day, it was afternoon and I was lying on a green lawn, the nature around me seemed to be in harmony. I was having a picnic with my friends when a severe thunderstorm came. We ran for cover, that nature that was previously happy had become sad, it seemed to cry. Luckily we found shelter in a safe place, waited for the rain to stop and went out. There was a beautiful rainbow waiting for us. Those colors seemed to envelop us, we admired it and immortalized it with a photo. In that moment I seem to have seen me a*

*few years ago, the moments of happiness and then the darkness. This period, however, did not make me give up, in fact the rainbow has also appeared for me. It took time and many sacrifices but in the end I was able to find myself just like the rainbow after a storm. APFC4*

*A night in the light*

*The stars were so brilliant in the dark sky,  
so many sparks in a dark heart.*

*I felt protected from the cloak of the infinity,  
the infinity of them light and them eternity.*

*It seemed like I was everywhere and nowhere*

*In the scattered magic of the stars,  
every star enclose our dreams,*

*we are a piece of every star in the light of an emotion.*

*I was lying in the wet lawn,  
the world seemed to sleep.*

*The owls sang the melody of the night,  
the crickets danced in the splendor of the darkness.*

*I remember when the stars kept me company,  
when the immense light of the moon made my eyes shine. SRFC5*

*It was a sunny day of April and the green hills were silent and in the middle of them a flood of colorful flowers. In the distance a little ground-cloud of white sheeps was the only think that wasn't green in that landscape. The sky was clear and of a light blue with no clouds over the orizon. While I was lying on that green carpet I was one with the sky and the birds because my bad thoughts were flying like them and therefore my mind was with no clouds to cover the sun of my tranquility. Now thinking about those hills and the sky I ask: where is that lighthartedness? And those birds? Now there is no flood of flowers and no more green grass. Now there are gray clouds covering my sun. AFMB24*

## Comments

This was one of the most successful lessons in terms of both linguistic features and writings. The past tenses used were regular and irregular. Apart from two cases (putted and grazed) past simple was correctly used: *was, were, felt, seemed, waited, went, made, swam, sang, admired, run, danced, kept, came, got, closed, preferred, enjoyed, crashed, immortalized, taught, loved, took, spent, found*. Besides this, students were also creative in describing a moment in nature. These writing pieces express deep connection with nature and a sense of self awareness that can be linked with personal growth. Students give great value to experience in nature and they think it is a way to overcome anxiety and stress. Once again, despite the focus of the lesson is on grammar, the students' writings show that it is not easy to avoid self- reflection when exposed to literature and poetry. Using the text as a model they were able not only to cope well with the linguistic features of the poem but also to reproduce the feelings, the mood, the vision, and poetic touch through the expression of their own personal feelings and emotions.

## **Lesson five - George Orwell "1984" (1948)**

Outside, even though the shut windowpane, the world looked cold. Down in the street little eddies of wind were whirling dust and torn paper into spirals, and though the sun was shining and the sky a harsh blue, there seemed to be no colour in anything, except the posters that were plastered everywhere. The blackmoustachio'd face gazed down from every commanding corner. There was one on the house-front immediately opposite. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption said, while the dark eyes looked deep into Winston's own. Down at street level another poster, torn at one corner, flapped fitfully in the wind, alternately covering and uncovering the single word INGSOC. In the far distance a helicopter skimmed down between the roofs, hovered for an instant like a bluebottle, and darted away again with a curving flight. It was the police patrol, snooping into people's windows. The patrols did not matter, however. Only the Thought Police mattered.

## Lesson description

The lesson starts with a TALO activity to elicits the meaning of the difficult words: *windowpane, eddies, whirling, torn, harsh, plastered, blackmustachio'd, gazed down, commanding, caption, flapped, fitfully, bluebottle, darted away, patrol, snooping into, matter*. This is followed by a TAVI reading comprehension of starting a discussion about the most relevant elements in the excerpt. Another TALO activity to revise grammar underlining the verbs in past simple and in past continuous and then discussing the difference. Finally, in the TASP/TAM Writing Task students are invited to describe a scene from their favorite book or film.

## Writing samples

*Captain Blackbeard and Elisabeth Swan were in a fortress at Singapore to talk with one of the nobles pirates. There were too many guards in the city and they knew they were spied but they tried. After entering there were also their spies in the town and they discussed to the pirate but when they were trying to release some people the battle started: their spies come out from the floor, all the pirates were fighting but the english troops entred by breaking the walls. Someone was trying to escape but it was a massacre and all the pirates were imprisoned for life. DVMEF*

*Kate had a rare disease, for which she could not expose herself to the sun's rays. So, when she met a boy, she decided to go out with him in the night. They catch the train and went to a Chinese restaurant and to an ice cream shop. Then they jumped off the rocks and stayed on the beach. There, she started playing her guitar and they sang together all the night. When they come back home, it was almost dawn. MVFA21*

*Mr. Sugarcystal, a serial killer had just killed the judge Crosby near his home with his gun. He hided the victim's body under ground, in his garden by using a showel. He left the showel in the garden, and after this he got into the car and started driving very fast. For a case a policeman stopped the him because he was driving very fast. Mr. Sugarcystal got angry and insulted the policeman, who brought at the policestation.*



*There, inspector Sanchez took his fingerprint: they were like those present on the shovel used to bury the judge. So the inspector arrested him for murder. CAMEF*

*Right now, one of the films I like the most is called "18 regali". It is an Italian movie that narrates the story of a young girl meeting her deceased mother in a dream. The scene I liked the most has to be the one where she tells her mother who she really is. While helping her mother out choosing the dress for her future daughter, Anna reveals her truth to Elisa who has a panick attack and has to be brought to the hospital, the following hours are a calvary for both of Elisa and Anna. I think crying during that scene wasn't an optional since the whole movie theater was in tears. That picture, of the mother dying in the arms of her daughter, even if it was just a dream, made me realize how lucky I am to have a healthy and loving family. GLFB26*

*A high school teacher in New England classrooms uses unconventional methods to urge his students, under pressure from parents and school, to freedom and creativity. The film is called "L'attimo fuggente". There is a teacher who is in one of his classrooms and goes up to the desk to remind himself that you always have to look at things from different angles and the world will look different from there. He invites the guys to stand on their desk and encourages them. He says that it is precisely when he thinks he knows something that you have to look at it from another perspective. While it may sound silly or absurd, you have to try. He then he comes down from the desk and adds that when you read you should not only consider the author but also what we think. He invites his students to fight to find their voice. The later they start doing this, the greater the risk of not finding it at all. ASFC6*

*The stormy sea overwhelmed the old Santiago, the increasingly thick sky seemed to fall on him, overwhelmed by the water and desperation didn't give up. The big fish didn't give up either, everyone fought for their own life, with great respect and with the strength to go on for their own life. The world of man and that of nature seemed to meet united by death and hanging by a thread, that of hope. The old Santiago spent days waiting for the fish to surrender. The sea full of life seemed to almost devour the little boat, everything*

*depended on the will of the fish, the will of nature is greater than anything else: it unleashes a storm, it gives courage to two creatures so different united by the same priorities: to live. when everything seems to be falling apart the light of hope never goes out. SRFC5*

#### Comments

This lesson was not very efficient in terms of linguistic features learned and general outcome. Most students would focus on describing the plot instead of their favorite scene. Nevertheless, some of them manage to focus on the description of the scene as the task said and in giving details. Only few used the connection between past simple and past continuous as used in the text. Finally, none used any words or expressions seen in the text as models to be reproduced. Probably this is because the model text is too rich in vocabulary, grammar and meaning and needs a different kind of lesson plan to allow students to use the language and the linguistic features presented in the text. A good starting point could be giving a task based on the description of a dystopic world like the one depicted by Orwell to keep the connection with the text, rather than asking students to depict scenes from different novels.

#### **Lesson six - Ed Sheeran “Thinking out loud” (2014)**

When your legs don't work like they used to before

And I can't sweep you off of your feet

Will your mouth still remember the taste of my love

Will your eyes still smile from your cheeks

And darling I will be loving you 'til we're 70

And baby my heart could still fall as hard at 23

And I'm thinking 'bout how people fall in love in mysterious ways

Maybe just the touch of a hand

Oh me I fall in love with you every single day  
And I just wanna tell you I am  
So honey now  
Take me into your loving arms  
Kiss me under the light of a thousand stars  
Place your head on my beating heart  
I'm thinking out loud  
Maybe we found love right where we are  
When my hair's all but gone and my memory fades  
And the crowds don't remember my name  
When my hands don't play the strings the same way,  
I know you will still love me the same  
'Cause honey your soul can never grow old, it's evergreen  
Baby your smile's forever in my mind and memory  
I'm thinking 'bout how people fall in love in mysterious ways  
Maybe it's all part of a plan  
I'll just keep on making the same mistakes  
Hoping that you'll understand  
But baby now  
Take me into your loving arms  
Kiss me under the light of a thousand stars  
Place your head on my beating heart  
I'm thinking out loud  
That maybe we found love right where we are, oh  
...

## Lesson description

In the first TAVI activity students listen to the song while reading the lyrics and then answer the questions: What is the song about? Why is the singer talking about the future? What does he foresee? Do you know the red words? In the TALO activity students revise how to describe future events with will answering the following questions: Why is the singer using Will? What kinds of future forms do you know? What are the differences? In the final TASP/TAP writing task students imagine themselves in ten years and make predictions about what will happen to their life.

## Writing samples

*If I have to think about myself in 10 years, I think I will be studying at the university, I don't really know what though, maybe I'll attend a languages major, after which I don't think I will still be here in Italy. I would like to travel a lot, always hoping that I'll find a job that can allow it. Talking honestly, I don't care what will happen in 10 years, I just care that I will still be smiling, whatever thing I will be doing. MTMEV*

*I am Baldassare and right now I am a student in a high school and I am fifteen. In ten years I will be twenty-five so I will finish most of my studies, maybe I will be in a university out of my city and be in a good point to do a degree in medicine. I will be a researcher about medicine or something I like. Find a job il very difficult, right now, but I am sure I will find a job in a centre of research if I study enough. BSMEF*

*In the future I'm going to go to the University, so If everything goes well, in ten years I will be already graduated. I hope I will be lucky in work life but it isn't the only important thing. I want to make the difference. I am going to do something important for other people and I want people to remember me after many years. I hope I will have a family and I think I will be a good wife but exspecially a good mother. I am going to go abroad and see new places. I will learn new languages and meet new people. I hope my dreams will come true.*

FCFA20

*In ten years I see my self doing lots of things. I'd like to become a vet, because I am very attached to*

*animals and taking care of them has always been my dream. I want to be vegan, because I believe that no animal deserves to be mistreated and deprived of its freedom. I would like to create a refuge to help animals in difficulty, especially cows, pigs and chickens, because they are the most exploited to produce food that we don't really need. I hope to do this in 10 years. STMB11*

*In 10 years I'll finish university and start working as a doctor in the hospital. I will open a studio where I can work when I am not employed in the hospital. I like children so in 10 years I see myself as a pediatrician, gynecologist or stetrica. I have always enjoyed the medical field. Bringing or treating children in my opinion is one of the most beautiful things, so one thing I know for sure about my future is that I will dedicate myself to children. JDFA17*

#### Comments

This lesson, together with the one on If clauses, was very interesting because besides the linguistic features, which were usually correct, students showed their vision and the ethical approach to life. Caring for animals and children, studying hard to find the job they like, being involved in medical research, making a difference and being remembered for the good things done... these are some the values expressed in this lesson. Also, the outcome of this lesson, like most of the previous ones, show that it is almost impossible avoid students to express their self-reflection and critical thinking when exposed to high quality literature or simply when dealing with a good prompt as in the case of this very popular song.

#### **Lesson seven - Ernest Hemingway “The old man and the sea” (1952)**

He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream, and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish. In the first forty days a boy had been with him. But after forty days without a fish the boy's parents had told him that the old man was now definitely and finally « salao », which is the worst form of unlucky, and the boy had gone at their orders in another boat which caught three good fish the first week. It

made the boy sad to see the old man come in each day with his skiff empty and he always went down to help him carry either the coiled lines or the gaff and harpoon and the sail that was furled around the mast. The sail was patched with flour sacks and furled; it looked like the flag of permanent defeat.

### Lesson description

In the first TALO activity, the teacher elicits the meaning of the highlighted or difficult words. In the TAVO reading comprehension students read the excerpt and then discuss the following: describe what the story is about in two sentences, what does ‘salao’ mean, identify the jargon or technical words, describe the old man in just one or two words, describe the boy’s attitude toward the man. In the second TALO activity students read the passage and discuss in pairs the difference between past simple and past perfect. Then they complete the following sentences using the past perfect tense

- That day I was mad because...
- The storm was approaching but luckily...
- The concert was great, but we were starving, unfortunately...
- People at the party were very elegant, she was the only one who...
- We invited everybody to dinner by email, however...

Finally, in the TASP/TAM writing task (70/100 words), students are asked to write a story that starts with the sentence: “The storm was approaching rapidly, luckily the day before the captain...”

### Writing samples

*The storm was approaching rapidly, luckily the day before the captain had seen weather and so he already knew this, but nevertheless he had decided to leave and take risks anyway, but this cost him a lot. In fact while he was sailing the power of the storm increased and the captain had lost the control of the situation, after a few moment the ship sank and the captain died. This story teaches us that we have to be careful. IGFB21*

*The storm was approaching rapidly, luckily the day before the captain had listened the radio and he had understood that the ship was in danger. So he had warned the passengers and he had tried to change the route, but without results. Around midnight they had seen a rock in front of the ship and the captain was scared. The sea was very agitated and the ship jump up and down because of the waves. The storm became worse and worse. All the people were screaming and running from stern to bow. The captain was in panic and he decided to jump off the ship. He was a coward! Finally the ship had crashed with the rock and it was sinking, but fortunately all the people were saved thanks to lifeboats. ACFB14*

*The storm was approaching rapidly, luckily the day before the captain Sir Francis Drake had seen these horrible Lightning's with fall down until the sea and he had taken quickly the ancient treasure of El Dorado, the famous Incas's old gold town. After he sailed the island in order to find a safe zone, but the storm was more fast and it reached the ship. Drake was in a hard situation, but before he had seen a secure land. So he decided to go there and he finally saved his life. CLMA19*

*The storm was approaching rapidly, luckily the day before the captain had foreseen the incoming tempest and decided to strenghten the boat with wood and furlled the sail around the mast. Captain Sparrows was used to this kind of weather. In his 38 years of sailing he had encountered many storms and always managed to keep the ship and the crew safe and sound, but not without having the new crew members throwing up all over the place. He managed to survive also to this storm, spending the night in a boat continuously shaken by huge waves. When the crew woke up the storm was far gone and they could now sail safely once again. LMMA22*

*The storm was approaching rapidly luckily the day before the captain had repaired some ports of the boat so it should have been strong enough to resist. Unfortunately, there were lots of waves and it was dangerous, so they decided to go to the nearest safe place. They were really sad because they had to come back*

*home without finding anything interesting in the sea, but when they could do their trip again, they found a new island, and they named it with the name of their ship.* CDFEV

### Comments

The linguistic feature of this lesson seems to be the most difficult one for the students to handle. The difference between simple past and past perfect is not always easy to use in the correct context. Nevertheless, even with some difficulties, most students managed to produce interesting stories and characters. In some cases, they also reproduced the fishermen jargon as presented in the text. Some of the writing pieces are quite surprising for the quality of the linguistic control and the creativity displayed. Some were probably inspired by the very famous American film series *Pirates of the Caribbean*. It is also worth to mention that model text in this case is one of the most famous American novels also popular with teenagers. Generally speaking, the outcome of this lesson was better in creativity than in linguistic features.

### **Lesson eight - Doris Lessing “The grass is singing” (1950)**

MURDER MYSTERY By Special Correspondent

*Mary Turner, wife of Richard Turner, a farmer at Ngesi, was found murdered on the front veranda of their homestead yesterday morning. The houseboy, who has been arrested, has confessed to the crime. No motive has been discovered. It is thought he was in search of valuables.*

The newspaper did not say much. People all over the country must have glanced at the paragraph with its sensational heading and felt a little spurt of anger mingled with what was almost satisfaction, as if some belief had been confirmed, as if something had happened which could only have been expected. When natives steal, murder, or rape, that is the feeling white people have.

And then they turned the page to something else.



## Lesson description

In the TAVI reading comprehension students answer the questions: what is the news about? Who has been arrested? Why? How did people react to the news? Why? This is followed by a TALO activity in which students read the excerpt and underline the passive tenses. Then, the teacher gives a link with a scheme of Passive Tenses from English Grammar Today - Cambridge Dictionary

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/it/amp/grammatica-britannico/passive/passive>

After grammar revision there is a TASP/TAM writing task: write a crime story (100 words) starting with the sentence “The woman was found with a knife full of blood in her hand...”

## Writing samples

*The woman was found with a knife full of blood in her hand and with horrible signs on her neck. The police take and left her to the police station in order to investigate the crime. She was interrogated by two investigator of New York City and she was hold all the night. Meanwhile the examination, the scientific police was analysed evidences, in this case the knife and the death body, and they discovered that the man was a famous serial killer who killed three people in Los Angeles and he escaped the West Coast in order to not being imprison. The woman has been released and the crime was defined as self-defence. CLMA19*

*The woman was found with a knife full of blood in her hand. The corpse had been completely disfigured. The detective knew in a single glance she was used to cut meat and later he confirmed this hypothesis as he was told she was the local butcher. The victim of the crime was a middle-aged man, probably the lover of the murderer. He was already married and the woman that killed him seemed to have done it in the heat of passion. Most likely he was starting to feel something for his wife again and wanted to stop seeing his lover. But she wasn't going to let him go so quickly. Even so this did not explain the brutal yet so precise and cold- hearted cuts, the mystery was far from being solved. LMMA22*

*The woman was found with a knife full of blood in her hand, and the man on the floor was full of stab wounds. But she kept crying and saying that she was not the killer, and so the police decided to take her to the police station. Two lawyers were called and they decided to defend her because they thought she was innocent. After the interrogation and investigation, the police discovered that the killers were a gang of criminals who had framed the woman. So she was released and the gang was arrested and sentenced to life in prison.*

MVFA21

*The woman was found with a knife full of blood in her hand. She had been raped by two men and, after that, she decided to kill them. At the beginning she was hanging out with one of them, a man called Mark. Sarah, our killer, met Mark during a party of a friend's of her, they started talking and they decided to get to know each other. Their first appointment was fantastic and they started dating. One evening she was chilling out with Mark in a pub while he received a call by a friend, Sam, that came to the pub and joined to their appointment. They were having much fun together, but, at the end of the evening Sarah got drunk and asked Mark to come back home. Sarah had been raped by the two friends while she was drunk and unconscious. The day after she went to the police station and reported everything to the policemen. Unfortunately, it was thought that her story wasn't true and Mark and Taylor hadn't been arrested. For this reason she got crazy and decided to kill both of them. CCFEV*

*The woman was found with a knife full of blood in her hand, she was shaking, her eyes were wide open and she was clearly terrified, she seemed completely dissociate from the reality, the cops started walking in her direction and then they handcuffed her. The police was telling her to stay silent, as they do with everyone else, but this was useless, even if she wanted she couldn't say anything, her voice was stuck in her. She was going on the police's car, when a suspicious man looked out the window smiling and waving goodbye to the woman. Then he answered a call, the call was from the wife of the dead man, she was crying, she screamed at the phone "it was you, you're a dirty murder, how dare you, don't talk to none of this family anymore, I can't believe you*

*did this, he was your brother, I want my husband back and you stole him from me and this word, you also made an innocent woman been arrested, I don't know how you can look at yourself in the mirror every day.”. The man responded with all the calm and the confidence “I don't really know what you're talking about, I did nothing, you know how much I loved my brother, I could never”, he put down the phone, he looked at the blood's trace and smiled with presumption and proud again. I think that now we have to do a step back, let's see how it actually went. It's 24th May 2019, the day of the murder, it's 10:32 a.m., the man who was killed's name is Thomas, he's drinking his coffee sitting on the couch. Here comes is brother, Kevin, please remember this name, he sits on the arm chair, does a fake smile and that takes a bottle of alcohol and two glasses. “We've gotta have a toast Thomas, you have dad's agency as your own property now, it's all yours.”, Kevin says and than drinks from the bottle and makes an hysterical laugh. “ what are you doing?” says Thomas with a suspicious tone, he was not trusting his brother. “What? I'm your brother! I cannot be happy for you now?”*

*Kevin responds and than takes another sips. “Stop drinking, you're not okay and you're not going to be Kevin, come on, don't do stupid things, give me the bottle!”. Kevin doesn't do what his brother says and takes a third sip and then goes by. “You know what's funny Thomas? You knew that, didn't you? You knew that everything was meant to be yours. and that's why you killed him, come on be onest, i am not going to be mad, I mean, everybody knows.”. “You're drunk so i am not listening to you, but you know how much i loved our dad, I could never”. Than Kevin finishes the bottle and throw it away braking it and than screams “Yes Thomas i know, everybody knows how you loved him and how you was his favourite kid, WE KNOW”. Kevin stands up and goes out of the house at 11:42 a.m. slamming the door. It's 2:36 p.m. and here comes the wife, she smiles a lot and than says “Hi babe, how are you, I was missing you” and kisses him. The wife's name is Ginevra, she looks around and than says “I am going to cook the lunch sweetheart”. Ginevra found out that Thomas was cheating on her with the woman at the beginning of the story, Bethany. Ginevra walks up Thomas and kills him. She exits the house at 2:58 p.m. LPFEV*

*The women was found with a knife full of blood in her hand, she had sunk the knife into the man's belly to release her spleen. According to the woman, the spleen is excellent for frying. A repeat murderer? No, she*

*ate the organs of her victims. She was an artist, she liked to prepare unique dishes which she then served to customers. As soon as the police entered the restaurant kitchen, she cut her jug. We don't know for sure if his colleagues were complicit ... Or victims. We know, however, that someone continues the work that she had started.* FMMB28

*The woman was found with a knife full of blood in her hand, she was injured but not died and she could call the police:" A thief entered in the house, killed my husband and he caused me a cut on my leg." The cop looked carefully at the crime scene and the woman's words and it was clear that behind that angelic face of a desperate widow was hidden a terrible lie: no property had been stolen and there was nothing to suggest an irruption, moreover her injury was too superficial (she provoked it herself). The woman bursting into lewdness went to her knees and exasperated said: "sorry Mike, I loved you so much but you chosed her"* EBFB25

## Comments

This was probably the most successful lesson as far as creativity is concerned. As for the linguistic features the passive form was used correctly at least once in every writing, in some cases more than once:

- *She was interrogated by two investigator of New York City and she was hold all the night.*
- *The corpse had been completely disfigured.*
- *Two lawyers were called, So she was released and the gang was arrested and sentenced to life in prison.*
- *She had been raped by two men, Sarah had been raped by the two friends, it was thought that*
- *you also made an innocent woman been arrested, the man who was killed's name is Thomas*
- *no property had been stolen*

Most students were able to produce interesting plots and characters, even though sometimes grammar was not completely under control and the sequence of actions was sometimes difficult to understand. However, from the writing assessed it is possible to say that crime story are creative triggers which help students developing connections among facts and organizing time sequences with logical conclusions. Crime story could

be used for enhancing both creativity and critical thinking at the same time. Another way to exploit crime story is to use them to develop problem solving skills. Handling the logical sequence of the story, developing connection between facts and characters, finding a balance between producing evidence and hiding clues can be a great practice for helping students facing and resolve obstacles.

