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"WORLD IN A TEXT, WORDS IN CONTEXT"
Enhancing the Role of Literature in Language Learning

Piera Carroli

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy of the Australian National University, August 2005

"A word is a microcosm of human consciousness"
(Vygotsky, 1986)

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Piera Carroli

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DEDICATION

To my son, Marco Ciarán:

May you continue to appreciate and take pleasure in reading literature,

— Not just television and video games!

May you transmit this love of printed words, books and stories to the future generation.

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to provide a qualitative analysis of the different ways in which students perceive, approach, and learn from literary texts in a non native language (L2). The thesis situates the research in the context of the debate concerning the possible roles of L2 literature by outlining the main arguments, approaches and descriptions of L1 and L2 literature. Barely touched by this literature, however, are L2 learners' experiences of L2 literature and L2 learning models and methods for analysing students' perceptions and approaches to the study of literature. This forms the focus of the research reported here.

For the research I conducted as both researcher and educator at the Australian National University I adopted a cross-sectional design. This allowed me to undertake the research in stages, with different groups of students of Italian, to investigate: 1) what students are actually thinking about and doing with L2 literary texts; and 2) ways of improving learning for all L2 students studying L2 literature. Following a preliminary investigation into students' perceptions of literature in 1998, I conducted two main studies in 1999 and 2000. In 1998 I had found that many students perceived literature in general as entertainment and, vice versa, L2 literature mainly as difficult language learning. Study 1 (1999) therefore investigated further students' perceptions of L2 literature and also their approaches to the study of literature. The major finding of study 1 was an association between perceptions of literature and approaches to the study of L2 literary texts and learning. Complex perceptions of literature and favourable attitudes towards L2 literature were related to integrated deep study approaches which led to advanced learning achievements. Conversely, more limited learning achievements were linked to less complex perceptions of literature, less favourable views of L2 literature and surface approaches to study.

Study 2 (2000) investigated a novel pedagogic approach based on key principles of phenomenography (awareness; reflective variation; change) and hermeneutics (the class as a learning community), and a repeated reading method designed to elicit complex understandings of L2 literary texts. Findings from study 2 are that students' awareness of their approach to reading literature, introduction of repeated readings of the same literature, and class reflection on variation in students' response to literature are key elements in expanding students' abilities and learning. These findings highlight that students' experiences of subject matter are a crucial factor in literature and language education.

Therefore, the role of L2 literature can be enhanced only if students' learning experiences of L2 literature are enhanced, and this can only happen if we, the educators and researchers, become aware of them and include them in our research and pedagogical practice.

GLOSSARY

Achievement in learning
In phenomenography learning achievement is understood qualitatively and holistically, it is not measured solely in terms of quantifiable items learnt.

Aesthetic reading
This term was coined by Louise Rosenblatt (1995), considered as the forerunner of reader response theories. Rosenblatt herself never fully espoused reader response criticism, considering it too extreme, however, many of her principles such as the centrality of the reader, reading as an organic **transaction**, a live exchange between text and reader for example, are central to reader response theories. Rosenblatt (1995) described reading as a **transaction** between reader and text, along a continuum between **aesthetic** and **efferent (see p. vii)** reading.

Audio-lingual method
A method of language teaching used in the 1960s and 1970s based on listening, repetition and imitation of small units of language recorded on audiotapes.

Awareness in learning
Awareness in phenomenography describes the relation between subject, in this thesis the students of L2 Italian, and object of learning, here, L2 literary texts. My object of research is becoming aware of the internal relation between students and L2 literary texts and making students aware of the internal relation between themselves and the texts as they perceive, approach and conceptualize them and how this affects their learning outcomes.

Bottom-up processing
"A special form of mental processing in which individuals attempt to derive meaning from novel textual information by analysing individual word meaning or grammatical characteristics of the text" (Chamot & O'Malley, 1990, p. 228). These "lower levels of processing are connected to the stimulus (i.e. print or sound) and are concerned mainly with recognizing and decoding it" [...] Bottom-up models [of reading] view comprehension as proceeding linearly from the isolated units in the lower levels (e.g. letters, words) to higher levels of comprehension" (Paran, 2001a).

Communicative language teaching
An approach to teaching languages, very popular from the 1980s to the present (2005), "aimed at promoting the development of functional language ability through learner participation in communicative events" (Savignon, 1991). Central aims of CLT are the development of inter-cultural understanding through the authentic exchange of information.

Conception and Perception are used in this thesis not in a psychological way but within a phenomenographic perspective, understood as a way of experiencing phenomena, in this case literary texts (Marton & Booth, 1997).

Consciousness
In this thesis it refers to L2 consciousness raising principles and is linked to 'noticing' and emphasizes the role awareness of form plays in second language learning (Schmidt, 1993).

Discernment
In phenomenography, discernment is considered a key aspect of learning and a necessary step towards awareness.

Efferent reading
The term was coined by Louise Rosenblatt (1995) who described reading as a transaction between text and reader with two modes of reading: "aesthetic" and "efferent". These two modes are not exclusive of each other but occur along a dialogic continuum with the text. The term "efferent", derived from the Latin "efferre" (to carry away), describes the epistemic aspect of reading: to extract and carry away information from the text. Rosenblatt argues that to enter into a transaction with the literary text it also necessary to read it "aesthetically", to approach it affectively and relate it to one's own background and knowledge of the world. Both modes of reading, "aesthetic" and "efferent" are necessary for an effective transaction between reader and literary text.

ESL
The teaching and learning of English as a second language.

Experience
In phenomenography, when applied to an educational context, the term 'experience' encompasses several aspects involved in the apprehension of subject matter: perception, approach, outcome of the object of learning.

Functional-Notional approach
A type of communicative approach emphasizing the importance of organizing the second language syllabus divided into analytical units which cover various communicative situations (e.g., greetings, making suggestions, discussing a text).

Grammar - Translation method (end 1800-mid 1900 circa)
A method used originally to teach classical languages such as Greek and Latin and subsequently adopted for teaching modern languages such as English, French, German and Italian. Instruction was grammar-based and conducted in the students' native language through the translation of written texts, often literary, with hardly any focus on speaking, pronunciation or cultural content.

Hermeneutic community class
The class as hermeneutic community, suggested by Luperini (1998) as the most appropriate approach for teaching L1 literature in Italy, is based on hermeneutic principles of reading and education (Gadamer, 1975). The main premises of the hermeneutic class are comparison of different perspectives emerging from reading the literary text and negotiation of these various views through discussion in class. This process should help promote not only the ability to respect others' views but also to change one's perspective in an effort to move towards a better collective understanding of the text within the class, and more broadly, to individuals' ability to operate meaningfully and peacefully within communities and societies.

Intercultural language teaching (ILT)
This approach emphasizes the inseparability of language and culture (*linguaculture*) and advocates the teaching of foreign languages as an outward manifestation of culture. Whilst in multicultural education language is often separated from cultural studies, ILT promotes "the learning of how language connect in one's first and target language" and

"understanding how world views come into being" and ultimately, "change in personal 'cultural/linguistic' behaviour" of learners. ILT provides the opportunity for this change to occur by: 1) teaching a "linguaculture" (Attinasi & Friedrich, 1988); 2) comparing learners' L1 and L2 languages and cultures; and 3) "intercultural exploration" (Crozet, Liddicoat & Lo Bianco, 1999, pp. 10-11).

Language arts educator
In this thesis the denomination 'language teacher' is avoided because it portrays a simplified and often downgraded image of what is actually involved in teaching languages. Educator, practitioner or language art educator, are the preferred terms (Kramsch & Thorne, 2001). The last one, especially, conveys a richer meaning of what it means in reality to teach "languages" within cultures and arts (literature, cinema, drama, philosophy, history etc).

Learning approaches
The different ways in which students go about learning, in this thesis, from L2 literary texts. Marton and Säljö (1984) found that there were remarkable differences in the ways students learnt from texts. They distinguished between "deep approaches" (trying to understand what the text was about) and "surface approaches" (focusing on the surface level of the text). They found a strong link between deep approaches and "higher" categories of learning outcome (better understanding of the text). Instead, "the surface approach was associated with "lower" categories of outcome (i.e., more shallow understanding of the text)" (Marton, 1993, pp. 4424-4426).

Learning outcomes
Learning outcomes in qualitative educational research describe the different ways in which students understand the object of learning, for example, in this thesis, the different understandings and interpretations of L2 literary texts provided by students in their responses.

Learner strategies
"Second language learner strategies encompass both second language learning and second language use strategies. Taken together they constitute the steps or actions consciously selected by learners either to improve the learning of a second language, the use of it, or both" (Cohen, 1998, p. 5).

Literature
For the purposes of this thesis the term is used almost exclusively to refer to literary texts. Literature is understood in its rich description, it includes works of fiction from popular culture as well as more traditional texts. In order to avoid confusion, the chapter usually called "Literature review" is entitled "Review of related materials".

L2 literature
Literary texts written in a language other than the native language of the learners. In this thesis this term includes texts written by Italophone writers in Italy and abroad and does not include texts translated into the language studied but originally written in another language.

Literary Studies
The definition is intended to cover a broad spectrum of courses, associated with literature, for example language and culture, cultural history, gender studies.

Object of learning
The phenomenon studied, in this thesis literary texts as defined in phenomenography. The **enacted object of learning** (Ling Lo & Yuk Ko in Marton & Morris, 2002, p. 59) is constituted by the classroom handling of the object of learning by the teacher and the impact it has on the students. The term tries to encapsulate the complexities and dynamics of classroom teaching and learning. The **lived object of learning**, how each individual student experiences the subject matter, is also determined by other factors such as students' background and prior experience outside the classroom.

Outcome space
In phenomenography the outcome space emerges from the logical relations found between the "categories of description" in which the data collected have been organized according to the variation found in the way a certain phenomenon is experienced (e.g., in this thesis, the different ways in which students perceive, approach and understand literary texts). (Marton, 1993, p. 4428).

Perception
See "conception".

Phenomenography
Phenomenography is a qualitative research paradigm. Marton, the "father" of this paradigm describes it as: "The empirical study of the limited number of qualitatively different ways in which we experience, conceptualise, understand, perceive, apprehend etc., various phenomena in and aspects of the world around us" (Marton, 1992).

Practitioner
As educator, used to indicate academics involved in teaching practices.

Pragmatic – functional language teaching method
Within the umbrella of a communicative approach, this method emphasizes the organization of the syllabus into communicative situations and the learning of notions attached to these situations.

Proficiency-based language teaching
A movement which stressed the importance of grammatical accuracy through tasks and illocutionary acts in the development of second languages.

Reading strategy
"The mental operations involved when readers purposefully approach a text to make sense of what they read" (Barnett, 1989, p. 66).

Second language
In this thesis used in alternation with foreign language, i.e. any language learnt after the learner's native language.

Schema (Plural: schemata)
One of the ways in which information is stored in long-term memory. Schemata are large information structures that are organized around a topic or theme. They are considered to be larger in scope than propositional networks. Schemata are typically

organized into hierarchies so that subsets of information are subsumed within larger or more inclusive concepts (Chamot & O'Malley, 1990, p. 232)

Story grammar
"A special schema representing the discourse organization of fables, stories, and narratives" (Chamot & O' Malley, 1990, p. 232)

Structural-narratological method (1960-1980 circa)
Based on structuralist theories, this method focused on the analysis of the internal structure especially of narrative texts.

Top down processing
"A special form of note taking in which individuals attempt to comprehend textual information by making use of schemata based on real-world knowledge or **story grammars**" (Chamot & O'Malley, 1990, p. 233). "Higher levels of processing are involved with comprehending and constructing the meaning of what is being seen, read or heard (e.g. integrating propositions) [...] Top-down models [of reading] stress the influence of the higher levels (e.g. the message which is comprehended) on the processing of words and letters" (Paran, 2001a).