### **Lesson nine - Emily Dickinson “If you were coming in the Fall” (1830)**

If you were coming in the Fall,  
 I' d brush the Summer by  
 With half a smile, and half a spurn,  
 As Housewives do, a Fly.

If I could see you in a year,  
 I' d wind the months in balls  
 And put them each in separate Drawers,  
 For fear the numbers fuse

If only Centuries, delayed,  
 I'd count them on my fingers droppel  
 Subtracting, till my fingers dropped  
 Into Van Dieman's Land.

If certain, when this life was out  
 That yours and mine, should be  
 I' d toss it yonder, like a Rind,  
 And take Eternity

But, now, uncertain of the length  
 Of this, that is between,

It goads me, like the Goblin Bee

That will not state - its sting

### Lesson description

The first activity is a TALO close test. Students Listen to the song and fill in the gaps (words in red). The teacher elicits the missing words 07 - Carla Bruni - If You Were Coming In The Fall - No Promises. The second activity is a TAVI reading comprehension: students in groups read the sentences in yellow and discuss the meaning. Before the writing task students practice the second conditional completing the sentences as in the poem:

- If only I could...
- If you were...
- I'd...
- If certain that

The final task is a TASP/TAP writing (100 words) with the title: If I had superpowers, I'd...

### Writing samples

*If I had superpowers I would use them to discover new things and have glory. If I could travel in time I would go to ancient Greece, then to ancient Rome, and listen to the prayers of Cicero and Demosthenes, I would witness the Punic wars and the civil war of Caesar, I would speak with Socrates, Aristotle 59, Carneade and get to know the language and culture Latin and Greek. I would also speak with Augustus and Jesus, and I would go in 1300 to speak with my patriarchs and to see the splendor of the ancient assets of my family, and I would write the book on the whole dynasty of my family. FMMB28*

*If I had superpowers, I'd do something, but I don't know what. If I could fly I would probably go on a desert island sunbathing. If I could breathe under water I would do nothing because I don't really like sea. If I was super strong I would do something stupid so let's leave it alone. I don't know if superpowers would improve my*

*life, of course they would make my life easier but I don't know if they would make my life better. Maybe the only superpower useful now is the power of not breathing at all. AFMB24*

*If I had superpowers I would like to have the ability to fly, to feel free, like a bird that escapes from its cage, to be able to touch the sky and to cross the falling clouds, to be able to feel the cold air on my skin, to be one step away from the top of a mountain, seeing how small the world is, being able to touch the water of the sea with the fingers and seeing all the colorful fishes swimming under me, being able to watch a sunset on the roof of a building and dance among the stars and the moon. EBFB25*

*If I had superpowers I would give homelessness a home, to people who are not calm, give peace. If I had superpowers, I would stop the wars that exist in different countries by giving peace. If I had superpowers I would fly all over the world to discover new things and new places. If I had superpowers right now I would exterminate the coronavirus, and I would experiment with a vaccine. If I had superpowers I would read the person's mind to understand what they think about me and to understand what I can improve if their thinking was negative. ELFB6*

*If i had superpower,i'd like be my father.*

*I don't need superhero.*

*My father does for me anythings.*

*For some years it also makes me a mother*

*He cooks,he washes the dishes,he washes the clothes. Sometimes i help him,doing my bed,i try not to leave things in a mess. He has the superpower send me positivasses,joy with a smile. He encourage me in the difficult things of the life,thanks to him, i'm acquring the strength to never give up. When i'm sad,he says me: "Alice nerve give up,everythings it's possible"*

*I'd like be a good parent such as my father it was for me. AMFB5*

*If I had superpowers I would do anything to protect people by flying and teleporting. I would stop criminals from committing crimes by stopping them in time. If I could foresee the future, I could avoid the attacks and know in advance about the weather disasters. Nobody would know my true identity, and I would be a hero. If I could fly, I would visit the world, knowing many cultures and traditions. My superhero costume would be yellow and purple, and I would wear a mask so as not to be recognized. I would also like to be immortal, so I could be young forever and meet many people. MVFA21*

*If I had superpowers I'd use them for my own good. I wouldn't spend time on helping people and I would rather enjoy them, than use them for a greater good. If I could run very fast I would use this superpower to never be late again, if I could create objects from nothing I would create gold or diamonds and become rich. I would not be a super vigilante always ready to fight crime for the sake of the world. I would use them just to ease my life, and no one else's. But I don't have superpowers so all I can do is enjoy life with what I have in its good and in its bad and so should you. LMMA22*

*If I had superpowers I would stop time*

*If I had superpowers I would travel in time*

*If I had superpowers I would change the bad things in the world*

*If I had superpowers I would be able to understand people well*

*If I had superpowers I would change the bad things in the world, for example: discrimination, violence and poverty If I had superpowers I would travel in time because I would like to know my favourite authors that lived in the 1800s. MMFEE*

#### Comments

The outcome of this lesson was a very interesting production. Students were mostly able to use the linguistic features presented in the lesson (If clauses) with good control. Even the weakest students were able to



perform well in grammar and the added value was the insight they gave on their self- reflections. Saving the world from crime, illness, discrimination, violence, and poverty... In particular being able to break free or not breathing at all, discovering a vaccine against covid pandemic are regarded as very useful superpowers.

However, among this outburst of generosity and altruism there are also students who honestly admit that they would use superpowers just for themselves, to travel in history and write the story of their family or simply to make their own life easier and more enjoyable. This kind of text can be used for developing self-awareness.

### **Lesson ten - James Joyce “Ulysses” Molly Bloom’s monologue (1918)**

it was leapyear like now yes 16 years ago my God after that long kiss I near lost my breath yes he said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body yes that was one true thing he said in his life and the sun shines for you today yes that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get round him and I gave him all the pleasure I could leading him on till he asked me to say yes and I wouldnt answer first only looked out over the sea and the sky I was thinking of so many things he didnt know of Mulvey and Mr Stanhope and Hester and father and old captain Groves and the sailors playing.

#### **Lesson description**

In the TAVI reading comprehension students read the text and answer the following questions

- Who is the woman talking to?
- What is a leapyear?
- What is she talking about?

Then, before the TALO activity, the teacher shows students a link about punctuations

[https://www.apu.edu/live\\_data/files/288/basic\\_punctuation\\_rules.pdf](https://www.apu.edu/live_data/files/288/basic_punctuation_rules.pdf) students in pairs or small groups read the link and add punctuation to the excerpt, then they compare their results. In the final TASP/TAP writing task students recall memory of a past event and write down a short note about it.

## Writing samples

*It was a summer's day, we were in a big garden, she was lying on a red cloth and she looked like an apple tree with sweet fruits. We were free and the wind blew over us. SRMA16*

*I remember the moment she asked me if I want the tomato pasta or ricotta pasta it was very delightful as it made me feel wanted and let me eat as much as I wanted. This is what grandmas are for. LMMA22*

*I remember when I was a kid and in summer I tried to take a ramp with my bike. No sooner had I jumped I was already on the ground. I bumped my hand and I started crying. I was really scared about the idea it was broken because after two days I had to go to Dublin on holiday. Fortunately my hand was not broken.*

SMMA12

*Six months ago I had my first English class, I remembered I was anxious. I noticed a boy, called Antonio, who also noticed me. After that first class, he sent me the friendship request on Instagram, of course I accepted. After a couple of days, he sent me a message "Hey, could you please send me the homework?". That was only the beginning of our love story. A month later, we had our first day. We went to a restaurant, we had a lovely walk on the beach, and he waited the perfect moment to kiss me. I cannot explain the chemistry that we had (and the chemistry we still have). I cannot explain the love story that I am living, I feel it is like a fairy-tale.*

GRFECWA

*An important event in my life, was when I had my first date with a boy. I was a little bit scared. In fact my legs were shaking, but at the same time, I was excited and nervous. There was a beautiful sunny day. We did a walking in the centre of the city. After that we went to eat an ice cream. He was so romantic. He said that: "the sun shine for you". He was also very kind to me. This was one of my favorite moment to remember, because it was a magical time. I think I will always remember. SVFECWA*

*It was 10th August and I was on the beach with all my family, because during that night there was shooting stars. I was lying near the shore, the waves of the sea wet my feet and it was all dark around me, but it was beautiful. The sky was full of stars and sometimes we saw a shooting star. In that night my father, who was sitting next to me, said: "Shooting stars are beautiful, they show that you can be beautiful even when you fall." He had read this sentence in a book, and it had impressed him, so, seeing the falling stars, he remembered it and told me. I will remember this evening for all my life, because my dad opened his heart to me, for the first time. ACFB14*

*When I was five my mother gave birth to my little brother. I remember seeing her pregnant, the joy she had in her eyes all those nine months, and we all couldn't wait to meet the baby. On the 12th of June I had to dance at my recital, and while I was enjoying my time on stage, my mother lost her baby at the hospital. My father still managed to come see me dance, he managed to answer all those questions: "how's the baby?" "How's your wife?". I remember feeling very confused when my parents came home without my little brother in their arms. I watched my mother start crying uncontrollably and it was heartbreaking, not because of what had happened, since I was a baby myself and I couldn't fully understand her pain — even though I never will — , but because I had never seen my mom cry. I remember all those years that passed, I remember my mother looking broken and I remember feeling so powerless against her pain, as if I wasn't enough to stop her sorrow. But I understand now; she loved me with all her heart but I, alone, couldn't make up for two children: the void was too deep to be filled, and it still is. BRFB27*

#### Comments

The outcome of this lesson is rather controversial. The idea was to offer students a model to follow while learning about punctuation. So, they were supposed to learn how to use punctuation in some of the lesson activities and then forget about it to write a short paragraph using the monologue as a model. Some students (namely the first two ones in the samples) followed the instructions and wrote a very short note with none or

very little punctuation, however, most of the students preferred a more traditional approach and decided to write a longer paragraph with defined sentence structure and punctuation. Nevertheless, despite the formal appearance of their writing, students succeeded in delivering emotional writing connected with their deepest feelings about love, family relationships and even traumas. So, this text can be very useful to develop creativity through self-reflection, besides punctuation. It would probably be more effective if used in two steps: first step recollects memories of an important event and write spontaneously without using punctuation (TASP/TAM); second step, after sharing memories with the others the piece of writing could be reorganized using appropriate syntax and punctuation (TASP/TEC).

### **Module two - Focus on tone, register and style - TASP/TEC texts**

11. Short Story Edgar Allan Poe "The tell-tale heart" Style, tone - TEC
12. Poem Charles Bukowski "8 Count" Tone, register - TEC
13. Novel J. Conrad "The secret sharer" Describing people - TEC
14. Short Story James Joyce "The Dead" Describing events - TEC
15. Novel Virginia Woolf "Ms. Dalloway" Describing places - TEC
16. Article "Black Friday" Consumerism - TACT
17. Article "What is meditation?" Is meditation good for you? - TACT
18. Drama William Shakespeare "Macbeth" (monologue) Life metaphors - TEC
19. Novel J.K. Rowling "Harry Potter" Discrimination - TACT
20. Novel George Orwell "1984" Style, tone - TEC

### **Lesson eleven - Edgar Allan Poe "The tell-tale heart"**

It was A LOW, DULL, QUICK SOUND -- MUCH SUCH A SOUND AS A WATCH MAKES WHEN ENVELOPED IN COTTON. I gasped for breath, and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly, more vehemently but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with

violent gesticulations, but the noise steadily increased. Why WOULD they not be gone? I paced the floor to and for with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men, but the noise steadily increased. O God! What COULD I do? I foamed -- I raved -- I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder -- louder -- louder!

### Lesson description

In the TALO activity students in pairs look up the meaning of highlighted words. This is followed by a TAVI Reading comprehension: students read the excerpt and answer the question: what kind of feeling/mood is the author conveying? This is followed by an exercise focusing on tone: students in pairs read the definitions and associate each sentence to an emoji and then they choose one (or more) emoji to describe the tone of the excerpt. Finally, in the TASP/TEC writing task they write a story associated to a tone/emoji of their choice.

- This tone in writing focuses on the positive emotions that are experienced in the moment of an action.
- This tone in writing increases the focus of the readers because the concepts being offered are important.
- This tone makes people begin to think about difficult concepts in a way that feels safe.
- When incorporated in writing, this tone makes the reader sympathetic with the characters or the author.
- This tone is based on the idea that the world can be a better place if we are willing to work for it.
- This tone makes you feel like that bad stuff in the world will only get worse.
- This tone speaks to the core fears that people have and forces them to confront those fears.

Emoji:       

Tone: Sad Serious Horror Optimistic Joyful Pessimistic Humorous

### Writing samples

*Once upon a time there was a girl who had a special talent: she could talk to animals and understand*

*what they were thinking. So she decided to help the animals who needed help, and became a vet in order to give them the necessary care. The animals were very happy when they went to her clinic, because she was always kind and sweet. Thanks to her success, she decided to travel around the world to help all animals. He went to the forest, in the savannah, in the glaciers and even in the ocean. When she grew old, she retired and spent his life surrounded by animals. MVFA21*

*One time a boy which was called Aristocratic Onceball go on a party with all girls and was managing to escape but two girls wich were called Medison and Mia grabbed him and make-up him. The boy was very smile because he played with the girls of war of food and this girls was very funny. DSMA4*

*Every step was heavier. My wet chothes were more of an impediment than a protection. My boots were entirely covered by soft mud created earlier by the rain, the sweat, and the blood of my companions. I couldn't hear nothing but the clash of metal and the terrifying screams of just before. I couldn't take it any more and I fell to the gound; luckily the wet soil deadened the fall. I was lying with the rain beating on my back and I had nothing but my material body. My soul was lost like the shouts of my companions; in the wind. AFMB24*

*She was in the bathtub: the water was cold, the soap bubbles had dissolved, the room was invaded by the silence and a deep darkness, the only light was given by a candle. She continued to caress gently her belly; the thought that until a few weeks ago a creature could be there, was destroying her. Her blue eyes, once full of light, became empty, it seemed she didn't feel anything anymore, not a word came out of those icy lips, but inside her there was a chaotic combination of pain and strong emotions and a continuous silent cry. Shedding bitter tears and sobbing, continued to tremble and in her mind she thought: "My baby, God did not want to give me the opportunity to show you how much I could have loved you, but I will continue to do it forever" EBF25*

*It was the night.*

*Cold, dark frightening and restless.*

*It was the moon.*

*With its pale white and grey spots, its big ghastly eyes and its apprehensive stare. It was my head.*

*Spinning, throbbing, hurting.*

*It was the way my hands shook.*

*Uncontrollably, involuntarily, irrepressibly.*

*Where were my legs taking me?*

*Running and running and running, far away from that dark dot.*

*The ocean was looking at me. Staring at me.*

*The tears in my eyes felt salty, just like its water.*

*My breath was beginning to shorten.*

*Big breaths with loud sighs.*

*Sitting down on a nearby rock, my chest rising up and falling down, I observed my surroundings.*

*It was late, it was peaceful and it was also very far from home. Big breaths and loud sighs.*

*Standing up was easy, I could do it.*

*Walking was also fairly simple, I could do that too.*

*Going back there was not simple, nor was it easy, but I knew I could do it. And I did it. GLFB26*

*Two years ago I went to the cinema, and I saw a film that I had been waiting for a long time, which is the second part of IT. I already knew it was REALLY SCARY! but I thought I could see it, but immediately after starting I already wanted to leave the cinema since I was very curious and I decided to WATCH IT UNTIL THE END. As soon as I got out I was AFRAID OF EVERYTHING! and I was so scared that I didn't want to leave the cinema. Back home I started seeing monsters EVERYWHERE! For several nights I did not sleep and because I was afraid of EVERYTHING! After a few days everything went back to normal but I didn't remember IT was so SCARY. RGMECWA*

*DAD,MUM NO! this is the first reaction of the little Bruce Wayne say when the Wayne's bodies going down.*

*Is very difficult to know the suffering of a little child.*

*So sad!*

*In the years Bruce traveler around the city of Gotham and he was shocked! "THIS CITY IS JUST A MADNESS PLACE WHERE CRIMINALS MAKE EVERYTHING THEY WHANT!"*

*And so i decide to become the NIGHT!, THE MAN WHO TERRYFING CRIMINALS!,THE ONLY WHO SAVED THE GOOD PEOPLE OF GOTHAM!*

*HE BECAME,*

*BATMAN! (Epic music at the end) MCMECWA*

#### Comments

The tone of these writings is varied. Students who decided to stick to the horror tone of the model text managed to deliver more convincing stories. Some invented stories, other ones decided to talk about an episode of their life, such as a trip with family, a day spend with friends... In this task they were free to choose the tone they wanted but to make better use of this text it is better to assign a task in which they have to write a story with horror, dramatic or dark tone and suggest avoiding personal experiences.

#### **Lesson twelve - Charles Bukowski "8 count" (1955)**

from my bed

I watch

3 birds

on a telephone

wire.

one flies



off.  
then  
another.  
one is left,  
then  
it too  
is gone.  
my typewriter is  
tombstone  
still.  
and I am  
reduced to bird  
watching.  
just thought I'd  
let you  
know,  
fucker.

#### Lesson description

In the TAVI activity, after a quick reading, the teacher elicits student's reaction to the poem (what kind of sensation, feelings, thoughts the text provoked in them). Then, in the mixed TALO/TAVI activity students in groups read the sentences in yellow and discuss the meaning of the poem focusing on the following questions:

- What can you say about punctuation?
- Is this the kind of vocabulary you'd expect in a poem?
- What is the meaning of the title?

- Which adjective can describe the tone: sad, bored, happy, joy, indifferent, hopeless, uncertain, failed, fulfilled, frustrated...?
- Who is the poet talking to?
- Is the register formal or informal?

Finally, in the TASP/TEC writing task, students have to write a poem to their best friend describing a moment of sadness or boredom.

#### Writing samples

*When I was young, / I was too fat / And all my classmates Laughed at me / And you don't now / How was difficult Go to school. / I remember all / The bad words yet, But now / I am stronger And I am Happy.*

ALFA15

*I am lying down on the bad / I am tied up with chains / I must get up / but I can't*

*There are some flames that are speading / I should run away / but I can't / I am tied up* CPMA11

*My phone broke / So I am using my computer. / Quite a boring life / The one of the computer user. / I really don't get why / that one guy / whose typewriter broke,/ wants to let us know / that he is now watching birds, / this guy sucks. LMMA22*

*From the side Of the school / 3 dogs / On the green Park. / One is Barking, / one is Running, / one is Dead. / I'm the third. / I can't watch. / I'm the third. I can't write. / ... SMMA12*

*Solem sadness / I saw a thousand solitudes / lying on the grass / and for days and days / maybe you were my pain / that you walk away from everything. A past made of roses, / cold and motionless  
Yet now my fears are gone. BAFA13*

*Blocked in my room. / I'm on my bed / watching outside and thinking about the tragedy that is hitting us. / Today the weather is / cloudy and windy. / I can hear / the wind crashing against my window. I'm locked / in my house, / I can't see you, I miss you. ACFB14*

*MY LIGHT / My friend / so far so close, / in the same situation at home / closed, / sad and / melancholy / but a light brings me to you, / and my days improve ELFB6*

*Raindrops./ In front of the computer I listen to / my English teacher. / The background is a continuous rain. / Time doesn't pass. The sun /is hidden / on this sad day / of March. VPFB20*

*From a year, / I'm yet here. / I stay in a cage / who everybody call home, / with nobody to see but with more and more homeworks to do. / I've just a phone to call my friends, who help me to free me of the stress. PSMECWA*

*Blue freedom / From / A / large / window / In / the dining room I look at / the endless deep blue. / Clouds / in / the sky / change / in shape. / Birds / twitter / and fly away. Lucky them. Far away / a train pass and I feel / like / a / passenger / who / want / to start / a new journey Dear me! / I'm / here immobile Waiting / from / freedom CAFEP*

#### Comments

This course covers a span of time that started in November 2019 until May 2021. This lesson is probably the best sample of the emotional and psychological suffering produced by the pandemic among teenagers. The prompt was a poem expressing frustration but in the words of the students there is much more than that. Contrary to common believe, it seems like students give their best when confronted with poetry. This

was evident in several lessons where poems were the texts used. It does not matter if the poet is famous, classical, not well known, contemporary or not. Emily Dickinson, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, pop song writers like Ed Sheeran, and in this case a modern and unconventional author like Bukowski, all of them gave students the opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts freely. Besides, when asked, they were also able to do so using similar language, rhythm and tone as the ones used by the poets themselves.

### **Lesson thirteen - Joseph Conrad “The secret sharer” (1911)**

He had rather regular features; a good mouth; light eyes under somewhat heavy, dark eyebrows; a smooth, square forehead; no growth on his cheeks; a small, brown mustache, and a well-shaped, round chin. His expression was concentrated, meditative, under the inspecting light of the lamp I held up to his face, such as a man thinking hard in solitude might wear. My sleeping suit was just right for his size. A well-knit young fellow of twenty-five at most. He caught his lower lip with the edge of white, even teeth.

#### Lesson description

In the first TALO activity, students elicit the meaning of the highlighted words. Then there is a TAVI reading comprehension where students in group read the excerpt and discuss the following questions: what is the author purpose? How would you describe the tone of this excerpt? Is the register formal or informal? Is the person described bad or a good? Why? What you say about this person’s feelings or mood? Finally, there is the TASP/TEC writing activity: describe a person that you like and one that you don’t like in two different paragraphs of 50 words each.

#### Writing samples

*He was such an attractive and handsome boy. He had little, beautiful lips and a little beard on his round and coloured cheeks. His hair was short and curly and his eyes were as blue as the ocean and they were also joyful and fascinating. He was wearing an elegant, white shirt, but his defined muscles were still visible. He had a well-knit and attractive body. That girl was not so good-looking: her hair was dirty and she was wearing*

*extremely big and unfashionable sunglasses that covered most of her face. Also her clothes were not so attractive: there was a quite evident hole on her t-shirt, whereas her trousers were too large for her skinny body. She also seemed really embarrassed and she tended to keep her head down, as she was ashamed of herself. GLFECWA*

*The person I like. He had sculpted face, a large mouth, small dark eyes under thick eyebrows, a little growth on his cheeks. His expression was always serious and thoughtful, but he scrutinised everything around him. He was very clever and determined, I admire him for this, and he was also sympathetic and funny with the person who need a friend. The person I don't like. He had a round face, a plump mouth with a white and even teeth, light eyes and blond eyebrows like his hair. His expression is stupid, shallow and curious, enough unbearable. He hasn't got a good personality, he is susceptible, angry for everything and he often sad. I can't stand his lamentations and is stupid jokes. BBFB17*

*She has got lights blue eyes, that look like the sky, with a small arch given by her shining smile of a rosy mouth and she has got a cute nose up. Her angelic face is hidden by wavy blonde hair strands that descend softly up to her shoulders. She has that dreamy air, walking always with headphones on her ears and a sketch pad in her hands, with those vintage clothes in warm tones. She has got brown perfidious eyes, a big nose, a grimacing mouth and an air always silky. She always act as if she is superior in a very arrogant way, with designer clothes but with a bad taste. Initially, she may seem nice and helpful but a moment later she does not hesitate to turn her back on you. EBFB25*

*He has blue hair, a large forehead and dark eyebrows. His eyes are little, but his expression is evil. He walks in an agitated and suspicious way on his broken shoes. He wears torn trousers and a shirt with a big hole. He's about 30 years old. I don't like him. Yesterday I saw a very handsome guy, who was wolking on the beach. His hair's movement followed the wind. He was relaxed and his brown eyes shined. He has a little bushy beard. He was tall and dressed very well. GSFA14*

*He had fair skin and red hair. His blue eyes seemed to contain the sea and he always had a smile printed on his face. His name is Ed and he is a singer: his voice is delicate and fine, and with it he always succeed to move people. Mike, on the other hand, has dark eyes and dark hair, and a perfidious expression. He is always presumptuous and hypocrite, and he is not very kind when he talks to the people. His square face gives a feeling of unease to those who are looking at him, so people stay away from him. MVFA21*

*The person I like While playing chess, his all body seemed to relax. His broad shoulders became less tense, and his light brown hair fell in front of his deep hazel eyes, that always looked at me like I was the only one in the room. His faced seemed to be sculpted by the gods, with his prominent nose and thin, warm lips. He didn't like being at the center of attention, probably because of the scar that crossed his face. He didn't like it, but I loved it and even if he didn't know, he would always be the centre of my attention. The person I don't like Blonde hair that almost looked white, icy blue eyes that pierced through one's soul, an arrogant smirk that showed his belief of being above everyone else. Maybe it was because of his money, or maybe because half of the girls I know fell to his feet, either way he knew what he wanted and what he could get. If only he was a little more humble, just a tiny bit, maybe we could have been friends, but his personality annoyed me so much that I could never stay around him for more than 2 hours. GLFB26*

#### Comments

This text proved to be very useful in helping students describing people in a very creative way. The interesting thing is that they managed to depict their characters personality simply by describing the way they look or the clothes they wear which is what Conrad, and every writer, does. This is the added value of this lesson, the possibility given to the students to describe personalities through physical features using the text as a model to develop language at a deeper level exploiting its full potential through metaphors:

- *his eyes were as blue as the ocean,*
- *She has got brown perfidious eyes,*

- *His blue eyes seemed to contain the sea,*
- *His eyes are little, but his expression is evil,*
- *icy blue eyes that pierced through one's soul*

These samples show that with a good model, students can expand their language and improve their style adding meaning and depth.

### **Lesson fourteen - James Joyce “The dead” (1914)**

A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. It had begun to snow again. He watched sleepily the flakes, silver and dark, falling obliquely against the lamplight. The time had come for him to set out on his journey westward. Yes, the newspapers were right: snow was general all over Ireland. It was falling on every part of the dark central plain, on the treeless hills, falling softly upon the Bog of Allen and farther westward, softly falling into the dark mutinous Shannon waves. It was falling, too, upon every part of the lonely churchyard on the hill where Michael Furey lay buried. It lay thickly drifted on the crooked crosses and headstones, on the spears of the little gate, on the barren thorns. His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.

#### Lesson description

In the TALO activity students in pairs look up for the meaning of the words in yellow.

In the TAVI activity students read the excerpt and answer the questions: what is the purpose of this excerpt? How would you describe the tone? Is the register formal or informal? What kind of words can you find? What kind of mood does the author convey? How does he do that? What can you say about the vocabulary and the words highlighted in red? TASP/TEC Writing: Describe the excitement of a child watching the snow for the first time (50 words). Pay attention to the tone and the mood you want to convey.

## Writing samples

*A few light taps upon the pane made him turn to the window. Everything was covered with a white layer of joy. He couldn't believe that, but he was curious and a few minutes later he went out to enjoy that moment. Despite he hadn't had breakfast, he didn't feel hungry as the snow had been only a dream for him until that day.* FDPMEV

*"What's happening out?" said in a cold winter morning. "What is coming down from the clouds?" thought "It seems so soft, it falls so slowly and gently; who knows what it tastes like, I've never seen something like this before, could it be a present from heaven?" the child ran out and he dived into that huge white carpet and he said looking up : "Wow, it's incredible! It seems to be on a cloud!" some snowflakes rested on his face : "But brrr...it's too cold!"* EBFB25

*When it was cold, usually it was because of the rain, or the wind; never because of this. This felt different, it was cold and shiny and if it stayed on my hands or lips for too long, it burned. Before going outside, mum wrapped me up in one of her big cozy scarves, and she put me in my heaviest coat, to be sure I wouldn't catch a cold. After playing outside for the whole afternoon, I discovered that if warmed up, the snow turned into water, just like magic! So, I guess that's what snow is, right? A magical thing that shows up rarely, but when it does, it's always super, super beautiful!* GLFB26

*The First Time a child sees snow he gets all pumped up about it. He earns on it and grabs it. He starts playing with it like it's sand and he gets all wet. He drops himself on it, he jumps on it, he throws it. He watches the land from the top of a mountain, looking to the white carpet that covers everything. After a whole day and a whole night spent on the snow he falls in it once more. The cold a problem is no more for a child whose soul is seeing the Lord. The last thought is quite short as he just thinks what an amusement this day was, more than the rest of them all.* LMMA22

*His look met with the biggest mountains of the valley, it is obstructed by the heavy flakes faintly falling.*



*From his white garden no flowers comes up, except for one, orange, tulip, white on its top. I saw coming up the children smile slowly, and when it was done . I saw him running and rolling on the snow. He was lonely, because it was 6a.m., and everyone was sleeping. But not him. he waited for the snow falling like a children wait for Santa Claus. After two Hours he was no more lonely, but his happiness didn't changed. SMMA12*

*The night full of stars was even more beautiful thanks to the thousands of little snowflakes that were falling down and immediately melt by the bonfire's wormth. I was hoping that an angel would appear in that constellation of flakes but I didn't realize that I had the best angels next to me. AFMB24*

#### Comments

In this case students had to cope with a difficult text at different levels: linguistic features, literary imagery, and content. Nevertheless, these samples show that they were able to deliver good pieces of writing with a creative touch as in the model: 1. *Everything was covered with a white layer of joy*, 2. *could it be a present from heaven?* 3. *A magical thing that shows up rarely, but when it does, it's always super, super beautiful!* 4. *The cold a problem is no more for a child whose soul is seeing the Lord*. 5. *From his white garden no flowers comes up, except for one, orange, tulip, white on its top*. Using challenging texts with due attention, can help students stretching out of their comfort zone to improve their writing skills.

#### **Lesson fifteen - Virginia Woolf “Mrs. Dalloway” (1925)**

Mrs. Dalloway said she would buy the flowers herself.

For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer’s men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning — fresh as if issued to children on a beach. What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there

at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling; standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, “Musing among the vegetables?”— was that it? —“I prefer men to cauliflowers”— was that it? He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out on to the terrace — Peter Walsh.

### Lesson description

In the TALO activity students in pairs look up for the meaning of the highlighted words. Then, in the TAVI activity, they read the text and discuss and answer the questions: what is the author trying to do? How would you describe the tone of this excerpt? Is the register formal or informal? In the TASP/TEC Writing task they must write a short story (100 words) that starts with the sentence: “What a day!” The tone can be positive or negative, depending on the experience they want to convey.

### Writing samples

*what a day when I was at school it starts to rain very hard and there were a lot of lightning. a few minutes later there was a blackout that lasted thirty minutes, the sky was dark and cloudy, the sun was covered with clouds and nothing could be seen, the school alarm went off and we were all in the corridors. outside some trees had been destroyed by the wind and the trunks occupied the road, the cars were stuck in the traffic.*

### LCFEE

*What a day! What a sun! Miss Bennett headed to the bank of the stream, and stopped there, a bit far from the house. As she picked up thin strands of grass from the ground, she pondered over everything that she had undergone in the last hour, and even though she wanted to distract herself, she simply couldn't take her mind off it. To restrain herself from obsessing, Miss Bennett gazed at the little birds singing on a tree, and judging by the lovely noise, she could tell they were nightingales. “I have been looking for you for so long!” Miss Bennett grimaced when she heard that voice. He just couldn't leave her alone. She turned around and gasped when she saw who she least expected — William Bingley. BRFB27*

*What a day! Perhaps a little different from the typical quarantine days spent at the moment. It was a Sunday afternoon. I had already studied subjects for Monday the day before. That day I felt inspired. I sat right in front of the table in the terrace. sitting somewhat rudely, I took a sheet of paper and started looking at the landscape. That walk showed my town. That for me was very far these days, not being able to go out, not being able to live ... taken by a strange desire to draw, (and plus I'm not even very good at drawing) I began to draw what I saw. I drew with the pencil. I decided not to colour my drawing. Why? Because this is how I see my town right now see it gray. I see it off. AMFB5*

*What a day! I could feel something was about to happen... I woke up early in the morning, feeling really happy and productive. I got out and everything seemed to smile at me: the sun that was shining brightly, the small birds, which were singing a lovely melody all together, and the kids laughing and playing in the park. It was a day full of positive vibes: how fresh! how joyful! But at the bottom of my heart I knew that that happiness wouldn't have lasted for so long: I was feeling kind of an angst inside of me, which I couldn't identify well in that specific moment. That unknown and unpleasant sensation got stronger as soon as it started to rain... I felt like something awful was about to happen, and actually I was not wrong, since the following day would have been the worst day of my life. GLFECWA*

*What a day! I decided to have a date with myself going to my favourite park, trying to connect with my emotions and had a peaceful moment. I listened to my favourite songs while I was starting a new painting project. I hadn't felt the sensation of freedom in a long time, it was amazing! But, I could feel something was about to happen, the sky was all dark, the birds escaped, I heard frightened thunders and I felt some rain drops that were transformed into a terrible storm. I was completely soaked. My perfect and peaceful day was ruined. GRFECWA*

#### Comments

This text is not an easy one. So, it is advisable to use it with B1+/ B2 students. However, it is evident

that as for register and tone the students were able to reproduce the adequate style needed. Stronger students in particular, where able to use the same expression, they found in the texts to convey the mood they wanted to share. One student even delivered a piece of writing that recalled Jane Austen, her favorite writer, as well as Virginia Woolf's style. So, once again, challenging literary texts can be occasionally used to expose students to high quality literature at its best. The great potential of this text can be better exploited if connected to the students' personal experience.

### **Lesson Sixteen - Article "Black Friday and buy nothing day" (2019)**

[https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/magazine/black-frid . . .](https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/magazine/black-frid...)

Black Friday is the day after the American holiday of Thanksgiving, which is celebrated on the fourth Thursday of November. Because it is a holiday in the United States, it has long been a popular day for consumers to start shopping for Christmas. Over the last 20 years big retailers have started to offer discounts and bargains on this day, and it has become more and more popular. Some feel that events like Black Friday encourage people to buy things that they don't really need and can't afford. Many people seem to completely lose control of both their spending and their tempers. It is easy to find video online of customers physically fighting each other over bargains. Since 1997, Buy Nothing Day has been held on the same day as Black Friday. The rules are simple: just don't buy anything at all for 24 hours. Many people are surprised how difficult this actually is. Buy Nothing Day aims to raise awareness of how to be a more ethical consumer. For example, you can avoid buying cheap clothes that are worn a few times before being thrown away. Or you could decide not to automatically upgrade your mobile at the end of a contract. These kinds of decisions can help to protect the environment as well as saving you money.

#### Lesson description

First activity is a TALO reading aiming at eliciting the difficult words (in yellow). Then, there is a TAVI reading comprehension focusing on the meaning of the article, students in groups read the text and

discuss the meaning of article and answer the questions: What is Black Friday? What's the alternative to Black Friday? What can you do on Buy Nothing Day?

This is followed by a TAVI reading comprehension based on understanding tone, register and style. Students in pairs answer the following questions: What is the author trying to do? Read the information in the link below and decide what kind of article is this. Materials:

Types of Writing Styles – About Writing: A Guide

Further information B1 PRELIMINARY: HOW TO WRITE AN ARTICLE

Finally, the TASP/TACT writing task (70/100 words): Is it better to celebrate Black Friday or Buy Nothing Day? Give reasons for your choice and support your opinion with examples, information and motivations.

Writing samples

*I think that Black Friday is a publicitary stunt to encourage people to buy things they don't need; because of the discounts many lose control of spending their money and some of them ends up in fights. In my opinion people exaggerate in these situations and excess always hurts. On the other hand on the Buy Nothing Day you shouldn't buy anything on a day full of sales to raise awareness of how to be a more ethical consumer. I think that if you're a conscious constumer and live with peace of mind and awareness you can shop on this day. VPFB20*

*The black Friday offer the opportunity to buy many things with less money but it encourage people to buy things that they don't really need, it's true, so it incentivize consumerism. However, the consumerism bring to a more competition, competition bring to more development and the development bring to greater well-being, so we can say that the consumerism encourages the development so the black Friday encourages the development. So I think that black Friday is better than the buy nothing day. FMMB8*

*I prefer the buy Nothing day to black friday because it is a day where I can think of myself and stay 24 hours without thinking about shopping. On this day I can relate to the clothes I no longer use and give them to*

*those who need them. In addition, on this day we can avoid spending money on low quality clothes, jeans or T-shirts which after a short time of purchase can be ruined. In addition, on this day we can save the money that we have not spent on these garments to keep them and use them for something you have long wanted or go shopping to give it to the poor. With these savings we can help our environment. ELFB6*

*I think that Buy Nothing Day is more useful than Black Friday because it is also more appropriate in these years of crisis. We all know that it is good that we save money in this era of consumerism so that we can use it when we need it, even though Black Friday is a good occasion to buy things that can not be bought at full price because of sales. In fact we can buy fridges or TVs or phones with 50% or 60% or 70% discount. All you need is money, but also moderation. ATMB15*

*In my opinion, it's better to celebrate Buy Nothing Day because I think it's the most interesting one. The main reason is that it helps the environment because if for a day nobody buys nothing there will be less plastic and other dangerous materials in our seas or even in our streets. But the reason why this is an interesting day is that it's really difficult to don't buy nothing for 24 hours, and it may become a funny challenge where you could discover new recipes or appreciate more the things you already have. CDFEV*

*Is It better to celebrate "Black Friday" or "Buy Nothing Day"? This is the question! Today we live in a consumer world and more people think they need all things they see. But we know it's wrong. During the Black Friday we can see people losing control, but they should take the opportunity to buy just what they need at a lower price or discount. The Buy Nothing Day is a symbolic day to say that we must be responsible and ethical consumers. Less is more! SLFEV*

*It is better to celebrate Black Friday or Buy Nothing Day? I think it's better to celebrate the Buy Nothing day. The black friday takes place on the fourth thursday of november. During this festivity there are a lot of discounts,so you can buy same-thing that are more expensive and pay it less.Many people, instead,can*

*lose control and start to take things that they don't really need. So i think that it's better the Buy nothing day. This festivity is not simple because you can't buy anything though if you need useful things. In my opinion it's very important to celebrate it because it aims to raise awareness of how to be a more ethical consumer.*

ECFEM

*Black Friday and Buy Nothing Day are two completely opposite days because the first leads people to buy more and more useless things and the second tries to reduce the purchases of things that are not needed. In my opinion the most useful and fun day is Black Friday. On this day you can make purchases at extremely low prices and be able to have them in case they could be used unlike the Buy Nothing Day which does not give any advantage. Furthermore, Black Friday is useful not only for buyers but also for sellers who could take advantage of it to make the shop more popular.* RGMECWA

#### Comments

Articles like this show that we can use this kind of texts to develop critical thinking among our students. These samples express different opinions and points of view, some students prefer consumerism while other ones have a more ethical approach, but everyone brings evidence and good reasons in favor or against. This contrast could be used in order develop other activities. For instance, inviting students to see the issue from a different, or even opposite, perspective and then ask them to write about it from this new point of view. This exercise could help developing tolerance by practicing detachment from our beliefs and acceptance of different opinions. It could also be a good starting point to develop debates about poverty and environmental issues by asking questions such as: do you think that poor countries could benefit from a Black Friday? Why/Why not? Imagine your family could not afford to buy anything, how would you feel during Black Friday? Do you think it is good to limit consumerism? Why/Why not? Is Buy Nothing Day a way to limit the amount of waste in the world? How can we balance economy with environment? Compare the pleasure you receive from buying with the satisfaction you receive from other kind of things that are free.

## Lesson seventeen - Article “What is meditation?” (2019)

Meditation can be defined as a set of techniques that are intended to encourage a heightened state of awareness and focused attention. Some key things to note about meditation:

- Meditation has been practiced in cultures all over the world for thousands of years
- Nearly every religion, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, has a tradition of using meditative practices
- While meditation is often used for religious purposes, many people practice it independently of any religious or spiritual practices
- Meditation can also be used as a psychotherapeutic technique
- There are many different types of meditation

Meditation can take on many different forms, but there are two main types: concentrative meditation and mindfulness meditation. In concentrative meditation, you focus all your attention on a specific object while tuning out everything else around you. The goal is to really experience whatever you are focusing on, whether it's your breath, a specific word, or a mantra, to reach a higher state of being. Mindfulness meditation includes, among others, both mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT). Mindfulness can target different issues, such as depression, which means that its focus may be different from practice to practice. Overall, it involves the state of being aware of and involved in the present moment and making yourself open, aware, and accepting.

Research has shown that meditation can have both physiological and psychological effects. Some of the positive physiological effects include a lowered state of physical arousal, reduced respiration rate, decreased heart rate, changes in brain wave patterns and lowered stress.

Some of the other psychological, emotional, and health-related benefits of meditation include:

- Increased self-awareness
- Better stress management skills
- Improved emotional well-being



- Better management of symptoms of conditions including anxiety disorders, depression, sleep disorders, pain issues and high blood pressure
- Improvement in working memory and fluid intelligence
- Changes in different aspects of attention

While experts do not yet fully understand exactly how meditation works, research has clearly demonstrated that meditative techniques can have a range of positive effects on overall health and psychological well-being.

#### Lesson description

First activity is a TALO reading aiming at eliciting the difficult words (in yellow). Then, there is a TAVI reading comprehension focusing on the meaning of the article, students in groups read the text and discuss the meaning of article and answer the questions:

1. What is Meditation?
2. How many types of meditation are mentioned in the article?
3. How do these forms of meditation differ?
4. What are the effects of meditation

This is followed by a TAVI reading comprehension based on understanding tone, register and style.

Students in pairs discuss the following issues:

1. What is the author doing?
2. Use these words to describe tone and register: formal, informal, neutral, ironic, dramatic, informative, poetic...
3. Describe the vocabulary used by the author choosing among these adjectives: sophisticated, simple, normal, plain, articulated, difficult...

Finally, the TASP/TACT writing task (70 words): Do you think meditation practice could be helpful for you? Why/Why not?

## Writing samples

*I think the practice of meditation is helpful for me because I am a very anxious person and I suffer from panic attacks. With the meditation I could reach mental and physical well-being. It would be useful to disconnect from the world and to think less about problems, especially in this period. I think It is a good practice to be aware of yourself and your mistakes, especially to focus on what matters, changing your attitude.*

DSFEA

*I think meditation practice helps a lot, brings me so many health benefit both mental and physical, i'm very anxious and impulsive man and meditation is the best solution to reflect and not to make hasty decisions, after meditation i find numerous benefit and i can deal with my problems better, the meditation is a pratice that can be useful to many people and i feel like recommending it a lot to everyone ANMEA*

*I don't know if meditation could be helpful for me. Usually when I focus on my breathing or someone points out to me that I breathe very quickly, my heart rate and my breathing increase more. I think it is a fairly subjective thing and that meditation is not a simple thing suitable for everyone. But if one day I had the chance, I'd like to try it with a professional and see if I notice any positive effects, because it could be an alternative to taking medicine. KFFB10*

*Could the practice of meditation help me? In all honesty, I really don't think so. I am too anxious person. And anxiety also adds a very strong stress. However, I don't think even mediation would help me relax a little. Once with the singing school, during an internship, the guest of the evening had explained to us a method of relaxation to be able to relax the nerves before the performance. We had to imagine that there was a thread over our heads, but I still could not relax. I don't even relax in the sea or in the pool when I put myself like a starfish on the surface of the water. Once even the beautician had to do my nails, and he told me to relax*

*because my hands appeared slightly stretched even if they did not tremble. I don't know if one day I will be able to find my technique to be able to relax but I hope so. AMFB5*

*For me meditation is useful. Leaving the phone, sitting with your eyes closed and taking deep breaths helps me reduce stress. Usually before my guitar competitions, I went for a walk outside setting a point in front of me, so my heart and respiratory rate decreased reducing stress. Sometimes life poses obstacles that seem unsurpassed. I have never accepted the loss of my grandmother... sometimes I feel really sad. To relax I close my eyes and start thinking about all the beautiful moments and I feel like reliving them with her as if she were by my side. CGFB9*

#### Comments

Development of self-reflection and awareness do not require specific texts or long research. Just a simple article on meditation found on the internet can give students the right prompts to better understand themselves and what can be good or bad for both their physical and mental health. Students showed to have clear ideas on this matter and were able to express them with good reasoning. This lesson could be implemented with a simple guided meditation exercise to let students deepen their knowledge of the topic through direct experience. More specific questions could be asked such as: How many kinds of meditation do you know? Where was meditation first used? What is the origin of meditation? Which areas of your life could be improved by meditation? Would you recommend meditation in schools? What kind of approach to life is behind meditation?