Transaction
Rosenblatt (1995) described the process of reading literature as a transaction between readers and texts. Readers' transactions can be envisaged as moving back and forward along an axis between two types of reading: carrying away information from the text (efferent reading) and relating what is read to personal experience, emotions and background (aesthetic reading).

Variation
According to Marton & Booth (1997) variation and the discernment of variation by students, is a key element of awareness, which in turn, is a critical feature of learning.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

"The teaching of foreign literatures not only intersects with the social and political history of nation-states and their symbolic cultural capital (Anderson, 1983; Bourdieu, 1993), it is also indissociable from other relevant aspects of language study, in particular the teaching of reading and writing, and the teaching of culture (Kramsch, 1998)."

(Kramsch & Kramsch 2000, p. 553).

1. Introduction to Chapter 1

This introductory chapter provides a summary of key issues related to the research undertaken for the thesis. A brief outline of the study of literature in second language (L2) learning sets the stage for the research undertaken. This is followed by a statement highlighting the central question and related issues and an outline of the research undertaken, its purpose and methods. The chapter ends with a description of the structure of the thesis and concluding statement.

1.1 Premises and purpose of the research programme

As a language arts educator, and researcher of language and literature, I believe literature can play a special role in the second language curriculum. Stemming from an individual's imagination yet emerging from the particular cultural world and beliefs that have formed the writer, literary texts thus integrate the salient aspects of language learning: language in its multifaceted variations; and different perspectives on the culture studied. Literary texts therefore have the potential to promote language and culture learning at a deep level. This potential, however, is not always fulfilled and literature can become a frustrating experience especially for young students not versed in literature. The main aim of the present thesis therefore is to investigate how the role of L2 literature in L2 learning, specifically Italian, can be enhanced. The ambition of this thesis is to expand the scope of literature in language education by taking it beyond a perception of literature as a tool for developing linguistic and meta-linguistic skills as well as a perception of literary studies as separate from language studies.

The pedagogical premises for the research programme were that the object of learning, in this case literary texts, is inseparable from the approach taken to teaching and learning; in the same way as language is inseparable from culture, of which literature is a part. The primary aim of the thesis, enhancing the role of L2 literature, is therefore inextricably linked to students' perceptions of literature and approaches to the study of literature, and how these affect their learning. Another major factor involved in learning is the pedagogical process and the choices this entails. The role of literature in general, and more

specifically in second language learning, has changed substantially over the years, and is still in flux, as literature is a part of culture which in turn is never static (Liddicoat, 2001). The way literary texts are selected and especially how the teaching and learning of L2 literature is enacted in class should also be understood as a dynamic process to be handled flexibly in the best interests of the students. The purpose of this research is not to suggest that there is a perfect model for teaching and learning literature since, as highlighted above, the pedagogic process should be dynamic. However, the research aims to clarify whether certain factors, such as students' perceptions and approaches, play a role in their experience of L2 literature and, if so, how to use this to enhance the role of L2 literature in language learning.

The thesis attempts to fulfil this purpose with a preliminary investigation and two subsequent studies. The aims of the preliminary investigation and study 1 were to arrive at a stronger awareness of students' experiences of literature in the L2 context. Then, for study 2, I designed and tested a novel pedagogic approach, with the aim of developing students' awareness of links between language expression, culture and meaning in literature, awareness of their learning approach, and change in their learning, using class comparison, reflection and discussion of variation in their responses to literary texts.

1.2 Central questions and related issues

The thesis addresses a number of issues which have strong implications for L2 literature pedagogy, such as: How do students perceive literature in general and the role of L2 literature in particular? Are students' perceptions similar to those of educators and theorists? If not, what are the pedagogical implications? Do students perceive and approach the study of second language literary texts in different ways? Does this have an impact on their learning? If so, how can educators intervene to enhance the role of L2 literature for all students? What kind of pedagogical approach can enrich the learning of language and literary studies?

These questions can only be answered through research into students' experiences of literature and pedagogical practices. However, building a theoretical framework and a

methodology drawing solely from L2 theory and research is problematic because available investigations into L2 literature do not look at learners' perceptions, the links between learners' perceptions, approaches and change in learning or the impact of pedagogy on learning. The theoretical and methodological approaches of the thesis are therefore eclectic and depend on different but interconnected areas, as will be further explained in this chapter and especially in chapter 2 (Part B). However, the principle method of investigation and analysis is based on principles of phenomenography (see glossary), such as the role of awareness and change in learning.

The thesis attempts to answer the research questions within a qualitative eclectic approach used to design the methodology and to analyse data obtained through two studies and preliminary investigation carried out between 1998 and 2000 at the Australian National University. Study 1 investigates students' perceptions of literature and the role of L2 literature and their approaches to literary texts. Based on the results of study 1, a second study investigates the effectiveness of an eclectic pedagogy that stresses the centrality of students in the learning process and encourages awareness and change. With the research into students' experiences of literature and into enhancing the role of L2 literature, the thesis aspires to underline ultimately the important role literature can play in achieving a global L2 literacy, but first and foremost the centrality of learners in enhancing the role of L2 literature, within a pedagogy aimed at encouraging awareness and change. Study 2 provides the opportunity for exploring student readers' individual and collective interpretations of literary texts – untrodden by reception theory, and only rarely considered also in L2 research (e.g., Kramsch & Nolden, 1994). This is what takes the thesis beyond narrowly defined applied linguistics, literary, or educational investigations.

Section 1.3 below explains the steps taken in the research programme to fulfil the aims of the thesis by outlining the methods used and their aims.

1.3 Methodology

The first step towards achieving the aims of the research was to investigate students' perceptions of and approaches to reading literature. A preliminary investigation in 1998 and a full study conducted in 1999 explored a range of issues related to the central question. It was crucial to investigate firstly what students understood as 'literature', their perceptions of the role of L2 literature, their attitudes to studying literature as part of the Italian language studies curriculum and their language and literary studies background. Secondly, it was necessary to gather data on how students approached the reading of literary texts and whether this had an impact on their learning. I was not interested just in the development of the literary competence of a particular group of students, for which a longitudinal study would have been appropriate, but in students' experiences of literature more broadly, and in developing a pedagogy to improve those experiences. I therefore adopted a staged approach to research and a cross-sectional design. This process allowed me to look at perceptions of and approaches to the study of literature of different groups of students at similar language levels with different treatments. Table 1.1 below summarises the research conducted between 1998 and 2000.

The next step in the research programme was carried out in 2000 and drew from the results of the previous studies to design and implement an alternate approach to teaching L2 literature. The data gathered in 1998 and 1999 were used to inform the design of a second study which had as a primary aim to test an alternate pedagogical approach aimed at enhancing the role of L2 literature in language learning. The study investigated the effects of a modified reading model, the repeated reading approach (Halász, 1983; Marton, Carlsson-Asplund & Halász, 1992; Marton, Carlsson-Asplund & Halász, 1994). This approach aimed to increase students' understanding of literary texts within a pedagogy based on key principles of phenomenography, i.e., student awareness and change in learning, and the idea of the class as a 'hermeneutic community' (Luperini, 1998) in which students, by collaborating with each other and the researcher/language arts educator become an integral driving force behind the learning process. The results of this novel approach to the teaching and learning of L2 literature, focused especially on changes that

occurred in students' learning processes through the different cycles illustrated in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 — Outline of investigations and main methods of data collection

	1998: Preliminary investigation
1.	Survey of Italian students' attitudes towards the study of literature
2.	Pre and post study reading, comprehension and lexical analysis exercises
3.	"What is literature"? - Interactive classroom exercise
4.	Students' Opinion Scales for each of the literary texts read
	1999: Study 1
1.	Survey of Italian students' attitudes towards the study of literature
2.	Interviews
3.	Students' journals
4.	Teacher's notes
	2000: Study 2
1.	Survey of Italian students' attitudes towards the study of literature
2.	Cycles of repeated reading/reflection/writing/comparison/discussion/ re-writing of 3 related literary texts
3.	Final written assignment on 3 literary texts
4.	Evaluations of change (students; marker; educator/researcher)

1.4 Background to the research programme[1]

The need for redefining L2 literacy, understood not only as linguistic abilities but also as cross-cultural understanding of the L2 society and literature, has been relatively recently

[1] Descriptions of "the global landscape" and "the 'local' landscape: Italian in Australia and beyond" are found in appendix A.

highlighted by prominent L2 scholars (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994). From the 1970s onwards the Communicative Language Teaching approach sought to demystify the role of written texts in L2 learning by emphasizing the importance of oral communication. However, with its strong emphasis on functional language levels, the Communicative Approach has been used often to teach languages out of their cultural and historical context. In addition, literary texts were and still are being used to teach grammar and vocabulary, whilst cultural content is trivialised or excluded altogether.

The diminished role of literature arose from the separation of language and literature reinforced by the Communicative Approach. The major issue was therefore the separation of language and literature in the L2 curriculum (Long, 1986) and how to integrate literary texts into the L2 curriculum. As Kramsch and Nolden (1994) pointed out, "the teaching of literary texts in the language classroom tend[ed] to repeat the traditional dichotomy" between language and literary studies. As a consequence, according to the authors, "teaching practice still does not give foreign readers the cognitive and linguistic ability to authenticate the texts they read" (p. 29).

Kramsch & Nolden (1994) propose and illustrate a more learner-centred approach to literature for the twenty-first century, which they call "foreign language literacy as oppositional practice" (p. 29), drawn from social and literary theories (see chapter 2). One major difference between my research programme and Kramsch & Nolden's study, as well as other studies into L2 literature pedagogy, is that the present research explores students' perceptions and approaches to the object of study, in this case literary texts, before attempting an alternate approach to L2 literature pedagogy. Students' perceptions and approaches have only been thoroughly investigated in L1 educational fields. Educational researchers (Marton & Säljö, 1976; Marton & Säljö, 1984; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999) have pointed out the key role that the perception of the object of learning plays in learning outcomes, since it influences how students approach subject matter. Furthermore, researchers in areas such as phenomenography (Marton & Booth 1997), L2 learning (Schmidt, 1990, 1993) and hermeneutics have stressed the role of the learner and the reader, and the first two areas have shown the importance of awareness in learning. In view

of the strong body of educational literature showing the impact of learners' perceptions of subject matter on their approaches to learning and learning outcomes, I decided to carry out a research programme, firstly to investigate aspects of students' learning and secondly, the implications for pedagogical practice. The impetus for the research coincided with my decision to introduce literature into the core language units at the ANU, to emphasize the integration of language and culture. Whilst previously my research had focused on 'content' areas such as contemporary Italian narrative, I decided to research the learning and teaching of L2 literary texts. The following section outlines the research process as reported in the subsequent chapters.