#### **Lesson eighteen - William Shakespeare “Macbeth” monologue (1623)**

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,

To the last syllable of recorded time;  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
 And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing.

#### Lesson description

In the TALO activity students read the text and try to guess the meaning of the difficult words with the help of the teacher. Then, they watch the video <https://youtu.be/HZnaXDRwu84> and discuss the tone of the monologue. After this activity they watch another video about metaphors [https://youtu.be/OkGeDUY\\_RdM](https://youtu.be/OkGeDUY_RdM) In the TAVI activity students read the monologue and find metaphors referring to time and life in the monologue. Teachers and students elicit the metaphors with the students. Time: tomorrow creeps in, yesterdays have lighted the way (personifications); Life: a candle, a shadow, an actor, one brief hour upon the stage, and an idiotic tale. In the TASP/TEC Writing task students write a few metaphors about time and life with opposite tone (happiness, joy, hope) than the monologue.

#### Writing samples

*What is Life?*

*Life is the only thing that makes us all the same, but also unique: we can be rich or poor, black or white, man or woman, old or young, but we are all able to love or hate, be happy, sad or angry, feeling emotions, but each in his own way.*

*Life is an adventure: love, laugh, cry, win, lose, fall, but always get up and continue, because life is unpredictable.*

*Life is to follow your heart, face risks, appreciate memories and learn from the past.*

*Life is a continuous search for happiness, making the dreams real.*

*Life is spontaneous smiles, the beauty of a flower, kisses and hugs, the fireplace fire on a cold day, a cool drink on a summer day, mother's cake on Sunday morning, ran under the rain, or long trips by car, we live those moments immediately, they last a short time but the memory oh them lasts forever.*

*Life is making new experiences, learning more and more, reading books, traveling, creating, hoping, with all your passion; doing what makes you happy and carefree, finding your inner peace*

*Life does not make sense, we give a sense of the life, because life is all you want it to be. EBFB25*

*Life is like a mirror: you can see all the results behind your great sacrifices .*

*Life is like a journey: it's not important how long it is, but how you live it. Time is like a movie: you see all the scenes, but at the end the time spent watching it seems shorter. ACFB14*

*Often we don't notice the passing time, the moments that pass in front of us as fast as a motorcycle during a race. These moments are essential to us, they are the pillars of our lives, made of decisions, adventures, discoveries, surrenders, happiness, sadness, tears and smiles. And to understand them, and to seize them, makes our lives look like a book: a book that in the end you can be browsed, you can relive in the memory, you can tell and it can bring you joy, sadness, melancholy and love, and the purpose is precisely to get excited, because so for better or for worse you have lived. FCFB13*

*Life is like a field of flowers: good days are your favourite flowers Bad days are are the flowers you are allergic to.Pick the right ones. CGFEA*

*Life is like a storm. After rain and thunder it spits a beautiful rainbow. GRFEA*

*Life is beautiful, like a rose that has just blossomed or like dew in the morning, but life often brings with*

*it unimaginable beauties. Like a butterfly, life amazes in all its shapes and colors. Life is given to us just as flight is given to a bird. Life amazes anyone with its arrival and often with the arrival of a life, joy flows from any person who will have contact with the future life. RGMEA*

### Comments

Although this text could be regarded as difficult, due to the many metaphors, students showed to have understood the meaning and being able to reproduce similar metaphors about life and time. Life is a: journey, a book, an adventure, a storm, a rose, a field of flowers... many different metaphors were created to respond to the task. One of them, the most beautiful one, is also enriched by philosophical reflections: *“Life does not make sense, we give a sense of the life, because life is all you want it to be.”* There is so much that can be said about Shakespeare’s metaphors in this monologue, so, this text could be further explored as the starting point for a personal growth and critical thinking discussions, starting from the question: what is your approach to life?

### **Lesson nineteen - J.K. Rowling “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows” (2007)**

“And what would you say, Royal, to those listeners who reply that in these dangerous times, it should be 'Wizards first'? asked Dean.

"I'd say that it's one short step from 'Wizards first' to 'Purebloods first,' and then to 'Death Eaters,'" replied Kingsley. "We're all human, aren't we? Every human life is worth the same, and worth saving."

### Lesson description

After a very short TALO activity focused on the highlighted words students continue with a TAVI reading comprehension in two steps: first, students in pairs memorize and then role play the dialogue, second, in groups, they discuss the meaning of the sentence: "We're all human, aren't we?" Finally, in the TASP/TACT writing task students are asked to write a comment about the sentence: Every human life is worth the same, and worth saving.

## Writing samples

*I think that right now in particular we can realize this. George Floyd is the demonstration of all this, a man who was brutally killed, only because he was black and not because he was bought using a fake banknote. I wonder why in 2020 we still have to witness these obscenities. I am glad that many people are showing their solicitude by demonstrating to defend the rights of ALL. We all have one thing in common, to be different from the other, and it's beautiful, imagine how boring it is to be all the same without any difference. VZFB2*

*There are many people who think that their life is worth more than that of another person just because they are richer or have a different complexion. In this last period there are many cases of racism and discrimination, one of the most recent is the one that happened in America where a black boy was killed by a white policeman just for the color of his skin. This thing is unacceptable, nobody is worth more than another person. All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, personal and social conditions. (Constitution of the Italian Republic, Art. 3, 1947) KFFB10*

*This sentence, in addition to being very beautiful, is very significant, because it means that we are all the same, regardless of gender, age, country of origin, economic situation, etc. All of us must be respected and respect in the same way, because equality allows us to remove the blinders and be sincere, respectful and loving with others as with ourselves. FFFB19*

*Today it should be normal to say that "Every human being is worth the same and worth saving". But we live in a world where hatred, selfishness, violence and indifference prevail, a world in which everyone thinks only of himself and believes that he is better than the other, for race, skin color, culture, religion and that human beings must be valued only for this and in some cases discriminated. We don't understand that our*

*differences make our planet wonderful and that knowledge of other cultures can only improve us. We are different only for language, religion, culture, skin color, but there's one thing that makes us all the same and It's that we are simply human beings. MIFEM*

*I think that every human life has a higher value than anything else so you have to save as many as possible without thinking about which life is worth more than another since all lives are worth the same therefore we must not attribute a material value to life but a spiritual value without speculating on the lives of others and help others in case of need. GDMEM*

*I think this is true, and this phrase is in favor of direct of equality for all people. I think all the people in the world are equal. In the world there is a big variety of people like, about phisic, like colour of skin; people fat and slim; about sexual orientation and more. But, agree with the phrase, we are all human and everyone needs to be free in our life. Freedom means that everyone can be himself and what he wants to be. Because freedom involves being happy and being happy is the most important thing among all. I hope that in the future the world will eliminate the hate against diversity. GSFEM*

## Comments

These writing pieces are rather different in style and linguistic control. Nevertheless, the interesting element here is that even the weakest students show that they can clearly state their opinion and let their voices be heard.

- *We all have one thing in common, to be different from the other, and it's beautiful*
- *All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, personal and social conditions. (Constitution of the Italian Republic, Art. 3, 1947),*
- *This sentence, in addition to being very beautiful, is very significant, because it means that we are all the same, regardless of gender, age, country of origin, economic situation*



- *We are different only for language, religion, culture, skin color, but there's one thing that makes us all the same and It's that we are simply human beings*
- *all lives are worth the same therefore we must not attribute a material value to life but a spiritual value*
- *I think all the people in the world are equal.*

Another important element is the fact that this type of text can be used to develop awareness on active citizenship and human rights, as the second student did quote the relevant article in Italian Constitution. This is a common CLIL topic in Italy for high school students so teachers could take advantage of the many interesting implications in this simple but very effective J. K. Rowling piece of writing from Harry Potter, including the fact that this best seller is very popular among teenagers.

### **Lesson twenty - George Orwell "1984" (1948)**

The Ministry of Truth - Minitrue, in Newspeak - was startlingly different from any other object in sight. It was an enormous pyramidal structure of glittering white concrete, soaring up, terrace after terrace, 300 metres into the air. From where Winston stood it was just possible to read, picked out on its white face in elegant lettering, the three slogans of the Party: WAR IS PEACE - FREEDOM IS SLAVERY -  
IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH

The Ministry of Truth contained, it was said, three thousand rooms above ground level, and corresponding ramifications below. Scattered about London there were just three other buildings of similar appearance and size. So completely did they dwarf the surrounding architecture that from the roof of Victory Mansions you could see all four of them simultaneously. They were the homes of the four Ministries between which the entire apparatus of government was divided. The Ministry of Truth, which concerned itself with news, entertainment, education, and the fine arts. The Ministry of Peace, which concerned itself with war. The Ministry of Love, which maintained law and order. And the Ministry of Plenty, which was responsible for economic affairs. Their names, in Newspeak: Minitrue, Minipax, Miniluv, and Miniplenty.

The Ministry of Love was the really frightening one. There were no windows in it at all. Winston had never been inside the Ministry of Love, nor within half a kilometre of it. It was a place impossible to enter except on official business, and then only by penetrating through a maze of barbed-wire entanglements, steel doors, and hidden machine-gun nests. Even the streets leading up to its outer barriers were roamed by gorilla-faced guards in black uniforms, armed with jointed truncheons.

#### Lesson description

TALO activity, eliciting the meaning of the words in red, followed by a TAVI reading comprehension. Students read the text and answer the questions: What is the author trying to do? How would you describe the tone of this excerpt? What are the main features of this city? What kind of words are the yellow ones? What is the Newspeak? Then, in a TASP activity students in pairs describe or draw sketches of the Ministry of love building. Finally, TASP/TEC Writing task: describe a scary place using the last paragraph of the excerpt as a model (70 words) to reproduce similar tone and register.

#### Writing samples

*There once was a ship very startlingly ,the mast soaring up into the sky, the deck was so big it looked like a maze. the other ships looked dwarfs compared to. On the back was picked out in elegant lettering: Flying dutchman. The ship had the most frightening crew ever seen, they roamed with glittering barbed-wire entanglements on the thrunchions and cannons that looked like our modern machine-gun nests, they leading up to the captain's room who concerned itself to find the traitor scattered about on the ship. MTMEV*

*A white and small daisy is waiting for the sun to rise on the railroad but time is coming. The hard metal surface of the train moves the air that roughly blooms on the petal and separates them from their home. So they cross a wonderful and lovely creek, but they can't stop there. Carried by the wind they pass through the holes of the fence and then into the chaotic spires of the barbed-wire entanglements. Now they fall in a square where*

*a new order divides the empty space. Tiny and grey isolated buildings stand up weakly, threatened by the main building in the centre. FDMEV*

### Comments

These two samples are interesting for different reasons. The first one uses the vocabulary of the excerpt to create the description of a scary place as asked by the task, reproducing similar tone and register. In this case, although the results are good, it can be said that the imitation of the model is rather mechanical and comes from a “sounds like” effect. The second sample, on the contrary, uses a limited number of words taken from the excerpt but the result is even better, as the student successfully manages to recreate the tone and the atmosphere of the excerpt through an intense and poetic description of the petals of a flower floating in the air and landing in an empty square surrounded by buildings. He also succeeds in expressing the political idea of “a new order” through a metaphor of the empty space, bringing the idea of imitation to a higher level.

### **Module three - Critical thinking - TASP/TACT Texts**

21. Essay: Treboliand “How to be an Aussie” - Multiculturalism - TASP/TACT
22. Novel: Ray Bradbury “Fahrenheit 451” - Culture - TASP/TACT
23. Short Story: Patrick White “Sicilian Vespers” - Literature - TASP/TACT
24. Article: “There’s no Planet B” - Environment - TASP/TACT
25. Biography: Maya Angelou “I know why the caged bird sings” - Prejudice - TASP/TACT
26. Poem: Raymond Carver “Fear” - Fears - TASP/TAP
27. Essay: Scott Deitche “Cigar City Mafia” - Social issues -TASP/TACT
28. Short Story: Alice Munro “Amundsen” - Relationships - TASP/TAP
29. Essay: Deepak Chopra “Synchro-Destiny”- Spirituality -TASP/TAP
30. Essay: Eckhart Tolle “Stillness Speaks” - Attention - TASP/TACT

## Lesson twenty-one - Robert Treborlang “How to survive in Australia” (1985)

How not to say anything at all

Even the most minimal discussion can land you in trouble. Best to limit yourself to expressions such as: “I think it’s too early to say”. However, be careful not to appear as though you enjoy standing around, talking. Don’t be afraid to walk out in the middle of a discussion, especially if you haven’t yet said a word. It makes people uneasy, which is what Australians are used to.

Act inarticulate. Answer any questions put to you as if are undergoing serious personal torment. Pull faces, scratch your ears, ruffle your hair, avoid direct replies, and look positively offended at anything that might actually necessitate a reply.

If you must take a point, don’t look at those you’re talking to. Turn away, bend down, adjust your socks, play with your toes, glance under your armpits – anything in fact which might legitimately show that you’re doing this under duress.

Above all, go by the Italian saying “In bocca chiusa, non entra mosca”, meaning “Don’t move your lips and the flies won’t get in”, and practice in the bush in the summer.

### Lesson description

TALO activity on vocabular, the teacher elicits difficult words (in yellow), followed by a TAVI Reading comprehension where students in pairs read the excerpt and answer the questions:

5. What is the author doing?
6. What is the tone of the article?
7. Why are Australians described this way?
8. What does the sentence “practice in the bush in the summer” mean?
9. Are the Italian and Australian way of discussing similar?

After answering the questions students mime the actions of being forced to talk as described in the excerpt: *act inarticulate, pull faces, scratch your ears, ruffle your hair, avoid direct replies, look positively offended, turn*

*away, bend down, adjust your socks, play with your toes, glance under your armpits.* This is followed by a TASP/TACT writing task (100 words): Think about the way Italians take part into discussions. Can you see any difference with Australians as described in the excerpt?

### Writing samples

*In general in a discussion Italians try to understand what it is said and, on the contrary of what Australians usually do, Italians don't make people uneasy and uncomfortable. Also because Italians, especially with people from other countries, use many signs with arms and hands. Above all, I think Italians are more friendly and they try to help you anyway. The same is for Sicilian people, with the exception that in the south of Italy there isn't a good knowledge of English so it is harder to understand or explain a concept, while Australians, who speak a universal language, communicate easily with the tourists. CLFEA*

*When Sicilians take part into a discussion they are very funny. They use their hands very much to say something easily. I think that Italians are more friendly than Australians. In fact, I read in the text that if you are in Australia and you ask some questions, it makes them uncomfortable. But be funny isn't the most important thing in a discussion. In fact, when someone speaks with Sicilians in a different language, often they don't understand. For us is difficult to communicate with other people that don't speak our language. ASFEA*

*In every country there are positive and negative aspects about the people's behaviour with the tourists. I think that Italians with tourists are really kind and helpful, rarely they take part in an argument with tourists (first of all because most of them don't understand English). I've never been to Australia, so I can't talk about the people's behaviour with the tourists. I don't think that Australians are really like they are described by the text, but if a tourist met the wrong people, he could be in danger in every country. GBMEA*

*Probably the Italians are more chatty and it can be so annoying. The Australian are more able to don't talk and don't ask any question. The Italians are loud, very active and you probably can't relax with an Italian, but the Australian people are more cheerful and absolutely more relaxed than Italians. However if you are in the middle of a discussion and you haven't yet said a word, the Italian people will try to include you in that discussion, but the Australian people will be annoyed by you, standing there without saying anything. MLMEA*

*I feel to talk about an argument with an Italian is more easier than an Australia. Because an Italian will listen you and he take part of the conversation, in addition to this you won't fell uneasy, controrwise an Australian will try to allooy your questions and the discusion will begin to be shy. Secondly, with an Italian you will have always an argument to talk, such as: the football, wha you did in the last days, politics and etc... All this you couldn't do with an Australian, because he tried to going out of the conversetion, and he started to be weirdo. In conclusion, we must remember they have a different culture and tradition from us, and we must respect. PSMECWA*

*Between Italian and Australian people, there is a lot of difference especially in the behavior in discussions. Let's start from the fact that, in my opinion, we need to behave differently based on who we have in front of us. Australians are very closed people, who don't mind being and discussing with people, so much so that they even try to get away from the city to not have discussions, even if it shouldn't be done because in Italy it would be rude. Unlike Australians, we Italians are much more sociable, we are people who like to talk and discuss so much that we could talk for hours. I'm not really like that even though I'm a chatterbox, because I like to talk only with my friends and if there is a person I don't know and I don't want to know, I avoid her a bit like Australians. One thing I learned and did not think, however, is the fact that Italians are more talkers than I thought!!! GGMECWA*

*When Italians speak in discussion gesticulate a lot often raise their tone of voice and aren't afraid to say their vision of things. Sometimes we resort to the use of proverbs such as "a mali estremi estremi rimedi" or "il lupo perde il pelo ma non il vizio". To "survive" in Italy, as well as to "survive" in Australia, I think we must always avoid the smallest arguments because we don't know how the person you speak to might react. It depends on the situation, even Italians like Australians make the persons who talk with them feel uncomfortable. For example, in a squabble are made smiles, jokes and grimaces. In my opinion, in general, to "survive" wherever you are, you just have to be kind and polite. AMFB5*

*There are differences between how Australians and Italians take part in a discussion. The Italians, before starting to speak, they think of something that is coherent and inherent with the topic being discussed. When Italians talk about something they look at those they talk to, while Australians do the opposite. Australians don't be afraid to walk out in the middle of a discussion, especially if they haven't said a word, because they don't worry to make people uneasy. Before starting to speak they turn around, bend down, adjust their socks ... While the Italians, if someone were to do the same thing, would laugh at him. Australians have tried to justify their behavior with the Italian saying, but they don't know that we are actually using it for another context. KFFB10*

*Italians take part in discussions in a very open way, are very expansive and are rarely embarrassed. Embarrassment can vary based on how shy the person is, but in general Italians are expansive by culture, just as Australians are more closed. I think the Italians would have no problem surviving in Australia. I think the way you speak and give a speech is very much about your own culture and therefore it's also nice to relate to different countries and see their way of speaking and relating to others. STMB11*

## Comments

Articles of this kind can be easily used to raise cultural awareness. In this case it is possible to say that students managed to spot the difference between Italian and Australian's different approach to discussions. All these samples underline the fact that Italians like taking very much and that they usually involve other people to avoid making them feel awkward. Others included a typical Italian cultural aspect like using gesture, and comments on being friendlier and more open with tourists. Some focused on the language barriers and the fact that many Italians still do not speak English well. Multicultural awareness can also be raised creating comparisons like this in a very simple and direct way, using irony to avoid judgmental attitudes. This could be especially good in multicultural classrooms to allow students to know more about each other overcoming cultural barriers and isolation. In this case, as a follow up activity, students could be asked to write an article comparing the culture of their classmates and or their parents'.

## **Lesson twenty-two - Ray Bradbury "Fahrenheit 451" (1953)**

And then Clarisse McClellan said: "Do you mind if I ask? How long have you worked at being a fireman?" "Since I was twenty, ten years ago." "Do you ever read any of the books you burn?" He laughed. "That's against the law!" "Oh. Of course." "It's fine work. Monday burn Millay, Wednesday Whitman, Friday Faulkner, burn 'em to ashes, then burn the ashes. That's our official slogan." They walked still further, and the girl said, "Is it true that long ago firemen put fires out instead of going to start them?" "No. Houses. have always been fireproof, take my word for it." "Strange. I heard once that a long time ago houses used to burn by accident, and they needed firemen to stop the flames." He laughed.

## Lesson Description

The lesson starts with a TALO activity. Students in groups discuss the meaning of the highlighted sentences:

1. Do you mind if I ...?



2. Burn'em
3. Put fires out
4. Take my word for it
5. By accident

This is followed by a TAVI reading comprehension. Students use their imagination to set the context of this scene:

1. Where are these people?
2. Who are they?
3. What are they talking about?
4. What kind of society do they live in?

Finally, there is a TASP/TACT Writing task (100 words): why are books important? Can you imagine a world without books? What is the best book you have ever read?

#### Writing samples

*Books are very important because they are a source of words that communicate concepts and ideas but above all different feelings and emotions in each of us, this is what makes them very important for all of us. I can't imagine a world without books, because it might seem like a black and white film: the film is only half understood and appreciated, the same way life would be without books. The best book I ever read is "Wuthering Heights" by Emily Bronte; it was a fantastic book, it moved me very much because it tells of a beautiful if poignant love story between Catherine and Heathcliff, a book that reaches deep into the heart. There have been also other sensational books that I have read, for example "Ten small indians" by Agatha Christie and "The book thief" by Markus Zusak. FFFB19*

*I can't imagine a world without books, they are source of culture, allow us to know our history, worlds with which otherwise we would never come into contact, they let us see infinite other realities and manage to make us escape from our world, and, more important, they are always there when needed. The best books I've*

*red are "hunger games", a trilogy set in "Panem", in North America, divided into 13 poor districts and the rich Capitol. Every year take place the "hunger games" in which children from each district participate and are chosen by drawing lots, among them there is Katniss, who manages to overthrow President Snow's dictatorship with his friend Peeta. The books are inspired by the Roman gladiator games and I liked them because the author, S. Collins, managed to combine such a "raw" setting with a love story between two teenagers, who despite their age manage to assert themselves. VPFB20*

*Books are essential to enrich our cultural background and to grow. In addition, books also help to develop fantasy and imagination. Words come to life and begin to be part of a world that each of us sees differently, something that doesn't happen in movies. Many books never go out of fashion precisely because they contain stories, research or historical events that manage to persist over time and it is thanks to these that man has achieved progress in all fields. Books constitute a testimony and without them we can hardly know our past and if they had not existed, future generations would not have been able to know our present. I don't think one book can be better than another and I'm sure that many books that I find uninteresting without even opening them can change my life. After all, you don't judge a book by its cover. DTMB18*

*Books, from fantasy to realistic genre, are very important because they are source of knowledge, culture and mental opening. I can't imagine a world without books or newspaper, because I believe in the strong power of knowledge. In the past it has been said that work makes you free, but I don't agree, I think that culture makes free, mostly for the young people who start to know the world. Probably the best book I have ever read is "per questo mi chiamo Giovanni". In this book a Sicilian father explains to his son the story of Giovanni Falcone and his work against the Mafia, but above all he wants to underline the importance of our dedication to justice and to legality, in particular in a island where a wall of silence reigns. CLFEA*

*Books are one of the most important things in the world! They give us information about everything, they give us the culture, and it's very important if you want to be a free man. Free from ignorance and stupidity. So I can't imagine a world without books, it's impossible, they are part of us, and part of our existence. For me reading books is very relaxing, the last book I read was 1000 beautiful suns, and it was my favorite too. It was about the conditions of the women in the world. It was a great story because not always we know in what conditions live the other people in the world, so this book give me a lot of information about it. ASFEA*

*In my personal opinion reading a a book is one of the things that you must do in your life, why? Cause books are very important for the creativity and with that you can travell around the world and more just with your mind! And you can also lern somthing you might don't know or you don't understand. Unfortunately I can think very well on a world without books, the most important reason is for the tecnology and other things like this, People have "no time" to read just one book. But I don't accept a world without one of the important things and I can't accept a world without Call Me By Your Name that is my absolutely my favorite book ever. It's a love story between two boys that fall in love in a summer holiday in Italy. GBMEA*

#### Comments

Critical thinking starts with cultural knowledge, so it is important to start reflecting on the importance of books for cultural development of our society. In this lesson, students managed to express their opinion clearly and firmly about the important role played by books in our society:

- *Books are very important because they are a source of words that communicate concepts and ideas but above all different feelings and emotions in each of us*
- *I can't imagine a world without books, they are source of culture, allow us to know our history,*
- *Books are essential to enrich our cultural background and to grow. In addition, books also help to develop fantasy and imagination*

- *I can't imagine a world without books or newspaper, because I believe in the strong power of knowledge*
- *Books are one of the most important things in the world! They give us information about everything, they give us the culture, and it's very important if you want to be a free man. Free from ignorance and stupidity.*
- *books are very important for the creativity and with that you can travell around the world and more just with your mind!*

This topic could be exploited also creating a comparison between the internet and books and could be farther developed talking about fake news and the importance to have reliable information from qualified people. Another comparison could be made between the cultural impact of social media and books on society, for instance. Another comparison could be made between paper books and electronic books.

### **Lesson twenty-three - Patrick White "Sicilian Vespers" (1975)**

Till her guide decided it was time for her to share his secret 'Down there,' he was still pointing, 'is the house where Pirandello was born.'

'Ohhh!' she moaned spontaneously. 'He does terrify me! Somebody lent him to me,' she confided, 'while I was at university.' She paused for him to appreciate the significance, then realized this was a secret they had already shared on the drive. 'At first I could only read him in English.' She was babbling now, her tic leaping. 'Till recently - during a course I took - I started on him in Italian. I read - well, after a fashion - *The Rules of the Game*'.

So, you're studying Italian.' Clark smiled.

'Oh, I'm only a lame linguist,' Ivy Simpson protested.

## Lesson Description

TALO activity: teacher elicits the meaning of the words in yellow. Then, there is a TAVI reading comprehension in which students read the excerpt and answer the questions:

1. What's the Italian for "He does terrify me"?
2. What's the Italian for "The Rules of the Game"?

After, this students in pairs role play the dialogue referring to the book of an English writer they know (TASP). Finally, a TASP/TACT writing task (100 words): comment a book by Pirandello or another Italian writer that you have recently read.

## Writing samples

*Luigi Pirandello wrote a novel called "Il treno ha fischiato", it's a particular novel that shows a particular point of view of the life of a common man. I think that it's very interesting because often we are chained on our daily routine and it crushes us; indeed we spend our days doing the same things and we forget that we are part of something bigger than our work, family and affects. Pirandello told the story of a man who was sleeping on the sofa and then he heard the train's whistle, subsequently he understood that there was a world outside his home, more bigger than he was thinking, and it made him crazy. In my opinion it's a very important book to read because it can be a input in order to have a correct way to see the world who surrounded us moreover it's important read it in order to give the correct importance to things. A very masterpiece! LVMEF*

*In this writing, I'd like to talk about a book that I read some time ago, "La Sposa Normanna", written by Carla Maria Russo. it's a historical book that talks about the story of Costanza d'Altavilla, the last Norman heir to the Sicilian throne, who is forced to marry the son of the emperor Frederick the "Barbarossa", Henry of Swabia. After the many issues in conceiving her son Frederick, when she finally gave birth to the baby she tried to protect him from everyone and everything, but suddenly she died when the baby was 3. What I liked about this book is that it shows how strong, brave and brilliant this woman was and how she was willing to sacrifice*

*everything to protect her son. Even during her last moments, she whispered to her son to be strong and to always remember that he was an Altavilla but what got me in tears were her last words "Always remember that you were the biggest joy of my life". ASFB22*

*I have never been very passionate about Italian literature, and because of that I haven't read many Italian books. But one book in particular caught my attention and interest, this book was "the betrothed" by Alessandro Manzoni. I discovered it thanks to school and probably I would have enjoyed it more if I didn't have to do tests on it. Leaving out the scholastic aspect, I was immediately captured by the environment and the context of this book. Being a history lover I couldn't help but appreciate this jump straight in to the past. Manzoni's way of describing and narrate not only the story but its surroundings too is impressive, and lets you go deeply inside his characters and story. Talking about the plot I appreciated his effort of building a story with deep meaning and powerful characters without being too invasive to the veracity of our true history. He charged his work with great meanings and similarities to his days making this story not only an accurate and great piece of entertainment, but also deeply meaningful for the people of his time. AFMB24*

*I guess books are very important for our lifes. They allow us to travel remaining still,they are capeble of transmitting emotions to us and reading them remains something that really marks us by changing us for the better. In my opinion,after a long time,we will not remember the story of a book,but the message that the book left us. A message that enriches our personality making us acquire critical thinking. My favourite book is "Uno,nessuno e centomila". It's a classic of Italian literature. One day the Mr Moscarda's wife say to her husband that he had a crocker nose. This is where all his lucid follies begin. Following others events he realizes that he has seen himself in a way,his wife saw him as the pathetic and softened Gengé. It's curious how from person to person the vision of us changes,while remaining convinced that we know each other even if not being able to see our selves in the mirror for how we are really in our daily life, really ending up being are one,nobody and hundred thousand. AMFB5*

## Comments

As a follow up to the previous lesson on the importance of books, this lesson investigates about students' favorite authors. Here students, according to the task, focused on Nobel Prize winner playwright Luigi Pirandello and other important Italian writers. They have underlined the importance of books not only from the cultural point of view but also to enhance our personal growth, through self-reflection, emotions, historical information. One of the samples also shows a good attempt of literary analysis of the text written by Manzoni. Talking about books can really open a whole world and can be very effective in developing critical thinking as well as self-awareness:

- *indeed we spend our days doing the same things and we forget that we are part of something bigger than our work, family and affects*
- *What I liked about this book is that it shows how strong, brave and brilliant this woman was and how she was willing to sacrifice everything to protect her son*
- *Talking about the plot I appreciated his effort of building a story with deep meaning and powerful characters without being too invasive to the veracity of our true history*
- *In my opinion, after a long time, we will not remember the story of a book, but the message that the book left us. A message that enriches our personality making us acquire critical thinking.*

## Lesson twenty-four - Article “There’s no planet B” (2019)

Schoolgirl climate activist Greta tells British MPs her future has been ‘stolen’

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/world/schoolgirl-climate-activist-greta-tells-british-mps-her-future-has-been-stolen-919568.html#.XX-vPHSXnnk.whatsapp>

Miss Thunberg visited the Houses of Parliament to speak to opposition leaders and make a speech to MPs. The 16-year-old told a packed room in the Palace of Westminster that her future and those of her fellow children had been "sold". She added: "That future has been sold so that a small number of people can make

unimaginable amounts of money. It was stolen from us every time you said *the sky is the limit* and *you only live once*." The schoolgirl said she knew politicians did not want to listen, as she started to experience microphone problems. She asked: "Is this microphone on? Can anybody hear me? Is my English, OK? I am starting to wonder." She added: "The basic problem is the same everywhere and the basic problem is that nothing is being done. You don't listen to the science because you are only interested in the answers that will allow you to carry on as if nothing has happened." Gove told Miss Thunberg she had been heard as he admitted "we have not done nearly enough". He went on: "Suddenly in the past few years it has become inescapable that we have to act."

#### Lesson description

TALO activity: teacher elicits the difficult words (in yellow). Then, students in pairs discuss the meaning of the expressions in red:

6. *the sky is the limit*
7. *you only live once*
8. *start to experience*
9. *start to wonder*
10. *As if nothing has happened*

This is followed by a TAVI reading comprehension: students in pairs answer the following questions:

4. What is the author doing?
5. Use these words to describe tone and register: formal, informal, neutral, ironic, dramatic, informative, poetic,
6. Describe the vocabulary used by the author choosing among these adjectives: sophisticated, simple, exaggerated, normal, plain, articulated, difficult.

Finally, the TASP/TACT writing task (70 words): Do you agree with Greta? What can we do to save the planet? Write your opinion using some of the expressions from the previous exercise.



## Writing samples

*Reading Greta Thunberg's speech, I was really impressed by her truthful and direct words. I'm fully agree with the speech he gave in front of so many words. We must open our eyes and start working to save what remains of our planet that we have neglected and disregarded for years. Each of us in his own small way must commit himself to allow our planet to heal its wounds. We must have respect and begin to observe small "rules" useful for the protection of the planet such as, for example, using water bottles instead of plastic bottles, replacing plastic and using glass. They are small actions that can give a great help to our big house. EFFC9*

*Yes, I agree with Greta. To save the planet we could reduce the waste of water for example when to take a shower we have to wait for the water to heat up instead of letting it flow and then waste it it would be advisable to put a basin underneath so that you can use that water to water the plants: save energy by using suitable energy saving bulbs or unplug household appliances when not in use; to reduce the use of plastic we must use canvas bags instead of plastic ones; instead the old T-shirts instead of throwing them away because then they will end up in landfills it is better to use them as cleaning mats; avoid throwing food waste in bins but use it as fertilizer for plants. If each of us is committed to these small gestures, we can save the planet. EAFC10*

*I agree with everything Greta Thunberg says because the basic problem is that nothing is being done. Reducing consumption is not enough, it is also necessary to activate measures to reclaim very polluted areas, and we must do it now before it can be too late, it is important that each of us do his part. Despite this, I think that our future has not been sold, we must all commit ourselves to lead a more sustainable life, using less energy, recycling and spreading environmental education among the new generations. ASFC6*

*I quite agree with Greta's protest action, in favor of the fight against climate change. But we can't leave this task to just one girl. We all should be activists like Greta. We should think to the environment around us, starting from the little things, for example by using recyclable materials, instead of dangerous ones. Maybe the example of a whole generation could convince the powerful of the earth to afford seriously this problem and*

*that we can't carry on as if nothing has happened, in order to leave a good planet to the future generations.*

MIFEM

*I agree with greta. I think we are unknowingly harming ourselves as well as the environment. And we do nothing to improve the situation. What is surprising is that a girl of only 16 is fighting for our planet. We could avoid many things. We should respect the environment by avoiding, for example, throwing away paper or any other object. Now the situation has worsened. Every day we talk about pollution or the greenhouse effect or floods. These things were caused by ourselves and our unawareness. If we don't start doing something we'll destroy our planet. ECFEM*

*We MUST save our planet! Some days ago, the 16-year-old activist Greta Thunberg has met the English Parliamentarians in order to discuss about the exigence to intervene to contrast climate changes and global warming. During her speech, Greta has used very touching words to express her frustration and anger: for example, she said that economic leaders just care about their business and that they are "ruining her childhood" and the one of all the other children of the world. I absolutely agree with Greta about the urgency to do something concrete to avoid climate change and all the consequences that it will have on the environment and on our health. While we are waiting for leaders to create a political and economic plan, we could all put some little significative actions into practice: for example, recycling items or avoid wasting plastic would be great. In conclusion, I would say that the phrase "You only live once" doesn't justify all the damage that we are provoking to our health, animals and to our planet. So, we must be responsible and act as fast as possible.*

GLFECWA

*The Environment is in danger , we need to do something now, we have to act. The future is in our hands, especially teenagers' hands who will live in this world for more time, we have to respect it and make sure all the others do it too. We have to recycle, assure to let the streets clean from rubbish, use less cars, don't use too much energy; we do this for us, for our future, for our world. MSFECWA*

## Comments

These samples show that students are very aware of environmental issues. They agree with Greta and offer ideas to solve the problems that the world is facing right now suggesting solutions for the challenges the whole world is facing right now:

- *We must have respect and begin to observe small "rules" useful for the protection of the planet such as, for example, using water bottles instead of plastic bottles, replacing plastic and using glass*
- *save energy by using suitable energy saving bulbs or unplug household appliances when not in use; to reduce the use of plastic we must use canvas bags instead of plastic ones; instead the old T-shirts instead of throwing them away because then they will end up in landfills it is better to use them as cleaning mats; avoid throwing food waste in bins but use it as fertilizer for plants*
- *Reducing consumption is not enough, it is also necessary to activate measures to reclaim very polluted areas, and we must do it now before it can be too late*
- *using recyclable materials, instead of dangerous ones.*
- *We should respect the environment by avoiding, for example, throwing away paper or any other object*
- *recycling items or avoid wasting plastic would be great.*
- *We have to recycle, assure to let the streets clean from rubbish, use less cars, don't use too much energy*

These are just a few suggestions offered by the students which show that they can address difficult topics and offer ideas about how to respond to them. Even if some students were not detailed in proposing solutions they all had clear minds about the change of attitude we should develop in order to improve the environment situation.

## **Lesson twenty-five - Maya Angelou "I know why the caged bird sings" (1969)**

Wouldn't they be surprised when one day I woke out of my black ugly dream, and my real hair, which was long and blond, would take the place of the kinky mass that Momma wouldn't let me straighten? My light-

blue eyes were going to hypnotize them, after all the things they said about "my daddy must have been a Chinaman" (I thought they meant made out of China, like a cup) because my eyes were so small and squinty. Then they would understand why I had never picked up a Southern accent, or spoke the common slang, and why I had to be forced to eat pigs' tails and snouts. Because I was really white and because a cruel fairy stepmother, who was understandably jealous of my beauty, had turned me into a too-big Negro girl, with nappy black hair, broad feet and a space between her teeth that would hold a number-two pencil.

### Lesson description

In the TALO activity the teacher elicits the meaning of the words in yellow. Then, in the TAVI reading comprehension students in group read the excerpt and discuss

1. Meaning: what is the author doing?
2. What is this character's main problem?
3. Which words can be associated with prejudice?
4. Which words or sentences have a negative connotation?

Finally, in the TASP/TACT writing task students answer the following questions: What is prejudice? How can we avoid it?

### Writing samples

*A prejudice is when you judge someone before knowing him/her in a more thorough way. A prejudice can also take place when you already know that person but you keep on having a negative impression even if he/she behaves well, because of a characteristic he/she has that you believe is negative. The only way to avoid prejudice is to be open minded with everyone and don't judge by a characteristic or an idea you have on your mind. It's important to judge by the real facts. ACFEA*

*"Different" is wrong? In the vocabulary the definition of prejudice is "preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience". An opinion that is not based on the reality of the facts is fantasy but*

*some make it real by giving birth to prejudices. There are prejudices now about everything: about your past, skin color, provenance, religion, sexual orientation, and I could move on. I don't understand why we think diversity is something bad and ugly. We are wonderfully different. It would be a horrible and monotonous world if we were all equal. To break down prejudices you have to start from childhood. Children should not be polite to think that "different" is wrong; that playing with that particular child, who has different skin or has two mothers instead of a father and a mother, is bad. Once they asked me "who are you?" and I just said "a human just like you". We should all learn to respond that way because we are all human beings with our wonderful differences that make us unique. GRFEA*

*In my opinion prejudice is a cultural factor. There are prejudices in every societies, they cause racism, violence and discrimination towards people who are different than something that the society imposes. The first thing to do to fight prejudices is talking about them in schools: this is a very important thing, because children are more open to differences than adults, so they will create a more open society. To afford the problem schools can invite experts or also invite people who were victims of prejudices and discrimination to tell their stories. Also parents must told about the danger of prejudices because they are the most important example for their sons. FTMEA*

*Prejudice is one of the worst things. Unfortunately the world is full of prejudices, and full of people ready to judge everything. We are ready to comment a person for the way he dresses, for the color of his skin, for his religion or even for the person he loves. We are very good at judging a book by its cover, because it is simpler and you don't have to worry about really understanding the plot of the book. I think it's not nice to do this with a book, even worse with a person. Appearances can be deceiving, and still many people struggle to understand this. There are a lot of stereotypes and prejudices that need to be broken down, and I think the time has come. KFFB10*

*Prejudices are opinions based on one's personal beliefs, one's history and one's culture. When these negative evaluations are accepted and shared by society they can lead to mistaken beliefs and attitudes of closure, rejection and contempt to everything is different. The sources of human errors and illusions can be identified in a wrong education, in habits, in the imprecision of language and only by getting rid of these will the human mind be able to approach the true conception of reality. How is it possible today to overcome prejudices? The way forward is openness to confrontation with others, listening to their reasons and their stories, being able to identify with the victim of prejudice, and above all always be respectful and empathetic.*

EBFB25

#### Comments

As the samples show, students were capable of describing prejudice and give precise definitions:

- *A prejudice is when you judge someone before knowing him/her in a more thorough way*
- *prejudice is "preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience"*
- *There are prejudices in every societies, they cause racism, violence and discrimination towards people who are different than something that the society imposes.*
- *We are ready to comment a person for the way he dresses, for the color of his skin, for his religion or even for the person he loves*
- *Prejudices are opinions based on one's personal beliefs, one's history and one's culture. When these negative evaluations are accepted and shared by society they can lead to mistaken beliefs*

They also had clear in mind what to do to avoid prejudice in our modern society:

- *The only way to avoid prejudice is to be open minded with everyone and don't judge by a characteristic or and idea you have on your mind.*
- *To break down prejudices you have to start from childhood. Children should not be polite to think that "different" is wrong*

- *The first thing to do to fight prejudices is talking about them in schools*
- *How is it possible today to overcome prejudices? The way forward is openness to confrontation with others, listening to their reasons and their stories, being able to identify with the victim of prejudice, and above all always be respectful and empathetic.*

This lesson was very successful. Students were aware of what prejudice is and looked like this was an important topic to them. Teenagers are often victims of prejudice so they know very well the suffering it can cause. For this reason, it would be advisable to introduce this topic regularly in every kind of syllabi.

### **Lesson twenty-six - Raymond Carver "Fear" (1986)**

Fear of seeing a police car pull into the drive.

Fear of falling asleep at night.

Fear of not falling asleep.

Fear of the past rising up.

Fear of the present taking flight.

Fear of the telephone that rings in the dead of night.

Fear of electrical storms.

Fear of the cleaning woman who has a spot on her cheek!

Fear of dogs I've been told won't bite.

Fear of anxiety!

Fear of having to identify the body of a dead friend.

Fear of running out of money.

Fear of having too much, though people will not believe this.

Fear of psychological profiles.

Fear of being late and fear of arriving before anyone else.

Fear of my children's handwriting on envelopes.

Fear they'll die before I do, and I'll feel guilty.

Fear of having to live with my mother in her old age, and mine.

Fear of confusion.

Fear this day will end on an unhappy note.

Fear of waking up to find you gone.

Fear of not loving and fear of not loving enough.

Fear that what I love will prove lethal to those I love.

Fear of death.

Fear of living too long.

Fear of death.

I've said that.

#### Lesson description

TAVI reading comprehension the teacher reads the poem and then elicits their reaction to it (what kind of sensation, feelings, thoughts etc.). This is followed by a TALO reading comprehension, students in groups read the words in yellow and discuss the meaning then the teacher elicits meaning. The following TAVI reading is based on tone and register, students in pairs answer the following questions:

- Is this the kind of vocabulary you would expect in a poem?
- How would you describe the tone of the poem?
- Who is the poet talking to?
- Is the register formal or informal?

Finally, the TASP/TAP Writing task: Describe the things you are afraid of and say why.



## Writing samples

*In my mind there are some things that scares me. The first thing is a nightmare when i sleep bad, where i'm alone i run in a dark place and the i fall into the void. The second thing is a bad thought on my parents's death; it's very terrible for me because in the future it will be hard to live without them! I'm also afraid that one day i wake up and to discover to have a incurable and lethal disease. The last thing that i'm afraid is my death, because i think on my family and to their suffering. GMMEA*

*I have a lots of fears. Since I was afraid of dogs because I can't predict their reaction and this make me feel very nervous. I have always been afraid of taking a plane but when I grew up I realized that is something I cannot avoid. But my biggest fear is about the future. I'm terrified I don't know where I'll be in ten years, to know if I'll be happy, to know if I'll have a new job or a family. I hope to make my dreams come true. DSFEA*

*hi my name is andrea, i've never had so many fears, when i was a child, like all children, i was afraid of the dark, but over time this feras went away, i 've always been terrified of the big dogs because when i was a child a dog ran after me to play but i was afrais and i cried a lot, after having a little surgery i am afraid of syringes, blood and medical interventions, in fact i often faint. but my biggest fear is that of not being successfull in my dreams and that my ambitions vanish into thin air. ANMEA*

## Comments

Although students responded rather well to the writing task given, this lesson could have been exploited more with other specific higher-grade questions. In spite of many mistakes, at least in some cases, students managed to express their fears in a clear way but did not have the chance to investigate the issue at a deeper level. Other higher-level questions could include: can you explaining the reasons of your fears? Have you ever tried to overcome them? Do you think they are limitations? If so, why? Is there a way to bypass fears? Is there any exercise that help you? In your opinion, when should we ask for the help of specialists? Do you think news and social media have a role in rising the social level of fears? Why do you think the poet fears so many things?