1.5 Thesis structure

Chapter 1 has introduced the thesis by presenting the central research questions, aims and methods. This chapter has also presented the background and context for this thesis. The next chapter, Chapter 2, outlines the evolving role of literature in the L2 curriculum by examining the main arguments in the debate on language and literature in the L2 curriculum and by examining the changes in L2 literature pedagogical practices through a brief historical overview of the main approaches to literature in language teaching. Part A of chapter 2 highlights some of the key issues involved in the debate: descriptions of literature and literariness, the relationship between language, literature and culture and the question of 'authenticity'. This section, focusing on conceptual issues regarding literature, shows a lack of focus on and investigations into how L2 learners perceive and approach literature. Part B of chapter 2 therefore reviews educational research on student-focused pedagogy, from broad studies of the importance of students' perceptions, approaches and outcomes, to key concepts of phenomenography (such as the role of awareness and change in learning), to more specific language learning concepts (such as 'consciousness raising' in applied linguistics). Then it covers more specific issues relating to L2 reading, literature and pedagogy as well as drawing from psychology (reading theories) and philosophy (hermeneutics). From these different but interconnected fields emerges the theoretical framework used in the design of the studies, including the methods of data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3 presents the major theoretical concepts adopted for the research design, and the methodology and instrumentation used in the studies. This provides the background for the three data-analysis chapters to follow. It discusses how and why key aspects of different theories, pertaining to different domains, were selected as methods in the research procedures for the studies undertaken. The chapter explores these theoretical concepts and explains how these concepts have contributed to the design and framework of the studies and the implementation of the pedagogy. The chapter discusses my role as researcher and language arts educator in the project and possible limitations of adopting a qualitative approach for the research design. It highlights the measures taken to minimise those limitations. The methods and instruments adopted for the studies as well as the study samples and data collection procedures are described. Although each study had its own aims and objectives, the two studies and the preliminary investigation were strongly related, with each subsequent study emerging from the results of the previous investigation and feeding into the next one. The chapter concludes by identifying key issues for data analysis in subsequent chapters.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the results of the studies undertaken during the research programme, thereby constituting the core analytical chapters. Chapter 4 presents the results of the investigation conducted in 1999 and 2000 on students' perceptions of literature and compares them with educators' and theorists' views of literature. Whilst literary theorists' views of literature have often informed educators' perceptions of literature, rarely have students' views of literature informed teaching and learning approaches or literary theory or pedagogical practice. This chapter reverses the process by focusing first on students' perceptions, then on educators' views, and finally on literary theorists' and philosophers' views, aiming to establish students' core perceptions of literature and compare them to educators' and theorists' views.

Chapter 5 analyses and discusses the results of the data collected during the teaching semester,[2] (interviews with students, students' journals and teacher's notes) to explore in

[2] In Australia, the second teaching semester usually begins in the middle of July and ends at the end of October or beginning of November. Students enrolled in Italian Studies—Continuing 2 have either done three

particular the nature of the link between perceptions, approaches and students' learning. The results of the investigation into students' perceptions of literature reported in Chapter 4 were influential in determining the choice of literary texts included in the 1999 study reported in chapter 5. The overall purpose is to identify effective L2 learners' strategies and approaches to literature studies.

Chapter 6 presents the results of a further study conducted in 2000, which incorporated the findings of the 1998 preliminary investigation and the 1999 study into students' perceptions and approaches to reading literary texts. The 2000 study explored the hypothesis that optimal use of literary texts in the L2 literature classroom and change in students' learning are linked to two key ingredients. These key elements are: a pedagogy leading to awareness in learning, more specifically, to 'noticing' language form as well as the link between language, culture and rhetoric; and the class as a hermeneutic community where students learn to appreciate difference and negotiate meaning through reading, writing and discussion.

Chapter 7 presents conclusions arising from the research programme as a whole, and states to what extent the aims of the programme have been achieved. It also presents implications for teaching and learning practice emerging from the research and provides suggestions for future research.

1.6 Conclusion

In a world increasingly dominated by visual images, electronic writing and fast food I propose reading literature as slow food for crossing over to new languages and cultures, alongside other texts, audiovisual and oral. As my students said, literature can be both "a world in a text" and "words in context"[3] and, according to Vygotski (1986), "a word is a microcosm of human consciousness" (p. 246). The value of studying literature in L2 lies precisely in the link between language, literature and culture. However, the link is not as obvious to all students as many educators may assume.

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semesters of Italian at university, starting as complete beginners, or have had some previous experience with the language, for example three years of high school, or an intensive course in Italy.

Lo Bianco and Crozet (2003) pointed out that culture within language is often invisible. If students miss this link they will not be able to notice that one word can, in literary texts especially, represent a whole world. They will therefore probably neither learn a new word to add to their L2 vocabulary nor access L2 culture through stylistics and rhetoric. Enhancing the role of L2 literature also entails making these links visible and providing the necessary conditions for students to become critically aware of variation. This thesis will therefore argue that to enhance the role of L2 literature it is necessary (1) to enhance students' experiences of literature, which can only be done if the language arts educator is aware of those experiences, and (2) to include students in a pedagogy based on awareness, change and the class as a learning community.

[3] As reported in chapter 5 of the thesis.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Part A: A review of the role of literature in language learning

Part B: A review of materials related to theoretical principles and educational theory and practice

"We read on, caught up in the discourse, involved in creating a world with language, and learning language at the same time as we use it in the realization of another reality. Far from being diminished, human experience is extended."

(Henry Widdowson, 1981, p. 213).

2 Introduction

Chapter 2 seeks to discuss questions, concepts and factors relevant to L2 literature in order to: 1) consider the different views of researchers and educators that have influenced the teaching and learning of L2 literature; and 2) provide the theoretical background from which the thesis research methods have emerged. The chapter is subdivided into two parts: Part A outlines the philosophical framework of the thesis; and Part B builds an argument for the theoretical framework used to develop the thesis research approach.

Part A contains two major sections: "Why literature in language teaching and learning? — The case for literature" and "What is literature?" From the wider background of the research field and a discussion of the main arguments in the debate on language and literature in the L2 curriculum, the chapter moves to specific areas such as text "authenticity" and pedagogical applications of L2 literature throughout the centuries, to more conceptual descriptions of literature, literariness, literature and culture and the place of literature within culture. A broad range of perspectives of literature from several countries, including Australia, Canada, Germany, India, Italy, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States are selected for discussion to highlight the widespread interest in this topic *vis-à-vis* the paucity of data-based studies focusing on students' experiences of L2 literature. Part A will show that there are good reasons for investigating L2 literature to attempt to provide insight into what is missing in the debate and research.

Part B covers a range of theoretical and pedagogical issues relating to the research aims of the thesis emerging from discussions foregrounded in Part A. A review of learner-focused educational research is followed by an outline of relevant reading and second language learning theories and a discussion of innovative studies of practices in L2 (and L1) literature pedagogy. All materials presented and discussed see the student, as reader and interpreter, as a central player in the learning process. By highlighting the connection among the different areas drawn upon for the theoretical and pedagogical framework, Part B of the chapter explains why it is necessary to combine student-focused educational research, such as phenomenography and L2 language and reading theories, to provide a theoretical framework and methodology for the thesis research, and also an alternate L2

pedagogic approach. Given the complex nature of literature, of teaching and learning *per se* and the even more intricate process of enacting literature in a second language as the object of learning (see Glossary), it is hardly surprising that several research areas were drawn upon for the research design, pedagogy and data gathering and analysis for this thesis.

PART A

A review of the role of literature in language learning

Traditionally the study of the literary 'masterpieces' was the main aim for learning classical languages and, subsequently, modern languages. "The 'masterpiece' theory of literature teaching [...] was part of the elitism of liberal humanism" (Bayley, 1994, p. 41). The supremacy of a historically-based literary canon lasted well into the 20th century. However, unlike the study of classical texts, learnt in their embedded cultural and historical traditions, the study of modern language texts involved the translation of literary texts, rather than the study of literature, and was often focused on grammatical and vocabulary features in accordance with the grammar-translation method in vogue until the beginning of the 20th century (Kramsch & McConnell-Ginet, 1992). The focus, however, started shifting away in the 1940s in the U.S.A., from translations of texts toward the acquisition of oral skills necessary to train military staff during World War II. By the 1960s, the audio-lingual method with its oral laboratory drills had become popular in the USA (Kramsch & McConnell-Ginet, 1992) and also in Europe, where however, at more advanced levels, it coexisted alongside the traditional literature translation method of language learning.[4]

Nevertheless, by the 1960s, under the influence of formalism and structuralism, the emphasis within foreign language curricula had shifted from literature to linguistics and language and, subsequently, in the 1970s the focus moved to learning L2 languages for oral communication. In the mid 1980s, however, under the influence of post structuralist theories and literary theories such as reader response, the emphasis moved from form to content and discourse and from text to reader. Consequently there was also a movement back to literary texts as authentic linguistic and cultural materials for learning foreign languages. Literature, as a result of approaches such as the Communicative Approach was used in second language learning, not primarily for its aesthetic qualities, but as authentic material to advance students' language learning and cultural awareness. From the late 1980s a new paradigm, advocating the integration of language and culture (including

[4] An in-depth historical overview of the role of L2 literature can be found in Kramsch and Kramsch (2000).

literature), emerged and has developed throughout the 1990s into the Intercultural Language Teaching approach (Byram, 1989, 1997; Crozet, Liddicoat & Lo Bianco, 1999). In the 1990s there has also been a return, of sorts, to form which has innovated the practice of grammar teaching and learning as well as producing a shift in focus from language acquisition to language learning.

One principle that affected also the field of L2 reading is "focus on form" (Long, 1991; Dyson, 1996; Doughty & Williams,1998) according to which language learning is related to L2 readers' ability to focus on the form of texts, and not just on their discourse features. Unlike acquisition theories (e.g., Krashen, 1982, 1985) focus on form stresses the role of instruction and learner's awareness in learning language. This perspective is related to second language learning studies focusing on the role of consciousness (Hulstijn & Schmidt, 1994). The point of view of this thesis is that focus both on form and consciousness can be successfully integrated into an intercultural language teaching approach to increase language and cultural learning achievement and make an important contribution to enhancing L2 Italian literature learning (see Part B and chapter 6).

An important development that carries significant implications for literature in the area of L2 (and L1) reading is that reading is no longer considered a passive skill but an active process. This redefinition of reading has given impetus to a body of research on L2 reading such as the relationship between L2 language competence and reading (e.g., Alderson & Urquhart, 1986; Carrell, 1991), schema theory (e.g., Hudson, 1982; Carrell, 1984), reading strategies (e.g., Hosenfeld et al, 1981; Barnett, 1988), the impact of literary competence and language proficiency on L2 reading (Fecteau, 1999) and the relationship between reading and writing (e.g., Salvatori, 1983; Spack, 1985; Kauffman, 1996). More generally, issues of literacy have been investigated by comparing visual and printed texts (e.g., Chune & Plass, 1996) and voluntary versus instructed reading (Krashen, 1993).

In this thesis, however, achievement in reading L2 literature is not just measured summatively on separate components of reading such as text comprehension or vocabulary learning, or separately on language learning or cultural awareness or literary competence.

Rather, it is intended as an ongoing learning process, at the individual and collective level. As such, assessment is largely diagnostic and formative. Within this pedagogical framework, the study of L2 language, culture and literature is understood as an intrinsic part of culture and social discourse, with a stronger emphasis on the learner and the class as a learning community (Carroli, 2001a, 2001b, 2003a, 2003b). Kramsch & Nolden (1994) and other researchers involved in the practice of teaching L2 literature (e.g., Maxim, 1997; Paran, 2001b; Fedorchuck, 2003) have investigated alternate approaches to teaching L2 literature based upon different theoretical areas such as social theory, literary criticism and cultural theories. This body of research, like the research presented in this thesis, was probably spurred by dissatisfaction with a tendency in L2 teaching and research areas to compartmentalize aspects of language, literature, culture, reading, writing, readers, writers, teaching and learning. and separate linguistic and literary research.[5] The point of view of this thesis is that the complexities of language, literature and culture cannot be reduced. Research into human interaction with texts, languages and cultures may be messier than quantitative research into text comprehension or vocabulary learning through literature, but it is also more rewarding, as it tries to look at what learners actually do with texts, their perceptions, approaches and achievements — the three being mutually dependent.

Throughout the centuries, literature has remained a constant feature of foreign language pedagogy, yet, as Shanahan (1997) pointed out, there was a glaring absence of research in this area. From the 1960s onwards, many scholars involved with teaching and researching L2 literature have expressed their favourable opinion of the role of literature in the second language curriculum[6] and many have proposed methods and approaches, frameworks and ideas for the L2 literature classroom[7]. From the 1980s, a number of papers have discussed L2 pedagogical issues from the position of narrowing the "gulf" or "unfortunate split"

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[5] As Mowatt and Dembroski (1965) remarked forty years ago: "Both disciplines [linguistics and literary studies] still behave in practice as if they were studying on behalf of a dualism; the linguists avoid meaning, and the literary critics pretend that their subject is not linguistic, or not entirely so" (p. 45).