In your opinion, what is the origin of his fears? ... Asking more specific questions about themselves could help students becoming more aware of their fears and the way to overcome them, starting a self-reflection and personal growth process. At the same time, asking more specific questions about the fears expressed in the poem or focused on society has the purpose of focusing more on critical thinking.

### **Lesson twenty-seven - Scott M. Deitche “Cigar City Mafia” (2005)**

Along with bolita and bootlegging, one of the more profitable criminal activities in Tampa in the late ‘20s and ‘30s was insurance fraud by way of arson. Individuals would purchase properties at rock-bottom prices, insure them, and then set the places on fire to claim the insurance. Due to the Great Depression, many people were forced to sell their homes at substantial losses, making them cheaper for underworld figures to buy. Racketeers would swoop in and buy up the homes, even furnishing them. Then, fires would sweep through the buildings, which were usually unoccupied, and the insurance payoff would go right into a local criminal’s pocket.

#### Lesson description

TALO activity: the teacher elicits the meaning of the highlighted words. TAVI reading comprehension, students in pairs read the excerpt and answer the questions:

11. What is the author doing?
12. Which criminal activities were among the most profitable ones in Tampa in the ‘20s and the ‘30s?
13. Can you describe the criminal activities you have mentioned?
14. Who are the underworld figures and the racketeers?

TASP/TACT writing task: What are the most profitable criminal activities of today’s mafia?

## Writing samples

*Today mafia isn't very present like it was years ago, but there is, especially in some place of the world. For example in Italy the most important place for mafia are Calabria and Sicily. Infact some years ago, mafia was very cruel, kill people who were disagree with them, for example the principal victim of the mafia in Sicily are two magisters: Falcone and borsellino. One of the most criminal group of mafia is the ndrangheta, the calabria's mafia. I think that today is changed, the member of the mafia ask the racketeers and if you don't do it, they kill you. In the past it was only in same place, but now is around the world, for example the ndrangheta is in America, too. Mafia for isn't something that we can eliminate, because it isn't like a virus, it's in the mind of the people, and it's difficult to contrast. ASFEA*

*The mafia is one of many big problems in Italy and in the world. A lot of people are scared by them because for their purposes they can do anything, literally anything. They threaten the people force them to pay the "pizzo" or they ruin their lifes with arson and at the end with the death. The mafia it's also responsible for drug trafficking, human trafficking and many attacks. Very ofeten it happens that in a TV series or in a film the mafia is rapresented as a good thing, an example to follow but all the people and kids dead beacuse of the mafia would disagree with that. GBMEA*

*I'd like to understand why some people do these disgusting actions,unfortunately today the mafia is all over the world not only in Sicily,they monopole people then some of these people get into crime.Personally I think it's horrible,these people make a lot of money in an absolutely bad way.I'd like a day I wake up without mafia but I know is impossible to stop it,It always become stronger and stronger and is every where,this is scare me.If there's a huge and famous factory I'm sure there's 99% Mafia.In my opinion if in Italy some drugs became legal ,we would have less Mafia. FCFEA*

*The name mafia is Italian, and it's not casual if it hasn't any correspondence in other languages, in fact it was borned and it developed here, specifically it was borned in Sicily, but while the time was passing by, it was a phenome that covered many states and countries. Particularly in Italy, people know very well what mafia does: it is an association that allow people to earn a lot of money by doing illegal works and that people are hidden to everybody; the work they do it's against justice and overall against the concept of a state where, as the 1st article says, is based on work. In my opinion mafia is a phenomenal that was stronger in the past and that today is not as stronger as it was, and that's because our country was very close to it in a period and many people decided to do something about and against it. Sometimes they also gave their life to stop it, it's enough to say the two names of Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, two victims of mafia. It doesn't mean that today we haven't mafia, but sometimes it seems like people care less about it, as they consider it like it's far from us, and they aren't informed about it. I'd really like people to know about it and to know overall about our past, because it's the truth that we have less mafia now, but we always have to remember who gave life for us, to contribute for our present. BRFEA*

#### Comments

Students focused on a few main points: definition of the word Mafia, description of the kind of business it is involved with, description of who the victims of Mafia are, and what to do to get rid of criminal people and criminal attitude. Although, the question asked was just one the outcome was more detailed than expected. Texts like this can be used and adapted to debate and increase awareness on specific social issues like drugs, poverty, homeless people... More detailed questions can be asked to and longer preparation (gathering information, google research...) can be needed for difficult topics.

#### **Lesson twenty-eight - Alice Munro "Amundsen" (2012)**

For years I thought I might run into him. I lived, and still live, in Toronto. It seemed to me that everybody ended up in Toronto at least for a little while. Of course, that hardly means that you will get to see

that person, provided that you should in any way want to.

It finally happened. Crossing a crowded street where you could not even slow down. Going in opposite directions. Staring, at the same time, a bare shock on our time-damaged faces.

He called out, “How are you?” And I answered, “Fine.” Then added for good measure, “Happy.”

### Lesson description

In the TALO activity the teacher reads the excerpt and elicits the words in yellow. In the TAVI reading comprehension students in group read the excerpt and discuss the following questions:

1. Where are the characters?
2. Can you describe them?
3. What happened before they met?

Then students in pairs role play the dialogue and act out what is going to happen next.

Finally, in the TASP/TAP writing task (100 words) they have to use the final sentence of the excerpt to start a new story.

### Writing samples

*we started to talk about the moment spent together, we were very close. A lot of things had changed from the past. He was married and he had two children. He was in Toronto just to work. He told me all the things that happened to him during the years. He lived in London with his family. He also told me to go to his home one day, to know his wife. We were both very happy about the meeting. He gave to me his number to keep in touch. SVFECWA*

*I looked him in those beautiful eyes I fell in love with when I was just a teenager, and I immediately knew that he was experiencing exactly the same emotions as me: surprise, enthusiasm, pure happiness. We decided to go to the snackbar at the end of the street. We sat there and talked for hours of what has happened during all those years: we both got married and then divorced, and we both managed to access to the job of our*

*dreams. We soon understood that that sudden meeting would have been the beginning of a wonderful love story. Today we are happily married, and our lives couldn't be better than this! GLFECWA*

*He called out "How are you?", And I answered "Fine." Then added for good measure "Happy." I felt a twinge in my belly. I still couldn't believe it. 10 years, 4 months and 12 days have passed since we last met: it was the high school graduation party. We were very friends, as well as classmates. We shared everything and spent a lot of time together. Until his girlfriend started to be jealous of our relationship and pulled us away. After the graduation, we moved to different cities and we never spoke again. Until that day. How strange life is. Meet again, after all this time, at the wedding of two former classmates. "And how are you? Are you alone?" I asked him, "I'm fine" he answered "Roberta and I broke up a few years ago. I'm sorry for how I behaved with you. I wanted to write to you, but I didn't want to disturb." "Oh, it doesn't matter." I replied. Suddenly, we heard a song. "Do you remember it?" he asked me, "Of course!" I exclaimed. We joined our classmates and started dancing like in the last party together. It was as if all this time had never elapsed.*

INFEA

*He called out "How are you?", And I answered "Fine." Then added for good measure "Happy." Yes, after 4 years I could say I was finally happy. Who knows if it's the same for him. I spent the breakup period really badly. It's really bad to let go a person you thought you were going to share everything with. Surely, I have not missed anything so important. I just gained by finding myself and I don't think there is a better victory. The story with Jake was beautiful, but at the same time it was so poignant and sick that it became a life lesson. I'm a new Jane now and that's the only thing I'm grateful for. JPFEA*

*He called out, "How are you?" And I answered, "Fine". Then added for good measure, "Happy". I was so overwhelmed. I started walking faster, trying to get out of that situation, but he crossed the road and as he did I could feel my heart beating faster. As I raised my eyes, I saw him walking towards me. He said "What*

*a coincidence!” and I answered, “You are right” I felt a sense of rage and contempt as I said it, but I did not want my emotions to overflow. We used to be keen on each other, but after a few months, he disappeared from my life with no explanation. He asked me “Do you want to eat out with me?” and I replied “We could go to a new restaurant, my boyfriend works there” ACFEA*

*He called out, “How are you?” And I answered, “Fine”. Then added for good measure, “Happy”. I stood on the other side of the street, holding my iced coffee in one hand and the keys of the car in the other one while I kept staring at him with my eyes wide open. He ran across the street taking advantage of the green light of the street lights: Harry, my prom at senior year, stood right in front of me. “Oh my gosh, Allie, I haven’t see you in such a long time, do you want to catch up with me?” He asked politely, I answered saying sorry because I was very busy. I started running, hoping that I’ll never see again the man who made me suffer the most. CGFEA*

*He called out, “How are you?” And I answered, “Fine”. Then added for good measure, “Happy”. And then he asked: “Do you want to meet up for a coffee sometimes?” I felt like a pain in the stomach. I didn’t know what to say because it was still too hard to forget what he had done... He simply used me for many years, like an object, and I didn’t know anything about that... Then I decided to say, courageously, the truth: “I don’t want to see you again. This was a simple coincidence that won’t happen again. You hurt me and you don’t know how difficult was that period for me”. He stared at me like he had receive a punch in the face. He started to mutter excuses that didn’t convince even himself. I stopped that pitiful scenario, I turned without looking back and walked away, leaving him without words. CCFEA*

## Comments

This text is very useful and flexible and can be used in different ways: as a model for enhancing creativity (TEC), or for self-reflection to increase personal growth (TAP). In the first case, the text proved to be effective in helping students developing interesting stories. Happy ending or not, all the stories had good reason for the choice made by the students. Some of the stories were about giving an old relationship a second chance and finding a new love, while other ones were about escaping from a bad relationship and overcoming resentment. Feelings of happiness, joy, sadness, revenge, surprise... were the focus of the story and for this reason it can also be used a personal growth exercise, a self-reflection about expressing feelings and dealing with personal relationship. This can be done extrinsically, as in this case, just asking students to complete the story, or intrinsically asking students direct questions such as: what kind of situation is this? Have you ever lived something like it? What would you do if you were in a similar position?

## **Lesson twenty-nine - Deepak Chopra “Synchro-Destiny” (1998)**

Miracles happen every day. Not just in remote country villages or at holy sites halfway across the globe, but here, in our own lives. They bubble up from their hidden source, surround us with opportunities, and disappear. They are the shooting stars of everyday life. When we see shooting stars, their rarity makes them seem magical, but in fact, they streak across the sky all the time. We just don't notice them during the day, dazzled as we are by sunlight, and at night they emerge only if we happen to look up at the right place in a clear, dark sky.

## Lesson description

In the TALO activity, teacher elicits difficult words. In the TAVI reading comprehension students in pairs read the text and answer the questions:

1. What is the author doing?
2. What is a miracle according to the author?



### 3. Why are miracles like shooting stars?

Then, students discuss in pairs asking each other the following questions:

1. What is a miracle to you?
2. Do you agree with the author?
3. Why/Why not?

Finally, in the TASP/TAP Writing task (100 words) they are asked to describe a miracle they happened to see.

#### Writing samples

*Hi Today I want to talk about a personal experience which I think can be called ‘miracle’. When I lived in Bologna, I used to go around the city until late at night. Once, while I was going home, I saw a very big dog on the other side of the street. When he saw me he started running with aggression. In that moment I had think that my last chance was to stay calm and show him that I wasn’t afraid. The miracle occurred. In fact the dog slowed down his run at 50 centimeters from me crouching down. SCMEF*

*On a mild mid-September night, when no one knew of the covid’s existence, i was in Palermo, in a place called “Vucciria”, and i didn’t know i was gonna have one of the most exciting experiences of my life. While the evening flowed boring, i saw the most beautiful girl I’ve ever seen. She had me at first sight, she was managed to bewitch me. At some point, despite I was very embarassed, I managed to talk her. I bought her a drink and starting to talk, we discovered that we had a lot of things in common. We spent the whole night together around the city but the next morning she left for UK. I will never forget her and her beautiful smile... This experience reminds me the poem, written about 2000 years ago and discovered in the remains of Pompei “Nothing lasts forever. After shining the sun falls in the ocean, decreases the moon that a little while ago was full, the violence of the winds often changes in light breeze”. ACMEF*

*Four years ago i was in my cousin’s countryside and we had a lot of funny moment. I must admit that i haven’t believe in miracles befor first of all that. It was 23 PM, me and my cousins were so tired after the long*

*and full day at swimming pool. We didn't give up, so we decided to play at hide and seek. The sky was very dark and there weren't stars inside. We went to a huge square near the countryside. Suddenly while we were playing me and my cousin Andrea saw a flashy light near an high tree. It seemed us like a female spirit and in my view was very frightening! Andrea was also scared in fact he burns into tears, he ran in a hurry and to seek relief we get up to home speedily. So, currently, I confess that I believe in miracles after that happened, though it was very terrifying. MZFEF*

*Recently, I heard about miracles that happen in the holy site on the TV, which are making a big news around the religion world. I'm so excited about life, and for these reason, I'm so interesting in studying and understanding, about the crazy and the subhuman events that happen into. Personally, I have never seen a "Religion Miracle" about a someone's life, but in my humble opinion I can say that, we are everyday in front of an enormous miracle, just saying the world life we are in front of a miracle. Everyday the nature shows us its magic miracles, like the rise of the sun, the sounds of the rough sea, the sounds of every creature, the perfection of our body, the intelligence of our mind, everything around us from the smallest thing to the biggest is a miracle. Sometimes we don't understand about the fortune we have in our lives , we always think that, a miracle is something which can change our Economic or Social life, but it isn't the truth , just the thing we live this life in the best way is a miracle in my view. EZMEF*

#### Comments

This could be regarded as a typical personal growth text (TAP) in which spirituality would be the area for self-reflection. Asking more questions would be advisable to clarify the meaning of the world miracle. This kind of activity would really give students the chance to better understand their approach to life, and it could also include the famous Albert Einstein citation stating that: *in life, either everything is a miracle or nothing is*, and help them understand which part of the quotation they support.

### Lesson thirty - Eckhart Tolle “Stillness speaks” (2003)

Wisdom is not a product of thought. The deep *knowing* that is wisdom arises through the simple act of giving someone or something your full attention. Attention is primordial intelligence, consciousness itself. It dissolves the barriers created by conceptual thought, and with it comes the recognition that nothing exists in and by itself. It joints the perceiver and the perceived in a unified field of awareness. It is the healer of separation.

#### Lesson description

In the TALO activity, teacher elicits difficult words. In the TAVI reading comprehension students in pairs read the text and answer the questions:

1. What is the author doing?
2. What does ‘full attention’ mean?
3. Why is attention important?
4. When do you give someone full attention?
5. What are your main distractors in everyday life?
6. Why is attention the healer of separation?

Finally, in the TASP/TACT Writing task (100 words) they are asked to answer the question: what do you pay attention to?

#### Writing samples

*I am a perfectionist, but not that kind of perfectionist, I like to pay attention to small things, because very often they are not appreciated and considered by others, because they are considered less important than the bigger ones. I like to pay attention to people, try to understand them to the deep end, and try to stay close them, and keep trying to help them heal. I like to pay attention to school lessons and learn new things. I love to pay attention when the sun rises and when the sun sets. I love to pay attention to the lyrics of my favorite songs, which I can relate to and always get excited about. I pay attention to the people I love: my family, my*

*friends, my kitten. But I should pay a little more attention to myself, because often for the sake of others, I tend to neglect myself, but I'll try. VZFB2*

*As far as I'm concerned, I usually pay attention with curiosity to the things that I like or interest me. These things can be hobbies, for example, when I listen to music I pay attention to the words and emotions that the song gives me, if the song tells a period in the life of the singer or an invented story. Another situation in which I pay attention is when I talk to other people and I understand from the way they talk to me what are their feelings and what they are really trying to tell me. VCFB7*

*we are often overwhelmed by people, things, imagines, situations, that we forget to focus our attention to one of these and we end up making everything superficial. Instead we must think that things we pay attention to, characterize our life and our points of view. So it's very important and essential to carefully choose what to bring our attention to. Personally I try to focus on the beauty of all the things that surround me and on things that cause my interest. Those things could be people around me (which are my family and my friends) and than again things like hobbies, activities, goals or maybe little things like a nice book or an involving movie. To conclude I think it's nice to say "pay attention to what you pay attention to". EMFB4*

*Normally I am a very curious person, so I pay attention to a lot of things in general, but the thing that most attracts and fascinates me is nature, and everything related to it: environment, different ecosystems, flora, fauna, ecc. I am also very attracted to history and art: the birth, the origins and customs of ancient peoples, the history of ancient and remote places, the archaeological sites, the events of the various eras and their beautiful artistic productions intrigue me very much, for this reason I spend my free time whatching documentaries or videos on youtube about wild animals, remote cities of the world and various curiosities. I think that having a good dose of curiosity keeps us active and willing to learn more and more and have fun at the same time.*

FFFB19

*Paying attention is one of the most difficult things to do, because we tend to “scape” (for example procrastinating, using the mobile phone or checking the social media) while we do things that need our complete concentration. I’m the kind of person that loose the attention quickly, for this reason I employ the “pomodoro technique” which consist of: 25 minutes focus on working and 5 minutes of break. Also based my day on “to-do list” help me to organized and finish all the task. I personally feel that paying attention is important because it is a way to do our daily activities effectively. We need to focus our mind on a specific task and do it in the best mode. We can’t pretend to be “multitasking” and put emphasis on many activities; it is only a way to start several assignments and don’t finish it. To sum up, we need to pay attention while we’re doing our activities, in that way we can have a satisfactory result. GLFECWA*

*When we are interested in something we pay attention. Often paying attention is a sign of respect towards the person who is speaking and makes it clear that we are polite, especially when we have full attention which means that for us what we are talking about is very interesting. For me paying attention is a very important thing because from here you can make many things easy for example the lessons or the rules of a game. I pay a lot of attention to the things I'm very interested in, but I don't always succeed because of the many distractions I find myself. RGMECWA*

*In my view, pay attention is a very important thing to do, in particular when you are in a significant event. This because, when you pay attention, you understand and do things weel. In fact in my opinion is better be a person that pay a lot of attention than a multitasking person. Actually, a multitasking person does many things together, so he can’t fully focus on his action. Personally I pay attention in the things I love to do, especially when I study to do the best. In conclusion, we can say that pay attention is a essential thing in life. SVFECWA*

*Paying attention generally means being particularly concentrated on something, for example on work, school lessons or social relationships. But if we go into its definition more deeply, we will easily understand that being a focused person also implies being efficient, careful and caring. I firmly believe that being careful to everything that happens in our everyday life is essential: in particular, I think that it is really important to always listen to our friends and to what they say. In this way, we will easily understand their feelings better, creating a more effective communication and a stronger friendship. Furthermore, an engaged attitude towards school or work may be extremely beneficial as well, since this kind of approach will lead to a significant improvement of our performances and to an increased sense of personal satisfaction. To conclude, I would affirm that all of us should try to pay more attention to every single event that happens in our lives and in our external world, in order to feel more connected with it and to become an active part of it. GLFECWA*

#### Comments

Attention is a very interesting topic that can give rise to several thoughts and discussions in different areas. These samples talk about paying attention to many different things: people, nature, family and friends, hobbies, studying....

- *I like to pay attention to people, try to understand them to the deep end, and try to stay close them, and keep trying to help them heal*
- *I pay attention is when I talk to other people and I understand from the way they talk to me what are their feelings and what they are really trying to tell me*
- *Personally I try to focus on the beauty of all the things that surround me and on things that cause my interest*
- *Normally I am a very curious person, so I pay attention to a lot of things in general, but the thing that most attracts and fascinates me is nature, and everything related to it*
- *I personally feel that paying attention is important because it is a way to do our daily activities effectively*

- *Often paying attention is a sign of respect towards the person who is speaking and makes it clear that we are polite*
- *Personally I pay attention in the things I love to do, especially when I study to do the best.*
- *I think that it is really important to always listen to our friends and to what they say*

As most students underlined, paying attention to people is crucial for establishing good relationships.

This lesson could be easily implemented with some Active Listening exercises to let students experience attention from their classmates. In this lesson the prompt given was a very simple question: what do you pay attention to? Nevertheless, many other questions can be asked to investigate the issue from different points of view, depending on what we want to focus on. For instance, if the focus is on distractors the questions could be: how/where do you spend most of your time during the day? How much time do you spend on social media/Tv/video games/sport/nature/reading/listening to music...? You feel happy when you spend time on...? Are you able to organize your day? Do you feel you could spend your time better? What can you do to save time? What can we do to avoid losing concentration? If the focus is on listening to other people: Do you pay attention when other people talk to you? Can you define active listening? If the focus is on learning how to be focused: What helps you keep your focus? What are the advantages and disadvantages of being multitasking?...

## Appendix 2 - Entry Test

**Class B** - Liceo Ugo Foscolo, Canicattì Agrigento - Teacher Adele Troisi - 27 Students

### Question 1

Read this email from your English teacher Mrs Lake and the notes you have made.

**EMAIL**

**From:** Mrs Lake

**Subject:** End of year party

Dear Class,

I'd like our class to have a party to celebrate the end of the school year.

We could either have a party in the classroom or we could go to the park. Which would you prefer to do?

What sort of activities or games should we do during the party?

What food do you think we should have at the party?

Reply soon!

Anna Lake

*Great!* (points to 'I'd like our class to have a party...')

*Explain* (points to 'We could either have a party...')

*Suggest ...* (points to 'What sort of activities...')