[6] For example: Paquette et al, 1967; Lohnes, 1968; Widdowson, 1983; Kramsch, 1987; Hirvela 1989; Barrett, 1988; McCrory 1989; Aitken, 1990; MacLean, 1990; Tarvin & Al-Arishi, 1990; Parry, 1995)

[7] For example: Bradford, 1968; Birkbichler & Muyskens, 1980; Brumfit, 1983, 1995; Brumfit & Carter, 1986; Bretz & Persin, 1987; Bretz, 1990; Adolphs, Boschetto & Shoos, 1991; Bowler & Parminter, 1992; 1993; Carter & McRae, 1996)

between language and literature[8] in favour of an integrated approach to teaching language, culture and literature[9].

Some papers have examined the teaching of literature at the lower and upper language levels with learner-centred approaches[10] and other publications have strongly advocated a content focused curriculum which includes literature (Kramsch, 1993; Johnson & Swain, 1994; Liddicoat et al, 1997; Liddicoat, Lo Bianco & Crozet, 1999) or a cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary and cross-genre curriculum (Carroli, Hillman & Maurer 1999; Maurer, Carroli & Hillman, 2000). Kramsch (1993) summarizes the major arguments put forward by educators in favour of literature as follows:

> Many arguments have been made in recent years for including literary texts in the readings taught in language classes. More than any other texts, it is said, the piece of literary prose or poetry appeals to the students' emotions, grabs their interest, remains in their memory and makes them partake in the memory of another speech community (p. 130).

In Kramsch's (1993) own view, the main argument for teaching literature is "literature's ability to represent the particular voice of a writer among the many voices of his or her community and thus to appeal to the particular in the reader" (pp. 130–131). The selection of texts in which the author gives voice to local yet universal concerns in his particular style (e.g., Benni, 1994, chapter 6) may appeal even to the least experienced literature students within an intercultural hermeneutic approach highlighting the specificity of words *vis-à-vis* the universality and transculturality of certain themes.

Although publications from the 1960s to the 1990s and beyond have generally favoured the inclusion of literature in the L2 curriculum, a few scholars have questioned the special status that literature often has in L2 learning (Kinder, 1994; Edmondson, 1995). Both critics of L2 literature (Edmondson, 1997) and educators who favour literature (Shanahan,

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[8] For example: Schofer, 1984; Long, 1986; Barnett, 1991.
[9] For example: Schulz, 1981; Widdowson, 1985; Spack, 1985; Hoffman & James, 1986; Ryder, 1986; Hegman Shier, 1990; Shofer 1990; Barnett, 1991; Haggstrom, 1992; Debevec Henning, 1993; Lazar, 1993; Bowler & Parminter, 1993; Stephens, 1995.
[10] For example: Swaffar, 1988; Bernhardt, 1994; Bretz, 1990; Kramsch, 1985.

1997; Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000) have called for more systematic studies investigating L2 literature teaching and learning. As Bredella and Delanoy (1996) observe "for years, theories of foreign language teaching ignored literary texts" (p. vii). Despite the renewed interest in the interaction between language and literature and the new focus on the interaction of literature and cross-cultural awareness, investigations in this area, especially into learners' perspectives of the role of literary texts in second language learning at the tertiary level, and more specifically in Italian are even more limited.[11] In Australia there is hardly any research at all in the field. It is quite significant that what is probably the largest association of researchers and educational practitioners in Europe,[12] the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (EARLI), has no sub-group specifically on L2 literature learning and teaching. Yet, L2 literature is studied at all levels in Europe, primary, secondary and tertiary.[13]

In the United States, as Kramsch and Kramsch (2000) point out in their survey article, "The avatars of literature in language study", the study and teaching of literature at the beginning of 2000 seems to be absent from *The Modern Language Journal*. Kramsch and Kramsch (2000) analyse articles published in the *Modern Language Journal* from 1916 to 1999 to document the changing role of literature that occurred in foreign language teaching, from essentially on aesthetic experience (1910s), focused on translating the major literary works of a country, to "an 'authentic' experience of the target culture (1980s–1990s)" (p. 553). In the United Kingdom, Gilroy and Parkinson (1996) surveyed publications and approaches to L2 literature and Paran (2000, pp. 75–88)[14] reviewed the latest publications on the teaching of literature in the *ELT Journal*, including Parkinson and Reid-Thomas' volume *Teaching Literature in a Second Language* (2000). Parkinson and Reid-Thomas consider the continuum between literature both as an object of study and as a resource previously addressed by Duff and Maley (1990) and Carter and McRae (1996), and include insightful discussions on the role of literature in language learning and vice versa, language in literature.

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[11] There are, however, several studies conducted into L1 literature, including students' perceptions of L1 literature (e.g., Miall & Kuiken, 1995; Miall, Kuiken & Gifford, 2003).
[12] EARLI has more than 1200 members from Europe and other parts of the world, including Australia.
[13] There is, however, an EARLI L1 Special Interest Group, "Research on Literature Education.

Although there are several publications on how to teach L2 literature, there needs to be more research linked to literature. Especially, further classroom-based research is needed to clarify the potential roles of literature in the L2 curriculum. The rationale for conducting research in this area is best summed up by Kramsch (1987):

> The growing field of second and foreign language acquisition can give foreign language teachers an intellectual and academic home. It is in dire need of data-based research, both theoretical and empirical. [...] This research can help integrate language, literature, and culture in foreign language departments. (p. 34)

The plethora of theoretical or educational papers discussing the role of L2 literature and proposing ideas and activities for the L2 literature classroom published over the last forty years shows the significance of literature in the pedagogy of second languages and cultures[15] but also the need for more data-based research into classroom practice, putting theory into practice and practice into theory. As Fecteau (1999) remarks:

> Although most articles, written by FL specialists and experienced instructors, offer valuable pedagogical advice and suggest alternative approaches, they remain largely anecdotal and rarely refer to empirical findings from L1 or L2 reading studies. In fact, an extensive search of the L2 reading research data-base revealed that no studies have been conducted with advanced FL learners in the U.S., and the majority or L1 literary comprehension or reader response studies have been conducted mainly with secondary school students (pp. 475–476).

2.1 Why literature in language teaching and learning? — The case for literature

> Solo il testo letterario offre l'esperienza dello spessore e della pluralità dei significati, e insegna così che la verità è relativa, storica, processuale: un

[14] See also Appel (1990) and Stephens & Brumfit (1991).

[15] These are some of the papers that discuss or survey the role of L2 literature or propose applications for the classroom: Lohnes 1968; Santoni, 1972; Benaiteau 1975; Hester 1976; Moran 1981; Muyskens, 1983; Kramsch 1987, Tonkin 1985; Hoffman & James 1986; Long, 1986; Reeves, 1986; Ryder, 1986; Yorke, 1986; Kaufman, 1987; Selig, 1987a, 1987b; Adelson, 1988; Diadori, 1988; Gajdusek, 1988; Trahan, 1988; Hirvela, 1989; Montfort 1989; Lazar 1990; Barnett, 1991; Ross 1991; Ambroso 1993; Bartley 1993; Sharma 1993; Bell 1994; Valz-Spuret 1994.

> percorso interdialogico che avviene attraverso il contributo di tutti (Luperini 1998, p. 15).
>
> [Only the literary text offers the experience of the depth and plurality of meanings thus teaching that truth is relative, historical, and processual: an interdialogic journey that happens with the contribution of all][16]

The above quotation by Luperini, a well known Italian professor and researcher, refers to native language literature but is even more relevant in a second language context. The plurality of meanings even a single word can assume, especially in literary texts, in an L2 setting with students and educators from different cultural backgrounds, is magnified. As Vygotsky (1986) wrote, "a word is a microcosm of human consciousness" (p. 256) but the link between words, languages and culture is often invisible (Lo Bianco, 2003). In my view, the literary text can become a collective journey of discovery and discernment of language-literature-culture intersections through negotiation of meaning leading to learning achievement and change.

Yet, the value and use of literature is continuously questioned or defended. Parry (1995) entitled her chapter, "Is literature a dead cause?", and Cook (1996) refers to the "undercurrent of disagreement about the teaching of literature, which surfaces from time to time in bitter and strongly-worded debate" (p. 151) in Britain. In Italy there has been an ongoing debate on the web from the mid 1990s on "La crisi dell'italianistica" [The Italian Studies crises],[17] mainly in reference to the teaching of Italian literature and which literature should be included or excluded in Italy and abroad.

The ongoing debate surrounding literature has certainly not been resolved; indeed it is becoming an important topic of second language pedagogy research. The discussion probably came to its peak in the 1980s, especially in the field of English as a Second

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[16] My translation.

[17] *Bollettino '900* - Electronic Newsletter of '900 Italian Literature - © 1995-2002). Bollettino 900 is the email bulletin of the Department of Italian Studies (Dipartimento di Italianistica) at the University of Bologna, Italy. On the same topic, see also "Il dibattito" (Armellini, 1992c, pp. 22-45).

Language, although it involved the teaching of all foreign languages. In ESL, as underlined by Sage (1987, p. 1)[18] much of the debate was centred on "how, when, where and why" literature should be included in the L2 curriculum. At that time, the teaching of foreign languages in many universities was to a great extent twofold: language "as communication",[19] with lessons usually conducted in the target language, and lectures on literature and civilization, quite often taught in students' first language as still was the case in some departments in 2000.

Towards the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, there were two main trends in the area of literature in foreign language teaching in the USA and in Britain. On one hand the gulf separating language and literature was criticised by several educators who advocated the integration of literature in the language curriculum as previously highlighted.[20] On the other hand, some scholars working in foreign language departments in the USA argued that literature study was still considered more prestigious than language study. The debate extended to the organization of staff within foreign language departments. In the USA, the dichotomy between language and literature at the curriculum level extended also to the hierarchical structure of language departments (Kramsch, 1987). Usually language was taught by contract instructors while literature was taught by tenured professors. As a response to the proficiency movement and also to avoid being accused of elitism, many institutions in the States reacted by asking their staff to teach both language and literature or other cultural content (Kramsch, 1987). Other universities, such as Harvard, and also some Australian universities, continued to keep the two areas separate.

This situation persists because language teaching and learning continues to be perceived by some university administrators, academics and politicians as a non-intellectual, skill-based

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[18] Quoted in Talif (1991, p. 22).

[19] In *Teaching Language as Communication*, Widdowson (1978) explained the implications of adopting a "communicative approach" to language teaching, especially *ESL*. He focuses on the complexities of discourse and communication and on learners and criticizes the interpretation and application of the communicative approach as a series of notions and functions in vogue at the time.

[20] A survey carried out in 1987 in the USA found that more than 59% of foreign language supervisors had completed their doctorate in the area of literature (Teschner, 1987), German had the highest percentage, with 74% of program supervisors (conveners) having specialized in literature. I am not aware of any similar survey

activity. Perhaps this differentiation has endured because language teaching in the 21st century is still perceived, as it was towards the end of the 1980s, as "teaching received knowledge" and "teaching a preliterate skill", whilst "teaching literature, civilization, or film studies is teaching knowledge that does not exist between the covers of a textbook but reflects different interpretation and original inquiry" (Kramsch, 1987, p. 31).