*Tell Mrs Lake* (points to 'What food do you think...')

Write your email to Mrs Lake using all the notes.

## Article or story

### Question 2 - Article

#### What makes you laugh?

Write an article telling us what you find funny and who you enjoy laughing with. Do you think it's good to laugh a lot? Why? The best articles answering these questions will be published next month.

### Question 3 - Story

- Your English teacher has asked you to write a story.
- Your story must begin with this sentence: Jo looked at the map and decided to go left.

Write your story.



**AFMB24****Question 1**

Dear Mrs Lake

I think that a party would be a really good idea and a good way to have fun all together after a long and hard year of work.

I think that do the party in the park would be funnier but we have to take care about weather!

Maybe we can play football or hide and seek or some other activities like dancing or such.

But of course the most important part of the party will be the food.

I think that we should have one or two cakes, lots of candies and other sweet thinks

**Question 2**

Jo looked at the map and decided to go left. He walked for some time really close to a reaver but never too far from the main path. He loves the sound of the water on the rocks, the smell of wet soil and the sound of birds and wild life. In general he loves nature and so he decided to go camping with his friends. They was still sleeping at the camp. It was in a clearing of the wood. This was their third day alone with nature and silence. It was fantastic. But was time to go back.

**AMFB5****Question 1**

Dear Anna Lake

I'd like to have a party to celebrate the end of the school year. There are two beautiful ideas. But I prefer,do a party in the classroom. During the party,we can do a dance competition or mind competition. (I can prepare some answers). The class is dived in two groups and we can start the match. After the match the winner must have a present. I'd like have a lot of sandwiches and chips. For drink,I'd like a bottle of coca cola a bottle of water and reply soon! Ps. Is it a great idea?

**Question 2**

I find funny the meme on Instagram or Facebook. I usually laugh a lot with my friends. I like stay with a funny people. They make me happy! I think laugh,it's a good things because I can't stay sad. I have the smile in my face,everyday. It's a good thing,I think. There are days of course,when you can't stay happy. Sometimes we are sad for stupid things. And we usually make a stupid problem in our mind. Stay happy! The life,it's beautiful! This articles will be published the next month. On may,I will be published another article.

**ATMB15****Question 1**

Dear Mrs Lake,

it is a so great idea because I think it could be really funny! We have talked about the location, and my classmates and I decided this party to do at the park because we would like to "break free" (as Queen sang). Another reason for which we chose this location is that we can do every sort of activities we would like to. In fact, we would sing and dance all together. And last, we decided that my classmates bring all the necessary (coke-cola, glasses, chips...) and I bring a chocolate cake. See you soon!

**Question 2**

Jo looked at the map and decided to go left. He wanted to go to the supermarket, but he didn't find anything. In fact, Jo saw that there was only a book shop. He entered and, after he asked the way to go to the supermarket, the shop assistant told him that he had to go straight on that road and, after, to go right. He could find the supermarket on his left. Jo did that and, in fact, he found the supermarket and when Jo entered, he bought something to eat and finally he could go to bed and he fell asleep.

**ASFB22****Question 1**

Dear Mrs Lake,

I think that the idea of a party to celebrate the end of the school year it's absolutely wonderful. In classe we talked about the two locations that you suggested, and we prefer going to the park, so we can also do a pic-nic! Why don't we play Twister? Or volleyball, football, there are so many games that we can do! And there's gonna be some paper sheets and some color to paint! At the party we should have some sandwiches, maybe also a cake, to celebrate with style! We can't wait to join the party!

**Question 2**

Jo looked at the map and decided to go left, but he didn't know that he just made the worst choice of his life. Because after two hours of walk he found a beautiful lake. He washed his face but in the reflection he wasn't alone, there was also a big, black Wolf, his eyes weren't normale, they were Red! Jo was shocked, he couldn't move, but the Wolf wasn't attacking him, he was staring at him, suddenly he bited him, on the right arm, and after that the Wolf was gone. But then Jo woke up, that was all a nightmare.

**ACFB12****Question 1**

Dear Mrs. Lake, I think your idea is great! A party to celebrate the end of the year will be funny! I think the party in the class will be great, because we can do a lot of games, we can sing, dance and tell our strange stories. What do you think? Maybe we can eat pizza and sandwiches, our mothers can prepare some of these at home, all the people like eating them. And you? What would you like to eat? We can play hide and sick, sing and play with a ball. What do you think? Reply soon.

**Question 2**

I find funny a lot of things like walks, go out with my friends, watch a film with parent, play sports and talk with friends. I love laughing with my friends and when I am with them I feel happy, friendly and thoughtless. I think laugh a lot is great for mental health, because if you are happy you can love your life in another way.

When I don't laugh, I feel sad, like a person who doesn't want to live and it is not a good feeling. So, all people have to laugh a lot and enjoy life to live better.

**EAFB23**

**Question 1**

Dear Mrs Lake,

I think it is great to have a party to celebrate the end of the school year! Maybe we could have both the parties.

We could stay in class in the morning and go to the park in the afternoon. Maybe during the party we could organize a dance challenge or a karaoke challenge. Martha and Jill can dance very well. My mom and I can make a cheesecake and Johanna's mom can make cupcakes or maybe we could buy some pizza. I love pizza!

I really like your idea!

See you in two days.

**Question 2**

Jo looked at the map and decided to go left. Every morning when she go to work, she always go right and she go at the bar. But this morning she decided to go left. It rained and all the street was wet, so she felt while she was texting her friend Meg. A guy, who saw her falling, helped her and they started talking and laughing and they found out that they were best friends when they were kids. Ten years later they got married. What if she had not turned left? Her life would be completely changed.

**BRFB27**

**Question 1**

Good morning Mrs Lake,

I've just received your e-mail, so I'm sorry to answer a bit later than you expected. I'm really glad to hear that!

I think we should have the party in the park because I've heard that many classes are going to celebrate there.

We could join them so we will definitely have more fun. We could book a DJ and dance or we could play sports. I'd personally love to have pizza at the party, but we could bring hot dogs and cupcakes too.

Thank you for writing to me,

### **Question 2**

Jo looked at the map and decided to go left. She had to meet her friends at 8.00 pm at the cinema, because the movie was going to start at 8.15 pm. Too bad she was literally lost in a city she had never been to, and she didn't even have her phone with her to call her friends! She was too shy to ask for help. She eventually reached the cinema at 9.00 pm... She had missed the movie because of her shyness.

### **BBFB17**

#### **Question 1**

Dear Mrs Lake,

I think that have a party to celebrate the end of the school year is a great idea for stay together last time. I prefer have a party in classroom because it's the place where we have all our moments. I'd like to do a video with all our photo to see at the end of the party after they we have eaten and danced all the time. I think that we should have a pizza or sandwiches because they are the food that everyone like, but I think that we should have a cake with a photo of the class.

See you soon!

#### **Question 2**

I find funny spend time with my best friends while we eat a pizza and see a comic film or while we are a party and dance together. I find funny go to beach or to the pool, obviously in the summer, with my family or with my friends and stay there all day. I think that laugh a lot is beautiful, it makes you feel happy in the sad moments and it improves your day. To laugh with people next to us is the most beautiful type of happiness. I love enjoy laughing with and laugh other people"

**CGFB9****Question 1**

Dear Mrs Lake,

A party it's a good idea, I think that it will be good to celebrate all together the end of a hard year. I think that the park will be a good place for the party. We could sing and dance all together outside and eat appetizers. We could play water games. In the afternoon we could cook desserts. I think we'll have a lot of fun. Reply soon!

**Question 2**

Ho looked at the map and decided to go left. He was at the city with Lucia and Jo decided to eat in the restaurant but Lucia hasn't got any money. It was eight o'clock but they don't decided where to go. Lucia watched the map and asked where they were. After that Jo decided to go left and they found a restaurant, and after ten minutes they met some friends and they asked some food. After dinner they went at the cinema, but at the end was late and they returned at home because were very tired, but happy."

**EBFB25****Question 1**

Dear Mrs Lake,

I think it's an amazing idea! I think that the class prefers to have the party in the classroom, because we can spend time all toghetar, doing some activities, like dancing or karaoke.An a great idea could be make a disco in the classroom! I know...maybe it's a bit crazy but it'll be funny.

For the food, we could take cakes or muffins made in home, they'll be delicious! To stay on topic we can prepare some cookies that look like musical instruments or notes .So a music party would be perfect for we. See you soon.

**Question 2**

Jo looked at the map and decided to go left.It was too late for come back, so she came in the darkforest. She was so scared! The only thing that made her brave was the love for her mum, Jo miss her so much.She's going to cry but finally she saw the camp that she had left before.She ran to her mum and took her an hug. The mum

smiling,said:" Did you enjoy your "little adventure"? "Yes,mum.I've been brave,I'm a superhero!" "Yes you are honey. But you are so tired! Come on, go to bed, this is the last night in the camp"

#### **EMFB4**

##### **Question 1**

I think it is a beautiful idea to celebrate the end of the school year with a big party! I like the classroom but i prefer to ho to the park! Well,we can have a fluo party,we can buy fluo bracelets and nackelaces and fluo caps. So,we can dance and play some activities like sing or we can do a runway wearing fluo dresses. At the end of this activities we can watch a film and then we go back home. I think that we can buy some sandwiches and pizzas and a big cake.

##### **Question 2**

Well, i love reading comic books and watching film that make me laugh! I usually watch film with my friends or my family and we always lugh a lot ! So,there are a lot of things and situations that i find funny and that make me laugh. I like watching films and videos on YouTube and sometimes i laugh about situations that are not funny ,for example when a person fall down the stairs or slip. I think that it is good to laugh a lot because when we laugh we are feeling good and we are happy!

#### **FCFB13**

##### **Question 1**

Dear Mrs Lake, it is a great idea. i'd like to have a party to celebrate the end of year too. i think it will be most important for the union of the class. i will miss all of my classmates and teachers . i prefer to have a party in the classroom and we could to put on some music and we could to dance. e could eat a cake and i think we will have a lot of funny. also we could have to do a food competition with the sandwiches. I'm sure that Mark will win, he love eating.

**Question 2**

Jo looked at the map and decided to go left. It was at six o'clock p.m. and Jo decided to adventure in a unknown city for him, Historia. He was with Ambra and together they were hungry. When they went left, they saw a big supermarket, but they haven't got any money. So, after some minutes, they met some people who they were eating. Jo and Ambra decided to ask some food at the people and kindly they gave it. Then they were happy and they took some flowers for that people. After that they returned at home with a taxi.

**FFFB19****Question 1**

Dear Mrs. Lake, Your idea is fantastic, I'd like to do this! Great!

I prefer to go to the park because we could do a picnic all around the nature, the grass, trees, butterflies and birds! And also because there will be more fun. During the party we could play at hide and seek, at volleyball or at football, or we could play with animals, why not?! At the party we should have hamburgers, pancakes, some fruits; we should have a cake, with a lot of chocolate! At the party we should have also drinks, for example fruit juice, Coca Cola, and others. See you soon!

**Question 2**

Jo looked at the map and decided to go left. He was in a big forest, and it was a little bit scary, because it was night. Jo walked for a long time, but he was tired, so he decided to sleep behind a tree. The next day, when Jo woke up, he found a big and ancient castle. He was surprised, so he went in the castle, and he found fabulous things, like armours, ancient weapons and very nice dresses. Jo decided to sleep a bit, and when he woke up, there was nothing! Poor Jo, it was a dream!!"



**FMMB8****Question 1**

Dear Mrs Lake,

I think we can do a music party: we can listen music and we can also dance. I think the classroom is too small for dancing and we are a lot! So we can celebrate the party in the park, that is bigger than the classroom and maybe it will be more beautiful have fun in the middle of trees. We can do some games like football, volleyball so we can play all together, or other games without a ball, would be OK? We can eat chips, pop corns, and small piece of pizza and the cola.

**Question 2**

Jo looked at the map and decided to go left. After, he found two other doors: in the first there was a paper that said ""dreams"", in the second ""nightmare"". He choose the first, and he found three doors: the first said ""horror"", the second said ""Sci-fi"" and the third ""dramatic"". He choose horror, he found four doors: the first said ""videogame"", in the others: ""football"", ""chess"", ""film"". He followed the map, but after one hour when he opened too doors, understood that he had to choose the doors of the activities that he likes, but now was too late"

**GFFB3****Question 1**

"Dear Mrs Lake,

This is an good idea, I'd like to celebrate the end of the school year all together. I prefer to do the party in the park because is bigger than our classroom and it is out. I suggest to do an musical contest with all of people in the park or playing with balls and da cing groups.

I think we should have pizza, candies, cookies, a big cake, chips and a lot of drinks. Thanks to writing to me.

Replay soon!

**Question 2**

Jo looked at the map and decided to go left. She was so confused because she was in the forest for three days.

She was looking for a pemple."

**GLFB26****Question 1**

Dear teacher,

I think having a party for the end of the school year would be an amazing idea.

In my opinion using the park near the school as the location would be the best thing to do: not only we've already spent the majority of the school year in that little classroom, but also breathing some fresh air could be refreshing.

In the park we could play lots of games: we could bring cards, dance, sing and so on.

In regards to the food, I believe we should keep it simple with hamburgers and fries.

I hope you like my ideas.

Yours truly,

**Question 2**

Laughing is definitely one of my favourite activities. My favourite laughs have certainly been the ones I've had with my friends and family, usually for something stupid or irrelevant. My sister insists that I laugh too much, but I really don't mind, since I believe laughing makes your life more interesting and sometimes even easier, because it takes the stress away. While laughing, your whole body moves: your chest vibrates, your mouth turns into a smile and your eyes water, all you feel in that moment is happiness, and what I like the most about laughing is the happiness that comes with it."

**GPFB16****Question 1**

Dear Mrs Lake,

I am happy about this idea.

So I think we could to make a cake and bring something to drink, we can plan a party with some decorations to celebrate the end of the school year in the park with our friends and our family. I would like to do it at the park because it's better since there are many trees and flowers, on the trees we can hang lots of balloons

During the party we would like to eat pizza,hamburger and potateos, cake, biscuits and choccolate. See you soon

**Question 2**

He wanted to visit the london eye and Central park. When he turned the corner the saw Mark, his best friend.

He was happy to meet him because they could visit the city together.

As they ware walking across the street. They saw a wonderful light. They followed it. They turned their he ad to the right, and met their favourite singer in concert

**IGFB21****Question 1**

Dear teacher,

this is a beautiful idea, I am excited. I think that have a party in the classroom is better, because it is more amazing. During the party we could dance, sing, play the piano or another instrument, Diana play the guitar so well... I'd like see a video with all the photo and memories of this year. I think we should have different foods, another students can take another types of pizza band the girl could make some cakes. We can buy some bottle of water, coke, orange juice and another drinks.

See you soon,

**Question 2**

I find funny spend time with my friend or go out to buy some dress and I like laughing with my best friend, because she knows me so well, and she understands me without words, she makes me fell amazed. I think that laugh a lot is very good, because when I laugh I am without problems and I take easily, but I think that is not good laugh a lot about people, so I think that someone is evil and useless, because that people fell stupid and ugly. So laugh is good only sometimes."

**KFFB10****Question 1**

Dear Mrs. Luke,

We would like to have a party to celebrate the end of the school year. I think that we could do it in a park because it's a big place and we can move better. Why don't we do a game during the party? I think it will be funny. I think we should to take pizza, hot-dog or fried chips. We could to take water and cola too. We could say to come to the party to all the teachers too? I think will be a good night. Thanks for this great idea. Bye!

**Question 2**

I think that everything can be funny if you take it easy. Sometimes we laugh in a bad moment and we don't why but we do it and we can't stop, without a reason. I enjoy laughing with all my friends because they like laughing too. I think it's good laugh because it makes your life longer. So during the day all the people must to laugh six times. When we see someone that never laugh we have to help him and understand why he is so sad. So laugh everybody because the life is good and you love only one life."

**STMB11****Question 1**

Dear teacher,

I think having a party cheerful to celebrate the end of the school year be it a beautiful idea. I prefer to do a party in the classroom, beaucose I want to stay with my classmates to talk about our summer projects. I think

that during the party we do the game of chairs and table games. I think we need to chips, hamburgers, popcorn, candy apples and candies...

Reply soon!

## **DTMB18**

### **Question 1**

Dear Mrs Lake,

It is a great idea, we could organize a fantastic party with foods and drinks. We would prefer to have a party in the classroom. We could talk or play some games during the party. We could eat pizza, sweets and fruits during the party and buy glasses, coca cola, water, orange juice, cakes, chips.

We should bring guitar and others instruments for singing songs. It will be an amazing party to celebrate the end of the school year. We will eat enough foods and have fun for all the party.

### **Question 2**

Jo looked at the map and decided to go left. He saw a forest and a lake with a lot of fishes. He decided to go straight on and has walked for two hours. Then he saw a dog and a cat. After he looked again the map and come back at home. At home he hasn't seen your parents for a lot of hours. The following day he went again at the forest and he saw the dog that ate dog food and anothers men that ate food. After he come back at home and finally he found the parents

## **VPFB20**

### **Question 1**

Dear Mrs. Lake,

We love the idea of celebrating the end of the school year with a party. It would be great to celebrate it in our classroom, but I think it would be better to go to the park because we could move better. I would like to do some group dances with my classmates, and you could dance with us too! We could sing songs and play some

games such as "guess the word". I think we should have some pizzas, french fries, some of us could also make some cakes and bring them!

Thanks for this great idea!

See you soon,

### **Question 2**

Jo looked at the map and decided to go left. Then she saw an amazing rainbow and a lot of butterflies were flying here and there. When she looked up, she saw many little fairies and, because she was distracted by them, she fell and hurt her arm. A boy came to help her, he was handsome, he had long blond hair and two amazing blue eyes. She immediately fell in love with him when he smiled at her. She was touching his amazing, soft hair, when she heard the sound of the alarm, and she realized it was only a dream."

### **VCFB7**

#### **Question 1**

Dear Mrs Lake,

I think, we could like to have a party. How about to have the party on the first floor of the school? I think is big and is perfect to have a party. In my opinion we could dance and we could put some chairs to talk with our friend and to have relax. What about to bring pizza and sandwiches? I think we could drink water and cola. My mum tells me that she could makes some cakes. What do you think if me and my classmates make pancakes and cupcakes?

See you soon!

#### **Question 2**

Jo looked at the map and decided to go left. He started to walk and he found a left big house and he decided to go in. When he went in, he went upstairs and he found another map. So he went out and he started to walk. So he looked at the map and decided to go right and than to go straight on. He saw some animals: dog, cat and a loro of spider. He looked at the map and he found the right place and he stopped, he saw a bag behind the tree, he found a dress with a photo of his mother.

**VZFB2****Question 1**

Dear Mrs Lake,

I think it is great. We would enjoy celebrating the end of the school year with a party. I think that we could celebrate the party in the classroom because if it a little small it is like a disco, we can buy a disco ball and it would be perfect. I think we can crown the king and the queen of the party and then we can dance with our partner. It is so romantic! I think we should have some sandwiches, muffins and some pounche, because we all eat and drink these. So, we could also write a catchfrase:

WELCOME TO THE BEST PARTY OF THE YEAR!

Reply soon

**Question 2**

Hello everybody, today I am going to tell you what I find funny and who I enjoy laughing with. Well, I can't stop laugh when I watch some funny videos where there are people that do stupid actions or try to do something but they don't. And sometimes I laugh for some situansions but I couldn't laugh. I think it is good and bad to laugh a lot, because when we laugh we are feeling good and we always smiling but it can bad because died some people beucase they laughed a lot.

So we can laugh but we don't always do it.