There was a period in which literature was excluded from the ESL/EFL curriculum and also some foreign language curricula as a result of the notional-functional approach to language teaching. Brumfit pointed out in 1981 that: "recent approaches to language teaching [...] have ignored literature teaching" (p. 248) and Brumfit and Carter (1986) stated that the role of literature in second language learning had often been questioned. As will be discussed in the next section, many educators have stressed the importance of using literary texts because they constitute what is regarded as "authentic" material in L2 learning. For example, for Kraschen (1985), "the literary text is considered as an efficient vehicle for foreign language acquisition" (p. 15). For Gajdusek (1988), literature is considered as "an organic whole for cultural analysis, and as a non-banal context for composition writing". Two quite different standpoints are illustrated by the language used in the definitions. Kraschen (1985), in the typical language of language-based approaches reflects the communicative view of literature as a "vehicle" or tool useful in language learning. Gajdusek (1988) takes cultural and rhetorical perspectives and views the text in its integrity and context as a means to teach culture and writing. Literature, according to Mitchell (1989), is a way of "extending the second language classroom beyond its four walls and into the community of the target language and culture" (p. 74). In her paper, she highlights the literature-literacy connection as an environment for successful language acquisition. Finally, in Kramsch's view, "The literary text is the epitome of the double-voiced discourse Bakhtin attributes to the writer: 'The writer is a person who is able to work in a language while standing outside language, who has the gift of indirect speaking' (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 110)" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 131).

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conducted in Australia, but from my experience as a student of foreign languages and then an educator in Australian universities the situation is not dissimilar.

The main arguments in favour of literature (summarized above) have been disputed by Edmondson (1997)[21] since they have no empirical grounding. That may be true, however, to my knowledge, there is no evidence proving that literature is detrimental either. Educators, as noted by Edmondson (1997), build their arguments for the inclusion or exclusion of literature mainly on assumptions. According to Edmondson, they advocate the inclusion of literature in the L2 curriculum without providing any empirical evidence that literary texts develop students' language competence. He questions whether literature should have a special place (or any place at all), in courses aimed at teaching second language skills and proficiency by analysing and criticising each major argument that favours literature in the L2 curriculum. Although I agree that the inclusion of literary texts should not exclude the use of other texts, Edmondson's own position is also based mainly on opinion, and not on empirical research. As he points out, the debate about L2 literature was certainly not settled thirty years ago. It is indeed still intense and therefore worth exploring more systematically.

Some of the arguments and concerns raised against using literature, especially in the 1970s, were that literary texts were too difficult for L2 learners or were not examples of everyday language. Duff & Maley (1990, pp. 7–8) address these issues[22] by indicating and explaining the different aspects of literary texts which could be difficult. These aspects are reported below with my comments and appropriate observations by other researchers: 1) linguistic (syntax, lexical density, the discourse organization); 2) text length (sometimes longer texts

[21] For an in-depth overview and discussion of "The times and places for literature" in the U.S.A. curriculum in the 1950's and 1960's, see Paquette et al (1967).
[22] On this issue, see also Stephens (1995), specifically in relation to the teaching of ELT.

may be less difficult because they offer an "extended contextual support" and also repetition); 3) cultural difficulty (not a valid reason for not "undertaking the journey" since cultural factors can be difficult also for insiders not just for outsiders). On this point, Hasan (1996) observes that cultural difference is not just spatial but also temporal; therefore L1 literature students may be as culturally removed for example from Shakespeare as are L2 students. 4) "Difficulties of range of reference", or intertextuality (as with cultural issues, references to other works or "things outside themselves" is, as the authors underline, one of the most interesting elements of literary works (Duff & Maley, 1990). I would add that it also offers a great opportunity for inter- and cross-cultural explorations; 5) conceptual difficulty (poetry can look simple to students because it is sometimes expressed in simple and brief language; however, this can be deceptive).[23] 6) "acceptance difficulties" (whether students will accept, be motivated and enjoy reading a literary text depends on the selection of the appropriate text for each language level and should not be one-dimensional). Text selection can take into account students' perceptions of literature, as will be reported in the next chapters.

Related to the issue of students' acceptance of the L2 syllabus is Edmondson's (1997) main objection to including L2 literature, which is that in surveys conducted in Germany young students rarely mention literature as a positive factor in their learning of EFL whilst they often refer positively to pop and rock music.[24] Should educators only include pop music and exclude literature and other visual and written material because students more readily accept it? Or is it perhaps a matter of adopting different criteria for the selection of literary texts?[25] Sometimes traditional literary texts do have a place in the L2 curriculum, for

[23] For example, this two-line hermetic poem by Salvatore Quasimodo (1942): "Ognuno sta solo sul cuor della terra // trafitto da un raggio di sole // ed è subito sera" [Each one (of us) stands alone on the heart of the earth // pierced by a ray of sun // and it is at one night.] expresses in a few simple words the universal theme of the lonely, violent and ephemeral nature of life with the oxymoron sun/night and heart/night and by semantical emphasis: each one; alone also in opposition with heart and earth. [*My translation*].

[24] It could perhaps be hypothesised that, unlike in university settings, especially in Australia, where the student population is extremely varied, and therefore the interests and attitudes to learning and subject matter is also far from homogenous, in Edmondson's survey it was composed exclusively of high school students who generally would prefer music to reading literature.

[25] "In brief, we feel that the issue of 'difficulty' in regard to literary texts can be exaggerated. It is likely that those who raise it as a warning spectre have in mind their own earlier struggles with literary texts in a foreign language (or even in the mother tongue). But such texts were (and still are) chosen by virtue of their respectability as part of a literary canon in the context of the 'Study of Literature', not for language teaching

example Dante's *Divine Comedy,* not just for their philological role (in this example, the evolution of the Italian language and concept of nation), but for their intrinsic aesthetic, philosophic, political and linguistic values. However, the historically driven literature syllabus is one of the reasons that have led to a view of literature as elitist and even anachronistic. In the 1990s, as noted by Kolski (1994), literary texts in Australia were considered old fashioned and elitist by what he calls "the anti-literature movement" (p. 255).

The view that literature had little role as comprehensible input was also widespread in communicative language teaching, especially given the strong push for practical language learning. As Kolski (1994) underlines, Australian university administrators, in view of the usefulness and accountability imperatives, wanted to see languages "solely as practical economic tools" (p. 254). The controversy persists in the 21st century, as does the separation between language teachers and lecturers in "content" areas, such as film, history, art and literary studies — evident also at conferences organized by international language and literature organizations[26], where sessions on language teaching are rarely attended by literature staff and few language teachers and researchers participate in cultural area sessions.[27] Indeed, at the end of the 1990s, the American Modern Language Association called for papers to be included in a special symposium entitled, "Should literature be included in language programs?" Perhaps Widdowson's (1983) remark when interviewed in the early 1980s is still relevant. He stressed that there were no solid arguments for the removal of literature from Cambridge exams in English, implying that linguists excluded literature because they lacked literary knowledge.[28]

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purposes. This is precisely *not* what we are advocating. In our approach you, the teacher, are free to choose the texts" (Duff and Maley (1990, pp. 8–9).

[26] For example, applied linguistics conferences (Applied Linguistics Association of Australia, American Association of Applied Linguistics) rarely include papers on the teaching of literature, and conferences organized by more literary-oriented associations such as AULLA (Australasian language and literature association), FILLM (International Federation for Modern Languages and Literatures) have fewer sessions on language research, rarely attended by literary and cultural studies researchers and educators.

[27] This was particularly evident at the 2003 conference, "Italians and their Others", in Perth, Australia, organized by the Australasian Centre for Italian Studies (ACIS) and sponsored by Fondazione Cassamarca, whose principle aim is to spread Italian culture in the world. The conference was conducted almost exclusively in English.

[28] "Yes. I regret even more that there was no reasoned argument for its removal [...]. Literature was dismissed as irrelevant because it seemed not to be practical [...] I think literature was got rid off on very facile grounds,

Widdowson's important point[29] is still pertinent in the 21st century in Australia: there are still linguists and language teachers who feel insecure teaching literature, and literary trained academics who feel inadequate teaching language.

The divide between linguists and literary academics is exacerbated by administrative factors, as became clear at the conference, "Italian Towards 2000", held in Australia in 1994, where a well known lecturer of Italian Linguistics strongly advocated the usefulness of studying applied linguistics, since "students enrol to study Italian in order to 'speak the language'" and also because the discipline provides an historical dimension to language studies as well as metalinguistic awareness (Kinder 1994, p. 249). Conversely, at the same conference, Kolski (1994), a medieval literature expert, defended the teaching of Italian literature because of its cultural dimension and the high profile it holds in Italian society and culture. Kolski's viewpoint is associated with what is perceived as the decline of classical literature and the Humanities in general and the commercialization of universities and teaching and learning in Australia (see also Mehigan, 1989). Kinder and Kolski's viewpoints are both valid and ideally students should be able to avail themselves of a mixed curriculum that includes linguistic and literary studies. However, as also noted by Kinder (1994), it is not easy to "juggle the various disciplinary strands included under the heading of "Italian" or "Italian Studies", within the confines of the three-year Australian undergraduate degree" (p. 249).

In Australia, the anti-literature and also the anti-languages debates were mainly led by economic factors (Mehigan, 1989; Kolski, 1994) and, in the United States, the subsiding of humanistic subjects was caused by a shift from reading to visual activities and by an

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ill-considered grounds; and there's also the rather disturbing fact that, as language teaching increasingly chose linguistics as its point of reference, literature was ruled out of court very largely because linguists, generally speaking, are not literary scholars. It's amazing how much philistinism there is among linguists and applied linguists [...]. *ELT Journal, 37*, No. 1, p. 34. Seven years later, Mary Lee Bretz, in her 1990 article calls for a retraining of literature instructors (1990, p. 338).

[29] Kramsch (1993, p. 8) uses Widdowson's stand on the issue as a springboard for her statement: "Given that the dichotomy between language and literature has no intellectual justification, we have to reformulate their relation with the language teaching enterprise. Texts can be read on different levels of meaning. Whether they are texts of information or works of literature, language is the stuff they are made of. The pedagogical question may not be whether language teachers should teach literature or not, but, rather: how can language teachers help learners read texts at a variety of levels of meaning?"

emphasis on vocational studies and xenophobia (Debevec Henning, 1993).[30] In Italy, in contrast, there was a far reaching debate regarding the "modernization" of the literature curriculum towards the inclusion of different types of contemporary texts: literary, non-literary and visual.

The arguments for and against literature, and the views of literary texts considered in this section are valid in themselves and certainly worthy of discussion in a thesis which has as its primary aim the enhancement of L2 literature within the L2 Italian curriculum. However, if debates are healthy processes which can bring about needed changes, divisive and competitive attitudes amongst academics seem harmful to the overall question of language teaching and learning in academic settings. Competition and debates alone do not advance scholarship or knowledge of the processes involved in teaching and learning literature. Results from data-based investigations prove much stronger in arguing that literature has a place in academia.

Furthermore, such investigations need to open up the debate to include learners. It is striking that in over thirty years of discussion the voice of students has hardly ever been heard and that students' perspectives on learning L2 literature have rarely been researched, with the exception of a few studies (e.g., Ludwig 1983; Hirvela & Boyle, 1988; Davis et al, 1992).[31] To fill this gap, this thesis will include students' views of literature in general and their perceptions of the role of L2 literary texts in language and culture learning.

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[30] Nearly ten years ago we adopted a proficiency-based methodology. [...] Traditional literature courses have been eliminated in favour of broad surveys, topic seminars, and civilization courses. [...] Foreign language and literature programs are attacked because Americans generally lack foreign language skills and a developed understanding of cultural complexities. The gap in their education is often attributed to an instructional emphasis on literature, which is regarded as more or less irrelevant to language skills and cultural awareness. [...] the clientele of foreign language and literature programs has changed. More and more students are choosing to combine a major in, for example, French or Spanish and a preprofessional specialization, such as international business, education, international studies, criminal justice. [...] It is important to understand the reasons underlying the growing hostility toward literature, particularly foreign literature, in the United States. After a year of struggle, however, I believe that overcoming that hostility is impossible; expecting opponents of literature to acknowledge the roots of their antagonism in native anti-intellectualism and xenophobia is psychologically naïve" (Debevec Henning,1993, p. 51).

[31] There are several studies on response to L1 English literature (e.g., Bleich, 1980; Hynds, 1985; Cooper, 1985; Beach & Wendler 1987).

2.1.1 Authenticity

A fundamental issue in enhancing the role of literature is the selection of literary texts and a central issue surrounding the integration of texts within the language syllabus is the question of "authenticity" and whether literature is made up of "authentic" language. With the title of his article, "Simple, simplified and simplification: What is authentic?" Davies (1986) underlined that "authenticity" is not, as it may appear, a straightforward or a shared concept for L2 educators and researchers. Researchers and educators in Europe started discussing the concept of authenticity in the 1970s. Widdowson (1979) based his description of authenticity on the interaction between text and learner: "it is probably better to consider authenticity not as a quality residing in instances of language but as a quality bestowed upon them, created by the response of the receiver" (p. 165). Little and Singleton (1988, p. 21) defined authenticity as follows: "an authentic text is a text that was created to fulfil some social purpose in the language community in which it was produced."

In simplified versions of texts, the language code has been simplified but the discursive purpose should have remained the same and, in simple accounts, the textual discourse has been purposefully written to suit the L2 reader (Widdowson, 1978). Simple accounts are preferable to simplified versions since they are "genuine instance[s] of discourse, designed to meet a communicative purpose" whilst "a simplified version [...] is not a genuine discourse, it is a contrivance for teaching language" (Widdowson, 1978, pp. 88–89). Davies (1986) refutes a polar interpretation of simple-difficult language (p. 181) and simplified-authentic texts, and perceives simplification as a pedagogic device to improve text comprehension. The view put forward in this thesis, however, as will be discussed further on, is that code comprehension is only one aspect of the complex process of reading L2 literary texts.

The discussion of the authenticity of texts extended to the authenticity of contexts and tasks (Nostrand, 1989; Long, 1997) and is still ongoing, since simplified versions of literature are still in use, at least in the L2 Italian pedagogy, as the following examples show. Two requests for information regarding simplified literary texts by a teacher of L2 Italian in the

United Kingdom and Italy sent in January 2004 to the international email bulletin "ITALIANO_L2",[32] were quickly answered by teachers of Italian in Belgium, Italy and Malta, providing lists of titles of Italian "Easy Readers" and similar publications of literary texts adapted for students of Italian.[33] Furthermore, a 2000 issue of *In.IT* published an interview with an author of literary texts written specifically for students of L2 Italian, which indicates that these texts are still widely published and used in L2 Italian instruction.[34] Such texts presumably should be defined, in Widdowson's terminology, as simple accounts because they have been specifically written for an L2 audience and neither original code nor purpose has been modified. They are nevertheless texts that the target language cultural community would normally not read or write and, as such, it is doubtful that they would contribute to enhancing intercultural language competence or cross-cultural awareness of the L2 language and culture.

Having used two simplified versions of literary texts, at the beginning of my career, when I had little choice about syllabus and curriculum matters, I developed an aversion to them because, although they were accessible linguistically to beginner students, the texts were denuded of depth since the cultural content was trivialized. Simplified texts or passages from texts may mean better comprehension, as Davies' (1986, pp. 191–192) quantitative experiment showed, but how useful is comprehension of a code that contrives the L2? I argue that using simplified literary texts, even at the early stages of language learning is damaging since they devalue the literary nature of the text and position it only as a vehicle for language acquisition, thus providing students with a culturally meaningless 'musak'

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[32] ITALIANO_L2: la mailing list per insegnanti di italiano L2. Università per Stranieri, Perugia, Italia (http://www.unistrapg.it/lista/lista.htm. [The mailing list for teachers of L2 Italian. University for Foreigners, Perugia, Italy].

[33] "Easy Readers" are literary texts in various languages, specifically shortened and simplified for L2 learners. They were used at beginner level especially in the 1980s and included glossaries, comprehension questions and very brief cultural notes about the author and the "authentic" text. For example, in Italian there is the series "Easy Readers" (Edizioni scolastiche Mondadori, Milano; "I libri verdi junior" (Archimede edizioni); a series of novels and short stories modified for beginners (Mireva Publishers, Malta). There are also simple detective short stories written specifically for L2 learners.

[34] *In.IT* (no. 12, 2004), the quadrimestral review for teachers of Italian as a foreign language, published by Guerra in Perugia, where the biggest University for foreigners is. The article was written by a writer of "facilitated literature", Renata Carloni, who begins the article by saying: "Di mestiere non faccio la scrittrice tuttavia negli ultimi anni mi sono trovata a scrivere dei racconti per studenti di italiano". [Writing is not my profession. However, in the last few years I have been writing short stories for students of Italian] (p. 8). [My translation].

version of the text. Instead, shorter texts can be introduced, whilst the same texts (eg., Maraini's "L'altra famiglia") in their unadulterated form can elicit, with pedagogical mediation, complex interpretations of literary texts (see chapter 5). This is the role of the language arts educator proposed in this thesis, unlike that of simplifying texts for students as put forward by Davies (1986). Davies rejects "the teacher as authenticator of texts" (1986, p. 192) and authenticity solely in terms of audience and in terms of what is understood. But what is understood depends on the interaction between audiences, readers and texts. Widdowson (1978) defines simplified versions as "contrived" and that's how native audiences would also see them. It is not the L2 teacher who authenticates literary texts; it is the cultural community from which they spring.

Given my standpoint on the issue of using simplified versions of literary texts, I decided to spur an electronic debate on this issue by sending an email to "ITALIANO_L2", questioning the use of simplified texts and suggesting instead using brief and less complex literature. Shortly afterwards, a much longer and adamant email against simplified texts was sent to the bulletin highlighting two valid arguments for excluding such materials. The first objection concerns the reduction of the literary text to its storyline, a simplification that effaces the author's unique language expression: "sono nettamente contrario a questo tipo di materiale, che riduce la letteratura a storiella da raccontare, quando invece lo specifico del testo letterario è proprio nei mezzi espressivi, unici e irripetibili dell'autore."[35] This important point, that simplified texts are devoid of the author's unique and unrepeatable means of expression, which is the specific function that Jakobson (1987) assigned to poetic language, will be discussed in this chapter and subsequent chapters in relation to L2 reading approaches. The specificity of the author's language expressed in her/his individual voice in the text is what makes each literary work unique. Therefore, if the formal features of the text are modified or simplified, its meaning is also reduced, focusing too heavily on plot and storyline and not on language and style. As argued in the second point addressed by the Italian educator's email, it is the responsibility of L2 teachers not to feed students pre-

[35] "I am totally against this type of material that reduces literature to 'its story line', when instead the specificity of the literary text is indeed in the author's unique and unrepeatable means of expression." [My translation].

digested literature,[36] but rather to choose (Duff and Maley, 1991), authentic texts appropriate for each language level:

> [...] ritengo inopportuno e ingiusto trattare delle persone che apprendono una lingua straniera o seconda come dei pulcini nelle cui gole riversare la lingua sotto forma di bolo già masticato e insalivato pronto per essere digerito, anche quando sono loro a chiederci di fare questo. Ribadisco l'importanza, nonché l'onestà, della graduazione del materiale autentico (Email message 24/2/2004).
>
> [In my opinion, it is inopportune and unfair to treat people who are learning a foreign or second language as if they were cheeks to be mouth fed language in the shape of already chewed food, wetted with saliva and ready to be digested, even when it is them [the students] who are asking us to do it. I reiterate and reaffirm the importance as well as the honesty of a graduated selection of authentic material].[37]

Such statements underline that the debate regarding the use of authentic versus simplified texts is still current. Educators' syllabus choices should be informed by research, not just into text reading and literal comprehension, but also into text processing at all levels. Students' perceptions of authentic L2 literature and their preference for particular types of texts or genres should also be taken into consideration.[38]

There are other important factors involved in accessing and understanding L2 texts, for example cultural distance (Hasan, 1996) may play a significant role in reading. It is possible that language barriers may be weaker if an L2 text has cultural references (places, films, music) to the students' L1. Conversely, Dante's *Divine Comedy* may be foreign to young Australian readers because its background and imagery is different from their

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[36] Related to the issue of authenticity is also the current debate on 'sanitized texts'. An article published in June 2002 in the *New York Times* first reports a mother's investigation into the practice of modifying literary texts: "In a feat of literary sleuth work, Ms Heifetz, the mother of a high school senior [...] inspected 10 high school English exams from the past three years and discovered that the vast majority of the passages – drawn from the works of Isaacs Bashevis Singer, Anton Checov and William Maxwell, among others – had been sanitized of virtually any reference to race, religion, ethinicity, sex, nudity, alcohol, even the mildest profanity and just about anything that might offend someone for some reason. Students had to write essays and answer questions based on these doctored versions – versions that were clearly marked as the work of the widely known authors (Kleinfield, 2002).

[37] My translation.

[38] At the Advanced Level especially there is scope for negotiating with students their choice of texts for individual reading and writing projects.

everyday experience, even though the themes are not. The point of view supported in this thesis is that the richness of the text lies in the interplay of language, culture and literariness. A syllabus that takes into account learners' perceptions of literature and its role within language learning as well as students' language level should promote an enjoyable learning experience of L2 literary texts.

Sometimes students may find "Easy readers" a pleasant reading experience. For example, one of my best students in her spare time really enjoyed reading detective stories written specifically for students of L2 Italian. The student was fully aware that they were not texts that Italians in Italy would read, because they were written for learners of Italian and were linguistically easier. However, because of the easily recognizable thriller plot structure, they offered a similar experience to reading a detective story in English. The question then is, although the text was linguistically and culturally "inauthentic", was her experience authentic or more natural because she read voluntarily in her own time and without having to resort to a dictionary? Perhaps the source of pleasure in reading was provided by authentic reading conditions (her choice of text and time to read without assessment pressures),[39] approximating those of reading a text in the student's first language rather than reading an inauthentic text. Kramsch (1993) discussed the controversial issue of "cultural authenticity" and whether it is possible to reproduce it while teaching language in the classroom. As she highlights, the term "authentic" was used as a reaction against the "artificial" language used in L2 textbooks, which often was closer to an idealized standard language than to the actual language used in natural everyday communication.[40]

A further aspect of the present discussion is the authenticity of tasks, which in turn determines the authenticity of the learning experience. Many textbooks and anthologies were, and still are, crammed with pre-reading questions, prediction exercises, glossaries and visual material to help readers understand texts and grammar exercises. Although these exercises may help students practice grammar rules and comprehend the text at a basic

[39] On the issue of free voluntary reading and its impact on language learning, see Kraschen (1995).
[40] Kramsch and Nolden (1994) have expressed their dissatisfaction about German textbooks: "A look at the textbooks used in foreign language literature courses is illustrative of the status quo: editions of literary texts

level, they might prevent them from enjoying the text by strongly controlling their reading, or detract from the content by focussing on microforms rather than links between form and discourse. Such framing of the text constructs a particular type of reading before the reading begins, and subordinates reading for input to other types of reading. Conversely, if the comprehension questions are too focused on the storyline the opposite may occur, and students, by skim reading the text in order to understand what is happening (top down strategy), may overlook language form and style. If students do not enjoy or value the experience, how much language will they learn? If they have no attachment to the text, how many lexical items will they remember? If a literary text is presented in a text-book in an 'inauthentic' way it is also more likely that students will focus more strongly on the exercises than on the text. As proposed by reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1995), to allow students the freedom of a more natural experience of the text, the first reading should be as free as possible. One role of the language arts educator, in my view, is to allow students that freedom in their first encounter with L2 authentic literary texts.

Widdowson (1979) states that "uncritical acceptance of the need to present learners with "authentic" data can lead to an avoidance of pedagogic responsibility" (p. 171). Kramsch appropriately (1993) raises the following question: "What exactly *is* our pedagogic responsibility?" (p. 179). The point of view put forward in this thesis is that the pedagogic responsibility of language art educators is to select texts written in Italian by Italophone writers that would be received by Italophone audiences as authentic (including authors of African, Albanian and Arabic or Asian origin now residing in Italy). In many countries, including Australia, university classes are a mosaic of different age, ethnic, educational, social and cultural backgrounds. It is also the pedagogical responsibility of educators to build on such a rich textured environment and use such elements to enhance the role of L2 literature.