AFMB24	15	Male	Racalmuto	Ugo Foscilo	Trionzio	Tri	The lord of the ring A Song of ice and fire Harry Potter	J.R.R Tolkien G.R. R. Martin J.K Rowling	Fa nta sy His tori	3	3	4	3	4	5	4	3	5	4
AMFB5	15	Female	Racalmuto	Liceo classico Ugo Foscolo	Ca mbridge	Trionzio	Questa sera è già domani	Hemingway	D'avven tura	3	1	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	4
ACFB14	15	Female	Canicatí (A G)	Liceo Classico Ugo Foscilo	Trionzio	B2	Me before you Little Women The notebook	Nicholas Sparks Jane Austen	Ro ma nti	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	5	5

									Emily Bront e												
ATMB15	15	Male	ti	LO	ola	i	T	KE	Il mastin o dei Basker ville, Questa sera è già domani , La roba.	Arthu r Cona n Doyle , Giova nni Verga	Gia llo, Ro ma nzo Re alis ta	5	1	5	4	2	5	4	3	5	4
ASFB22	5	Fema le	alm uto	Fosc olo"					J. K. Rowli ng Rick Harry Potter Fallen Romeo and Juliet	Riord an Willia m Butler Yeats	Cla ssi c Fa nta sy	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	4	5	4

ACFB14	5	1	Femal le	Can tì	Ugo Fosc olo	Tr ois i	La ladra dei libri Questa sera è già domani	E tu splendi	Lia Levi	Co me dy	4	3	3	4	3	3	2	4	4	5
AEFB1	5	1	Femal le	Can tì	Lice o clas sico Ugo Fosc olo	Tr ois i	Emma, Oroglio e prejud izio, ragione e sentime nto	Jane Auste n	Po etr y		4	1	4	4	3	3	3	3	5	5
BRFB27	4	1	Femal le	Can tì	Lice o Clas sico Ugo	Tr ois i	Pride and Prejudi ce Harry Potter	Jane Auste n John Green	Fa nta sy Ro ma nce		5	1	5	4	2	5	2	4	5	5



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EBFB25	1 5	Fema le	Can o Fosc olo"	Lice o Clas sico "Ug o	Tr ois i	M ove r	Oscar Wilde Dr Antoi ne de Saint- Exup éry Aleks andr Serge evič Puški n	co 3	2	4	3	3	3	2	2	4	4	
EMFB4	1 5	Fema le	Can o Clas	Lice o Clas	Tr ois i	M ove r	Shake spear iva	Na rrat 4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	5	4



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GFFB3	5	1 Fema le	icat ti	Lice o clas sico		Tr ois Tri nity	E tu splendi , questa sera è già domani , innamo rarsi in un giorno di pioggia	I don't have	Ro ma nti	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
GLFB26	5	1 Fema le	icat ti	Lice o Clas sico	Aft ern oon cou rse	Tr ois B2	Cime tempest ose Manna e miele,	Giuse ppina Torre gross a	Fa nta sy Gia llo	5	1	5	5	2	5	3	5	5	5

				Fosc olo				ferro e fuoco D'amor e e ombre	Isabel Allen de Andre a Camil leri	Po esi a										
GPFB16	5	1 Fema le	Nar o	Lice o clas sico	Ingl ese	Tr ois	No	Jane Auste Orgogli o e pregiud izio, il barone rampan te, e tu splendi	Jane Auste Orgogli n, Italo Calvi no, Giuse ppe Catoz zella	Ro ma nti co, gia llo, thri	3	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	5	5
IGFB21	4	1 Fema le	catt i	lice o clas sico cano	afte rno ugo	Tr ois	Fly ers	giaco l'arte di trattare le donne, il process o, cavie	giaco mo leopar di, alessa ndro d'ave nia, alexa	ro ma nzo epi stol are	3	4	3	3	2	2	2	3	4	2



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KFFB10	4	1 Fema le	icat ti olo	Lice o clas sico Can Ugo Fosc olo	Tri nity i	ois B1	The vampir e diaries Storia di una ladra di libri Twilig ht	Paulo coelh o J.k rowli ng	Ra cco nto , Ro ma nzo	3	2	4	3	3	3	4	3	5	5
ELFB6	5	1 Fema le	icat ti olo	Lice o clas sico Can ugo fosc olo	Ingl ese i	ois	Il barone rampan te, e tu splendi , questa sera è già domani	Catoz zella r	Ho rro	2	3	3	2	4	2	2	2	4	4
STMB11	5	1 Male	po Ugo	Lice Cas o trof clas sico Ingl ese	Tr ois i	No	Harry potter and the Prisone r of	J. K. Rowli ng	Fa nta sy	3	3	3	2	4	4	3	2	1	3



VPFB20	15	Female	Canicattì	Liceo Classico "Ugo Foscolo"	English	Tricóis	ISE 2	Assassinio sull'orient express, la verità del ghiaccio, le pagine della nostra vita	Nicholas Spark, Ken Follet, Stephen King	Love stories, dramatic, adventures, Nicholas Spark, Ken Follet, Stephen King	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	5	4
VCFB7	15	Female	Canicattì (AG)	Liceo Classico Ugo Foscolo		Tricóis	B1	Me before you Little Women	Nicholas Spark, Jane Austen	Nicholas Spark, Ro ma nti	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	5	5

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VZFB2	5	1 Fema le	Can icat ti	Lice o Clas sico “Ug o Fosc olo”	Aft ern oon cou rse	Ad ele Tr ois	Ket	Il Barone rampan te Cuore d’inchi ostro Five feet apart	Steph ev King Lia Levi Corne lia Funke r	Fa nta sy Gia llo Ho rro	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	4	5	3
ABFEA	8	2 Fema le	Fav ara e	Laur ea mag istra le in tutel a e gesti one del terri torio		An tho ny		Cecità di josè Sarama go Non ti lascero mai solo di Giorgio Panarie llo Identiki t di un	hor ror, trill wilde er		3	4	4	2	3	3	3	3	3	3

				dell' amb ient e natu rale				ribelle di Piero Pelù												
AAFEA	1 2	Fema le	fav ara	scho ol	olin gue	An ny		after, harry potter ,percy jackson	anna tood, j.k. rowli ng	fan tas y ,ho rro r	3	2	4	3	4	4	3	4	5	4
CLFEA	1 7	Fema le	sett a	Rus so	sch ool	An ny	IISS Eur Calt Luig olin anis i gue An	Harry Potter Maze runner J.K fan Hunger Rowling games y	Rowli tas	tas	4	1	4	3	4	4	1	3	5	3
DSFEA	1 3	Fema le	sett a	Ros so Di Eur Calt San olin anis Sec gue An	ond Sch ool	An ny		Twilig ht Midnig ht Sun Yo Five Steph un feet enie g Apart Meye Ad You r ult		Ad	4	1	5	4	4	4	1	5	5	5

FCEA	2	1	Fema le	Del ia	Nin no di Mar i Deli a	Eur An olin tho gue ny		Harry Potter Diverg ent Wonde r	J. K. Rowli ng Veron ica Roth	Fa nta sy	3	2	3	4	4	3	1	3	5	5
GLFECW A	2	1	Fema le	aca y	Bac hille rato Mar en Cien cias	Eur An olin gue Calt anis sett tho ny		Divina Comed ia Romeo and Juliet		Ro ma nti c No vel s Fa nta sy	2	2	2	2	5	2	1	1	5	5
GNFEA	3	1	Fema le	ald o	gios san uè Cat Car ducc i	Eur An olin tho gue ny		Miss Peregr ine, Cose che nessun o sa	Aless andro D'ave nia	thri ller	5	1	4	5	4	3	3	5	5	5



								coccodrilli Game of thrones											
RSMEA	15	Male	Favara	Liceo Matematico Leonardo Agri gento	Eutolin	Anthonny	"Il codice da Vinci" "Cripto" "Harry Potter"	Dan Brown	Giallo	4	4	4	5	5	3	4	4	4	5
SFFEA	4	Female	Caltanissetta	liceo classico Caltanissetta	eroguetto	Anthonny	harry potter	Jk ROWLING	yOUNG ADULT	4	1	3	4	4	1	1	1	2	5



SVMEA	15	Male	a	Rap sard Calt anis sett Vin ci	Da Vin olin gue	Eur An tho ny		Steve Jobs (Bio) - Walter Isaacso Pasoli ni	Bio s, sto ryt elli ng, eco no mi cs	3	3	4	4	4	1	1	1	5	5	
GPMEA	14	Male	ata	Lice o clas Ca mp obe llo Di Lic catti	Ugo Fosc olo Cani catti	Eur An tho ny		Per questo mi chiamo Giovan ni	Luigi Garla fict ion	3	2	4	3	3	3	4	4	5	4	
AMFEF	15	Fema le	nto	Agr ige nto	Eur olin gue	Fe der ica		Il piccolo princip e Una barca	Aless andro D'Av enia	Ro ma nti c	2	3	2	2	5	3	1	4	4	5

							nel bosco per questo mi chiamo Giovan ni												
CGMEF	17	Female	agrigento	euro lingue	Fe derica	la solitudi ne dei numeri primi il giovan e Holden ogni respiro	Nicho las spark s	lov e	3	3	3	2	4	2	3	3	4	5	
CGMEF	12	Male	Eur olin Agr igento	Fe derica	il segno del ciclope , topolin o ,kobe	walt disne y, kobe bryan t, savio	bio gra ph y, mis ter y ,	3	3	4	3	5	4	1	5	5	3		

							bryant biograp hy	ur perrot ta										
EMFEF	20	Female	Porto Emilio pedro	Euro lin gue School		Federica	Aurora nel Buio, Senza nessun segreto , Equazi one di un amore	Ro ma Nicho las Spark s, and Steph Thr en King r	3	3	4	4	5	4	1	5	5	5
STMEI	55	Male	Palermo	Reti red	Bi	Ina	Istorico l novels	Alber to Angel a massi Ist mo ori manfr col s	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	4	4	4
SLMEI	16	Male	Palermo	Liceo scie ntifi	B1	Ina	Harry Potter Ivanho e	J.K. Rowli nta ng sy	4	4	3	3	2	4	1	2	5	5



				“R. Polit i”				giorno della civetta	Giova nni Verga	cie ntif ico										
CLMA19	17	Male	nto	Lice o Scie ntifi Agr co R.P oliti	Eng lish	M odi ca	B1	Harry Potter, 1984, Game of Throne s	Dan Brow n Steph en King	Fa nta sy Thr ille r Sci enc e fict ion Cri me sto ry	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	4
CEFA18	17	Fema le	nto	Lice o scie ntifi co Agr Raff aell o		M odi ca		Il vecchio e il mare Le parole che non ti	Nicho las Spark s Herne st Hemi	Ro ma nti ci Fa nta stic	3	2	4	2	1	3	2	4	3	3



							Il fu Mattia Pascal Il giorno della civetta	Scias cia o	tic										
EBMA5	17	Male	nto	oliti	ese	ca	Il giorno della civetta Uno,ne ssuno,c entomil a Novell e di Verga	Verga , Scias cia	Av ven tur a	3	3	3	2	3	1	2	1	3	2
FRMA1	18	Male	nto	i		ca	The shadow over Innsmo uth A Study	Oscar Wilde Arthu r conan doyle Mauri ce	wh od uni t Tri ller	2	2	2	1	3	3	3	2	4	5





FCFA20	16	Femile	Agri- nto	Lice o scie ntifi co Raff aell	Eur olin gue Eng o lish M	Politi sch ool ca	odi B1	Pride and prejudi ce, Hunger Games, The fault in our stars	Jane Auste n, Nicho las Spark s, Virgi nia Wool f	Thri lle r, ro ma nti c, adv ent ure	3	4	2	2	3	2	3	3	4	4
GSFA14	17	Femile	Agri- nto	Lice o scie ntifi co Raff aell	Eur olin gue M	Politi sch ool ca	odi B1	Fahren heit 451 Follia Le affinità elettive	Georg e Orwel l J. K. Rowli ng Goeth	Thri lle r Ro ma nti co	3	2	4	3	2	3	3	2	4	4
GFFA6	17	Femile	Agri- nto	Lice o Scie ntifi co	Eur olin gue M	Politi sch ool ca	odi B1	Il giorno della civetta	Leona rdo Scias cia, Luigi	Azi one , gia llo,	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	4	4

				Raffaello Politici	of English			Il piano B La scomparsa di Majorana	Pirandello, Anna Todd	romanti co										
LPMA2	17	Male	Agri-nto	Liceo scientifico Agrigenti	Corso avanzato di Matematica Inglese	Modi	No	Harry Potter e il prigioniero	Rowling	Fantasia e magia	4	1	5	3	1	4	4	3	5	3
MAFA10	7	Female	Agri-nto	Liceo Scientifico Agrigenti	Corso di Matematica Inglese	Modi		Le parole che non ti ho detto La risposta è nelle stelle Il ritratto	Nicholas Parks	Romanti ci Fantasia	3	2	4	2	1	3	2	4	3	3

							di Dorian Grey												
MVFA21	16	Femile	Agri- colto	Liceo scie- ntifi- co Polit i		M- odi- ca	1984 La storia infinita Harry Potter	Willia- m Shake- spear e Georg sy Ro- Orwel l J.K. Rowli- ng y	Fa- nta- sy Ro- ma- nce Tra- ged	3	2	4	2	1	3	2	4	3	3
RFCA3	7	Femile	Agri- colto	Liceo scie- ntifi- co Raff- aell Agr o Polit i	Ingl- ese	M- odi- ca	Il cacciat- ore di aquilon i i La solitudi- ne dei numeri primi	Orian- am a Fallac- tic o Oscar Gila- wilde Av- ven- tur- a	Dr am- ma- tic o Gila- llo Av- ven- tur- a	3	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	4	4

								Cime tempest ose											
SRMA16	17	Male	nto	Lice o scie ntifi co Agr ige i"	Eur olin gue	M odi ca	B1	Il barone rampan te, Il cavaliere inesiste nte, Il visconte e dimezz ato.	Dr am ma tic o, fan tas cie ntif ico	4	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
SMMA12	17	Male	nto	Lice o scie ntifi co Agr ige R.P oliti	M odi ca	B1	Percy jackson , 1984, eroi dell'oli mpo	Fa nta stic , sci ent ific	4	3	4	2	3	2	3	3	4	3	3
FMEV	16	Male	o	Pal erm gue	Eur olin Eng lish	Tu tro ne	non e	Fattoria degli animali , Il	Gianr ico Carof iglio, noi	fan tas y, 5	5	3	3	4	5	2	3	4	3

				Pale				sentier	Agath r,											
				rmo				o dei	a yel											
								nidi di	christi lo											
								ragno,	e, w											
								Percy	Luigi											
								Jackso	Piran											
								n	dello											
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								office												
								Uomini												
				Acq	Eur			e topi												
				uav	olin			Il	Charl											
				iva	gue	Tu		vecchio	es ver											
				Plat	Pale	tro		e il	Buko	ism										
GRMEV	3	Male	ani	rmo		ne		mare	wski	o	3	3	4	2	4	3	2	2	4	3
								il giro												
								del												
								mondo												
								in 80	steph											
								giorni,	en											
								gli	king,	fan										
								sporcel	andre	tas										
				high		Tu		li,	a y,											
				pale	scho	eng	tro	harry	camill	hor										
PRMEV	6	Male	rmo	ol	lish	ne	no	potter.	eri	ror	3	2	3	4	4	2	4	1	4	5

## Appendix 4 - Class A and Class B Students' Feedback

### CLASS A Teacher Daniele Modica

*I think it was a good experience. I think I have improved in creating stories and also in using the right minutes. At the end of the course I would like to be much more confident in dealing with various topics in English. ALFA15*

*Great experience / grammar / I would like to improve in writing CPMA11*

*I believe that participation in this course is very useful to enrich my cultural background and to help me improve my English. Since the beginning of this course I have improved a lot in writing and I hope that in the end I will be able to improve even more so that I can face the final exams with more confidence CEFA18*

*It was a good experience. I think that I am improving on writing, thanks the texts that we write during every lesson. At the end of the course I hope to write better. EFFA9*

*This experience was very beautiful and interesting because it helped improve my vocabulary and introduce me to new words that i didn't know before. I think i have improved my understanding of of the text. At the end of the course i would like to achieve this objective: to express myself more fluently. EBMA5*

*I think that this experience is very nice and it has helped us to improve our writing and to know new words and concepts. I think I improved my writing because I have never written something different from what teachers usually say at school before now. I would like to have no problem in writing in English whatever I want without teacher's help. FCFA20*

*The course with Eurolingue done until now is very interesting, it's a different way to learn something new because the lessons stimulate me to do always better and they help me to improve my English. Now I think I have more knowledge of English words. At the end of this course I want to know as many things as possible.*

GFFA6

*I think this experience is very beautiful and it is making me grow in terms of writing. I really enjoyed the lessons, it was pleasant and instructive. I noticed that I had improved writing and description compared to the beginning of the year. I hope that at the end of the course it will be even more prepared.* MAFA10

*So far this new program has made me better and I think it has been very useful even if at the beginning I didn't think so. I think I have improved especially in writing because writing a lot helped me make fewer mistakes and I increased my cultural background. The main goal that I want to achieve at the end of the course is to not make any mistakes and to develop more and more adequately the contents that are proposed.* MPFA7

*Until now it has been an interesting experience that has allowed me to improve my way of writing and developing documents in a short time. And I hope through this work to pass English language exams.* SRMA16

*I think that this experience is very useful because I can improve my English skills and maybe I could go to work outside my country I think I improved my grammar skills in writing and this is the start point to improve my speaking skills, too. My main achievement is to have an English penfriend and to be able to do complex speech.* SMMA12

*I think this project has helped me a lot to improve my speaking and writing skills. It help me a lot to improve my English dictionary and grammar. Yes, I think it has helped me a lot to develop my idea and my thought, and to develop a great self- criticism.* MVFA21 (A)

*It is an excellent experience because it allows us to improve our skills and our vocabulary. I have certainly improved in writing and reading comprehension. By the end of the course, I would like to improve even more in reading comprehension. MVFA21 (B)*

*I think this experience is serious both for my relationship with English. I think I have improved regarding the comprehension of the texts and the writing. The goal I want to achieve is to be more confident in the English dialogues. BAFA13*

*I think that this course is fantastic. During this course I learned a lot of things. For example I improved my writing skills. I don't know what I learn at the end of this course. FAMA7*

*So far this course has improved me, so I think it's a very useful project. I think I have improved especially in the composition of texts that I didn't know at the beginning. The goal that I would like to achieve at the end of the course is to develop the texts without making mistakes and using multiple words. JDFA17*

*This experience was very nice because I am allowed to learn new terms and train with the English language. I improved in conjugation verbs correctly. Do not make mistakes in writing or verbs. RCFA*

### **Class B Teacher Adele Troisi**

*About the work done, I think it's an excellent activity, which is making me learn bits and pieces of authors that I didn't know, for example I was very impressed by the book by George Orwell "1984" really rich in meaning! I still have some difficulty in understanding and not having a polished vocabulary I have difficulty in finding the right words, at the end of the year I hope to be able to improve things where I have difficulties and to enrich my cultural background AMFB5*



*I think that this work is really useful because of the fact that you can learn new words and you can read some of the classics of literature. But I am not happy of the fact that these passages should be modern for the students who have to study them. These lessons should be simple also for the fact that they have to pave the way for studying English. Regardless, I am of the opinion that this project helps me so much because I found out that my vocabulary is so improved. Thank you. ATMB15*

*I think that these lessons based on literary texts have increased my interest and motivation in studying English because literary texts offer a rich source of linguistic input and help me to practise the four skills - speaking, listening, reading and writing. Literary texts help me to develop my understanding of other cultures, awareness of difference and develop tolerance. I think literature can help me develop critical thinking and self-awareness because give me the opportunity to express my own ideas about life, values, beliefs, interests and dislikes. Literature let me practise expressing opinions, explaining cause and effect relationship and comparing facts and ideas. I can develop my thinking skills over time by reading more literary texts because reading stimulates my brain, allowing me to think in new way. GPFB16 (A)*

*Working with literature is one of the most effective ways to learn and improve your English. Even though I have not encountered any difficulty in writing the texts, they have shown me a wider range of vocabulary that can be used to better my speaking and writing abilities. I expect to continue learning more and more words and maybe be more passionate about English literature and its beauty. GLFB26*

*I really liked the work we've done with our teacher. I think it helped me a lot to be more confident in writing. I learned to try harder to understand the meanings and use words that I didn't know before. By the end of the year, I expect I'm going to be more confident in writing and to know many new words and be more adept at using new grammatical structures so that I can write better and better about the things I think and I want to.*

VPFB20

*I think it's a nice initiative that all classes should take! this work helped me to strengthen my grammar and vocabulary, making them better. I hope to gain more confidence in speaking and writing in English by the end of the year and to reach the level I hope to achieve! KFFB10*

*I really Like the job we've done, because I'm learning new words and New ways of writing. And I also found out that I love writing, it makes me relax and think about what I am feeling in that moment, so thank you for everything you are making me discover about myself! Before I had little difficulties in writing, but now everything it's better. And I hope that at the end of the year I'll be able to write better than how I'm doing! ASFB22*

*I believe that all of these assignments have helped to improve my writing skills and especially my vocabulary. It's very useful because we have been working on poems and famous novels, so next year, when we study the English literature, we will be a step ahead. However, I would like to be more creative by the end of the year. BRFB27*

*I think that the work I have done in this months helped me to expand my vocabulary and now I think I can speak and write English better.I have improved my grammar and my writing skills. By the end of the year I aspect to learn new words and improve my texts with a better grammar ACFB12*

*I think the work I did was useless, the area that I have improved is the grammar and I think that by the end of the year I will have nothing, I will not improve FMMB8*

*In my opinion I think that the work we have done was important to improve our skills and I think it was interesting. I have improved many areas like writing skills and reading comprehension. By the end of the year I expect to achieve better writing skills. VCFB7*

*It was a good way to improve my writing skills and to learn about English writers. I improved Grammar. By the end of the year I expect to be more confidence with English and to have more command of the language.*

ACFB14

*I've always wanted to express myself and my interests in English, but before this project I didn't have a clear idea of what to do. Naturally some of the words used in these texts weren't familiar and consequently they were harder to understand, however now I think I have a better perception of the things I should and I should not be doing while writing in English. I really hope that, at the end of this year, I will be able to gain a better grasp on the writing system and improve it by combining the exercises provided by the project and my own studies.* VZFB2

*I think the work I have done has been very useful for me both to broaden my vocabulary and to acquire some competence on how to write an English text and more importantly to find a place where I can express myself. For me the most complicated part was grammar as I have some difficulties. By the end of the year I hope that I will be able to write an English text without any problems.* EFFB1

*For me, this work is very useful and has helped me enrich my English vocabulary and grammar. I hope to improve more and more and know words that I don't know* ELFB6

*I think this work has helped me so much to develop my imagination and above all it has helped me to improve understanding and enrich my vocabulary. By the end of the year I hope to complete this beautiful project and improve myself in every aspect, above all I hope to know as many words as possible.* FCFB13

*I think it's a good job and I would like if we could have the chance to repeat it in the next few years. I have improved my reading and my vocabulary. I hope I can improve and gain more confidence myself.* BBFB17

*I think it was interesting to work on our english with these lessons. I like studing english but over the time it becomes monotonous to always study in the same way,so it was very intereresting to learn in a different way. I evolved my grammar but mostly my vocabulary and this is very important. At the end of the year I expect to become more confident in my speaking abilities. EMFB4*

*I think working on this project has given me a lot, my writing abilities have bettered, my speaking has too. Of course, sometimes the different texts could represent a difficulty, however the prompts and the studying I have done thorough this project have helped me very much. I expect to improve my English much more and maybe gain a better understanding of what studying English is needed for. IGFB21*

*I think that with this writing project we have expanded our knowledge, the terms, but we have had also the opportunity to express ourselves and our thoughts with stories in a wonderful language. I think the only area that I haven't been able to correct completely is speaking, because many times the terms don't come to mind immediately. At the end of this school year I will certainly have perfected my vocabulary, fluency of language and grammatical correctness, all this will serve ma forever because English is an unstoppable language, which allows you to make yourself understood everywhere. FFFB19*

*I think the work done during this year was important because it allowed me to write without any fear of making mistakes and I learned many new words. During the writing of these passages I had same difficulty in choosing the appeopriate words. At the end of this year I would like to improve my English language skills I'll do my best to achieve this target GPFB16 (B)*

*On the work I have done I think I learned many things and gained confidence in speaking. I have improved writing skills and comprehension. I expect to achieve fluency and speed in speaking and new words learned by the end of the year. DTMB18*

*I think that the work we have done during this project has been very helpful in many areas, such as writing and speaking. I believe that not knowing perfectly the English language is completely normal but, thanks to this project, I have improved in many ways my english. I hope that this project continues to inspire and spur me to do better for the rest of the year. STMB11*