Another responsibility of educators is to promote a critical awareness of the L2 language and culture, not to transform students into parrots, but provide the learning conditions to

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provided for non-native readers leave the user with the impression that the language, e.g., of a contemporary German comedy, consists of vocabulary items only (p. 29).

"turn students into voyagers across intercultural space" (Shanahan, 1997, p. 170). Cultural competence does not mean that students should become parrots who thoughtlessly imitate the language and behaviour as represented in authentic texts. Rather, cultural competence (knowledge about the culture) and cultural performance (the experience of culture) should not be separated (Nostrand, 1966, 1988, 1989). Awareness of the culture allows behavioural choices within the culture, without loss of one's identity. As social psychology has shown (Tajfel, 1981), identity is socially and culturally bound, however, an individual's identity is not fixed, just as culture is not fixed. A famous Italian proverb says that it is crucial to know when to change one's suit (*cambiarsi d'abito*) according to the social context, which also entails knowing how to speak and behave according to the situation and the people one is addressing.

Kramsch (1993) addresses students' learning behaviour, drawing from three traditions, the critical, the pragmatic and the hermeneutic: the critical stresses the importance of meta communication, learning how to best communicate (Breen & Candlin, 1985, p. 65); the pragmatic (communicative method) strongly values communication *per se* (Omaggio, 1986); and the hermeneutic stresses the comparative dimension (Hunfeld, 1990). Learning a language, Hunfeld (1990) states, "also means being able to compare one's own world of language with that of others, to broaden one's experience with language and language use [...] it means border crossing, blockade, disturbance" (p.15).[41] From my perspective, literature can offer such an experience. Literary texts are often inter- and intra-cultural.
Enhancing the role of L2 literature also entails providing students with the opportunity to become effective intercultural communicators, critically aware of the L2 conventions of communication, and to identify with members of the L2 community, yet maintain their own identity. The hermeneutic classroom model of learning approximates, in my view, to an authentic forum for reading and discussing authentic literary texts, as will be proposed in chapter 6.
Having focused on the debated reasons for studying literature and debated issues such as authenticity, it is appropriate to now provide a brief historical overview of the major L2

[41] Hunfeld (1990, p. 15), translated and quoted in Kramsch (1993, p. 183).

pedagogical literature paradigms and their association with arguments and approaches to L2 literature.

2.1.2 The uses of literature: A review of the major paradigms

Broadly speaking there are three main schools of thought on literature in L2 educational settings (Liddicoat & Crozet, 2000):

1) Teaching the canon (High Literature: the great texts of a nation);
2) Teaching language (literature as language samples: texts as tools);
3) Teaching culture (literature as culture).

The three schools of thought developed chronologically but one did not necessarily efface the other. To a certain extent, the three paradigms still coexist, although the approach to teaching the texts may have changed. The first, teaching the canon, has its sources in the classical period, and remained dominant beyond mid 1900, although it became linked also to the teaching of civilization. The second paradigm, literature as language, has its roots in stylistics but developed during the communicative boom in the 1970s and 1980s and is still used in schools and universities around the world. The third paradigm emerged partly as a kind of reaction to the communicative focus on language tokens, partly in answer to the need to teach cultural awareness.

Shifts in the teaching of literature reflect changes in the theoretical perceptions of language, literature and culture. Cultural and historical changes are reflected in the movement from 'langue' to 'parole' of the 1970s and to a special emphasis on the inextricable link between language and culture from the late 1980s to the new century. In Italy, the strongest debate about the literary curriculum took place in the 1990s when some intellectuals questioned a school system that often completely omitted authors of the 20th century, and that's when changes in syllabus and curriculum as well as in pedagogical approaches began to take place. Arguments for teaching literature, as paradigmatic approaches, are not always time-specific, they can overlap or, as shown below in Table 2.1, barely change throughout the centuries (from the 16th to the 20th) whilst different views of literature can coexist within a

particular approach to teaching and learning L2 literature. From the 16th centuries to the 20th the pedagogy of literature in foreign languages remained focused on the classical languages model in which literature written by major authors remained dominant in the L2 curriculum. From the 20th century instead there has been a proliferation of different arguments and approaches to the teaching of L2 literature. Very succinctly, this increase reflects developments in research (in fields such as reading, linguistics and literary theory) as well as major historical events (e.g., World War II), socio economic and cultural changes (e.g., job mobility) that have affected the reasons for learning and teaching languages. Table 2.1 provides a synthesis of the prevalent reasons for teaching literature put forward over the centuries within certain approaches and paradigms extrapolated from various sources.[42]

[42] The information contained in Table 2.1 is extrapolated from various sources, including Hill, 1991c; Collie & Slater, 1987; Carter & Long, 1991; Duff & Maley, 1990; Talif, 1991; Lazar, 1993; Kramsch, 1993; Edmondson, 1997; Carter & Mc Rae, 1996; Gilroy & Parkinson, 1996; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2000; Parkinson & Reid Thomas, 2000; Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000).

Table 2.1 — Literature in Education: Approaches and aims

Period	Reasons for the study of literary texts	Approaches	Perceptions of literature
16th– 20th	Main reason to study languages: Literary texts (classical and modern languages) are the best models of good writing (rhetoric) Literary texts are timeless and carry universal values Literary texts are better than any other text	Traditional literary and Translation	Literature as object/ product for study; imitation; Mental training Transmission high cultural heritage (canon)
20th–21st	Cultural enrichment as imparted knowledge; authentic text and context for increasing language proficiency; non-triviality; memorability (poetry); Open to multiple interpretations[43] Language is literature; literary language pervades everyday language Motivates language learning	Communicative Language-based Interactive	Literature as topic/resource
20th	Activates cognitive processes relevant to language / culture learning[44] Encourages language awareness	Strategy-based psycholinguistic Interactive	Literature as process
20–21st	Is at once specific and universal; individual and 'collective'; Stems from an individual's voice embedded in the L2 language community[45]; cultural enrichment through comparison Literature pedagogy for social change[46]	Inter Cultural Cross-cultural Critical language pedagogy	Literature as discourse and process
20–21st	Encourages interaction, reflection on multiple perspectives, negotiation of meaning/develops interpretative abilities	Reader-response Interactive reading	Process discourse oriented
20–21st	Dialogic nature of literature fosters understanding of different perspectives and interpretations Encourages personal growth; engages the emotions; remains in the memory; educates the whole person	Hermeneutic Psychological-affective (reader-response)	Collective critical process Emotional process

In enacting L2 literature in the class, the educator can adopt an eclectic approach based on process-oriented methods aimed at developing an advanced understanding of literature and contemporaneously develop language abilities by focusing on the links between language

[43]Duff & Maley (1990) observe, "The fact that literary texts are by their very essence, open to multiple interpretations, means that only rarely will two readers' understanding of or reaction to a given text be identical. This ready-made gap between one individual's interpretation and another's can be bridged by genuine interaction" (p. 6).

[44] According to Widdowson (1983), literary texts can activate systematic and schematic knowledge.

[45] Kramsch (1993) states that in her view "the main argument for using literary texts in the language classroom is literature's ability to represent the particular voice of a writer among the many voices of his or her community and thus to appeal to the particular in the reader (p. 130-131).

[46] Kramsch and McConnell-Ginet (1992) affirm: "the renewed emphasis placed recently on the interpretation and production of written texts in foreign language instruction, and the comeback of literary texts into

form, style and culture. In this thesis, the fundamental principle guiding the teaching of literature is the inseparability of literature, language and culture (Maurer, Carroli & Hillman, 2000, p. 157). Therefore, in developing the pedagogical and research approach for this thesis, I rejected approaches that diminish the literary text by using it as a peripheral tool in the teaching of other subject matter such as the cultural studies approach or traditional approaches which state the supremacy of literature or limit it to the "canon", and also approaches which trivialize literary texts by reducing them to language samples for learning grammar and vocabulary. The view adopted in this thesis is that each approach has some merit, but the most appropriate approaches for teaching and researching L2 literature are almost by necessity eclectic.

2.1.3 What is literature?

This section provides a concise summary of the ways in which literature has been defined throughout the centuries, with a specific focus on the 20th century, including discussions of the interface between language, culture, literature and literariness. This section seeks to explain the complexity of literature by discussing views, theories and issues concerning descriptions of literature, specifically, the language/s of literature, literature and literariness and literature and culture. Since "literature is widely if not universally considered to be the most important [of discourse types] and the most powerful" (Cook, 1994, p. 1), it is essential to review well known perspectives and theories before analysing L2 learners' descriptions of literature and literariness. A major but often overlooked issue involved in the L2 literature debate and the pedagogy of L2 literary texts is what is meant by literature, how learners perceive literature, and how their views compare to the views of educators, researchers and theorists. Thus, this section provides terms of reference for the discussion on students' perceptions of literature vis-à-vis educators' and theorists' views presented in chapter 4. For centuries, philosophers, literary figures, literary theorists, linguists, anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists amongst others have attempted to define literature. Periods and views, as indicated in Table 2.1, often overlap. Perhaps the simplest description, which also goes back to the oral origins of literature, is as a "song line"

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language syllabi indicate an opportunity for a critical language pedagogy that sees the role of education not

(Chatwin, 1982) or "a story" (Bakhtin, 1988), and it may be true that "the spirit cannot breathe without story" (Carroll, 2001, p. 6) and that teenagers in the West "are dying for want of a story" (p. 7). Stories are "models for the redescription of the world" (Ricoeur, 1984) although "the story is not by itself the model". "It is [...] an instantiation of models we carry in our minds" (Bruner, 1986, p. 7). If some writers and critics have sought to define literature in terms of its oral beginnings, other critics such as Bloom (1994) have encaged literature into a historically-driven canon and defined literature, by genre, as a list of works deemed important and timeless.

Other writers instead have focused on the value of literature within society or the internal value of literature: its language form. Unlike formalists such as Sklovskij (1956) and later Jakobson (1965), and structuralists such as Todorov (1973, 1977), and semiotic theorists such as Corti (1976) who defined literature mainly in aesthetic terms, Sartre in the 1940s wrote a lengthy volume entitled *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (Sartre, 1948) dedicated to explaining the social and didactic role of literature. Sartre's title was meant to provoke further debate on the binary view of literature as either engaged or aesthetic. The role of the poet in the social and political world has been a strong motif throughout history, certainly with Romanticism but also Illuminism and even the Middle Ages. With the *Divine Comedy*, Dante sought not only his eternal salvation but also the salvation of "Italy".

Like Sartre, Calvino (1963, 1986, 1996) too was a profound believer in literature as a positive force to oppose the destructiveness of capitalism and industrialism. In other words, with Sartre and Calvino the stress is on the role literature can assume within society. De Beaugrande (1988) has underlined the educational benefits only attainable with literature since "Experiences could be attained that would normally be difficult, hazardous, or impossible (p. 9).[47] Literature has been defined by other educators in terms of what it can offer young readers (Culp, 1977; Hynds, 1985), or how it can improve young people's outlook on life (Luperini, 1998), or "the self-concept of at-risk adolescents" (Miller, 1993, p. 442). Cook (1994), as does Todorov (1973), defines literature as a type of discourse,

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only as a reflection of social order but as an instrument of social change (p. 13).
[47] Quoted in Bell (1994, p. 9).

"which has a particular effect on the mind, refreshing and changing our mental representations of the world" (p. 4) and also "a mode of social interaction" (p. 1), a view developed out of discourse analysis and Halliday's perspective on language, with a strong focus on the social function of language.

According to Cook (1994) literature has the potential to access readers' minds and modify their schemata. This potential is neither situated in the text alone nor in the reader, but is found in the transaction between the two, as previously advocated by Rosenblatt (1978, 1995). Although it may be impossible to define what literature is, educators and theorists have set ideas of which texts should be considered literature (Carroli, 2000, 2002) and it remains to be seen what views students themselves hold. That does not mean that ideas and concepts should not be discussed and challenged. Indeed different perceptions of literature can be a very stimulating topic of investigation, reflection and discussion in the L2 classroom, as will be explained in chapter 5. The hermeneutic perspective of literature adopted in this thesis, is that it is the practice of literature that produces the meaning of literature — meaning produced on the basis of our preconceived ideas of literature, which precede and make possible any subsequent analysis of literature (Guglielmi, 1999).

An important factor in attempting any description of literature, especially in a language learning context, is the interface between language and literature. Burke and Brumfit (1986) posited the question in a second language context, "Is literature language? Or is language literature?"; a question that had already been analysed at length, especially by formalist theorists in a theoretical context and, more recently, by deconstruction and post modern writers. I will restrict the discussion here to two issues particularly relevant to L2 literature and its pedagogy: the interface between literature and language within literary texts and also the language used by Italian narrative writers between the 20th and 21st centuries.

By linguists, literature was considered an underclass of language, a secondary system built with the materials of the primary system, language. Saussure (1959) thought of language as a self contained system which generated its own meaning — a meaning to be found in the relationship and differences amongst its different parts. His vision of language was

dualistic: *langue* and *parole*, the former being the formal grammatical system and the latter the less rigid application of language structures in everyday speech. Jakobson, a formalist, following from Saussure, defined poetry as a particular function of language detached from any psychological or historical context. Therefore, in his analyses of literature he focused solely on its internal elements (Briosi, 1973, pp. 399–402).

Formalists such as Propp and Sklovskij analysed the morphology of poetry, fables and novellas, whilst structuralists such as Ullmann focussed heavily on the organization of narrative structures, and for Barthes, a semiologist, literature was a particular organization of standard language whose only reality is its own internal system of signs (Barthes, 1953). Sklovskij (1956) assigns to the language of literature the potential to make readers see the world from a different light because its language use can provoke in the reader a feeling of *straniamento*, estrangement. In short, literature was the language itself in the form and structures it assumed within the text. Jakobson (1965), also a formalist, added another dimension to literary language by affirming that it is marked by its poetic function. In literary texts, language is used in a *poetical* manner whilst in everyday interaction we use language in a 'common' way. In everyday interaction the focus of language is communication whilst in literature, especially poetry, the focus is language itself. Literariness though, is not confined to literary texts; in fact everyday language and the language of advertising abound with sayings, similes, metaphors and other literary and rhetorical devices.

Extensive use of what may be considered non-literary language also fills the pages of contemporary literature, especially narrative. Conversely, literary expressions often make their way into standard everyday spoken and written language. In particular, advertising often uses devices such as similes, and Italian sports' articles and oral reports make extensive use of metaphors. Taken out of their context, these excerpts may look like and be perceived by L2 learners as literary texts. Is it possible to pinpoint any particular feature or site belonging specifically to "literature"? According to Bell (1994) "the main weakness of Jakobson's (1965) theory is the confounding of poetic form and function" and the fact that

"the poetic function is defined according to its lack of objective —it has no function beyond itself" (p. 4).

In attempting to clarify these issues, Cook (1994, pp. 99–123) also underlines that the distinction between literary and non-literary texts lies in their discourse type. Adopting schema theory, he analyses two texts, the translated opening of *Crime and Punishment* and the slogan "Every cloud has a silver lining". Unlike Jakobson (1965), he concludes that there is no difference in the use of linguistic form. However, he makes a series of important distinctions. First, for most readers, translations are still literary texts, whilst advertisements would be perceived differently because they evoke different schemata. Since the focus of the slogan is on the buyer's fulfilment once he has bought the product, the message in the script has to be clear and unambiguous in order to convince the public to buy the product it promotes. Instead, as in many other literary works, the opening of *Crime and Punishment* presents different and ambiguous viewpoints and conflicts between characters. Ambiguity in literary texts is tolerated (Cook, 1994), and also appreciated, whereas it would not be in advertisements or in other types of texts such as newspaper articles or faculty reports. It remains to be seen however how students perceive literature and deal with the language of literary texts, whether they appreciate it or become frustrated, and also how language arts educators deal with these different reactions.

The language of the literary texts selected remains an important issue in L2 literature pedagogy and, as the following example shows, educators address it in different ways. Freddi (1985) asserts that literary language should not be identified with common or everyday language. Freddi (1985) conducted a survey of the teaching of Italian abroad and found that it was usual practice to use excerpts from Tomasi di Lampedusa, Bacchelli, Pavese and even Manzoni, to teach vocabulary as if 1800s literary language corresponded to the everyday 1980 Italian lexicon. According to him, the strong influence of Croce exalting written literary language led to literary texts being considered the best texts for learning language, and the conservative attitudes of textbook writers and teachers living outside Italy were responsible for perpetuating the established status quo of certain texts (belonging to the canon but didactically inappropriate) within L2 Italian syllabi. As a

solution he proposed a separation between the teaching of language and the study of literature.[48]

In this thesis, literary texts are certainly not promoted to the disadvantage of language studies. Since the underlying assumption of the thesis is that language and culture are inseparable and literature is a product of culture and, at the same time, creates culture, it follows that enhancing the role of L2 literature of necessity involves also enhancing L2 language learning. Freddi's (1985) proposal to teach language and literature separately is not a solution, and is no longer necessary, especially since the language of many contemporary Italian narrators (e.g., Palandri, 1979; Tondelli, 1980) is resembling more and more everyday language. Their style has been defined as "stile semplice" (Testa, 1997). From the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century Marinetti (1912) waged war on the lyrical language of Italian poetry with his "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista". The Fascist period and World War II (1920–1945) slowed this process. In the 1950's it was resumed by Neorealism, and in the late 1960's and 1970s, Italian women writers revolutionized the language of literature (Rasy, 1978; Rossi, 1978). From the 1990s, a generation of young narrators (e.g., Ballestra, 1994; Brizzi, 1996) and the "Cannibali" [Cannibals] (e.g., Ammaniti, 1999; Ammaniti, Brolli & Fabbri, 2004) adopted a different aesthetic, more oral and visual, by including regional Italian, colloquial registers, slang, computer, medical or legal terminology in their narrative — what Covito (1997) has called, "italiano integrato" and has herself used in her novel, *Benvenuti in questo ambiente* (Covito, 1999).

Paradoxically, the rise of technology seems to have reversed the overtaking of the oral word by the printed word, which started in the 16th century (Ong, 1982). The written word, in its different delivery modes, printed and electronic, often incorporates the multifarious

[48] In L1 Italian, this view was proposed by other Italian linguists and from the 1960s onwards, language and literature were seen as a "binomio da scindere" (Lavinio, 1990, p. 40) [a binomial that should be split] in an attempt to break the long and enduring dominion held by literature in schools and universities. Unlike in other parts of the world as reported earlier, in Italy language study was subordinated to literature study at least until the late 1980s. The only way to break this hegemony was to separate the two, also to avoid disadvantaging underprivileged students who did not and could not speak, write, or understand the bookish and artificial literary language (Lavinio, 1990, p. 47).

aspects and registers of the oral word. Admittedly, such texts can be very difficult for L2 students because they deviate from standard Italian, but they can be excellent examples of everyday Bologna youth language (Brizzi, 1996) or spoken regional Italian and computer terminology (Covito, 1999). It is not within the premises of this thesis to debate whether such texts can be considered "literature", however, from my broad perspective of literature, they can. Drawing rigid boundaries between *langue* and *parole*, literary and non-literary language is counterproductive; it has also become increasingly more difficult since finally the gap between spoken and written Italian has narrowed and Italian has become a "lingua plastica" (Sobrero, 1994), a fluid language capable of reflecting the rich and diverse cultural humus of Italian society.

The perspective taken in this thesis is that neither language nor literature is a watertight organism. Literariness does not reside exclusively in the text, in its language and textual structure, or in the canon as Bloom (1994) asserts.[49] Rather it springs from the transaction (Rosenblatt, 1978) with the reader and the discourse established between reader and text. This transaction is influenced by readers' preconceived ideas of literature (Guglielmi, 1999) and their dissimilar expectations of different types of texts. In their representations of Italian cultural worlds, narrators between the 20th and 21st century may use slang, the language of advertisements, computer terminology and pulp-fiction imagery, but they do so within an expected 'literary' framework — one that most readers would recognize as literature. Inextricably linked to language and literature is the concept of culture. An understanding of the interface between literature, language and culture is a necessary step towards an analysis of students' perceptions of literature, which presumably arise especially from their native culture and their schooling, and are influenced by their perceived role of L2 literature within language learning and their preconceived ideas of the L2 culture.

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[49] In juxtaposition to Bloom's (1994) elitist view of literature, I will quote an Italian author, Giorgio Manganelli, who provides this colourful description of literature: "Se esistessero solo i grandi autori, la letteratura sarebbe una foresta vergine percorsa da dinosauri; ma per fortuna della letteratura, esiste la grande legione dei minori, che la trasforma in luogo frequentabile, ben attrezzato, adatto al tè delle cinque." Quoted in Corti (1976, pp. 7-8). [If there existed only great authors, literature would be a forest with dinosaurs running through it; but luckily, there exist the great legion of minor authors which transforms literature in a frequentable place, well equipped, suitable for five o' clock' (afternoon) tea]. [My translation.]

Culture is perhaps an even more disputed term than literature and will be addressed in this chapter mainly in relation to literary texts. A clarification of what is meant by culture and literature, and how the two are understood in relation to each other, is also necessary for understanding the conceptual pedagogical framework developed for the thesis research programme.[50] The connection between literature and culture was certainly more clear-cut two centuries ago when Arnold, a pedagogue and literary critic, in an 1868 book described culture as the contact with the great works of art and literature (Wilson, 1935).[51] The traditional canon-based approach to literary studies was based on Arnold's elitist idea of literature and culture. Tyler (1881) instead defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".[52] The gradual shift to a more inclusive view of culture influenced how literature was perceived generally and in the education field (see Table 2.1), more as a product of a culture and less as the best available culture. As Richards (1967) reports, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) expanded this concept by affirming that: "Any culture is a system of expectancies", and culture patterns are *felt,* emotionally adhered to, or rejected." (p. 308).[53]

Attempts to provide absolute definitions of culture or literature are certainly not the intent of this thesis. The perspective taken in this thesis is neither "Arnoldian" nor is it dualistic: formal (the products of art and literature) and deep (the beliefs and mores of societies). The traditional division between culture in the anthropological sense and [C]ulture in the classical sense, and culture as a system of values and mores separate from its artefacts, is unfounded (Maurer, Carroli & Hillman, 1999, p. 157). The point of view of this thesis is that Culture (products) and culture (practices) are not separate, but rather different ways of perceiving different aspects of culture. If "language is at the same time a part of reality, a

[50] As Shanahan (1997) highlights, "A working model of the relationship between language and culture that can be applied to the language teaching experience is absolutely essential to any systematic articulation of the ways in which literature may contribute to that experience" (p. 170).
[51] The Arnoldian legacy found expression in classical foreign language education in which the written was privileged over the spoken, the past over the contemporary. This view of culture is also resurgent today in revived notions of a literary canon in which prestige literature is elevated as the highest purpose of studying languages, and is seen as universal and improving (Lo Bianco, 2003, p. 16).
[52] Quoted in Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952, p. 81).
[53] Quoted in Richards (1976, p. 21).

shaper of reality, and a metaphor of reality" (Halliday, 1993, p. 8), literature is produced within a culture, (re)creates culture and transmits culture: "Just as the personality and concerns of the reader are largely socially patterned, so the literary work, like language itself, is a social product. The genesis of literary techniques occurs in a social matrix" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 28).

In the L2 context, intercultural bridges (e.g., focusing on the signals of cultural difference inherent in textual language) can help L2 students process differences between L1 and L2 social and cultural matrices (see study 2, chapter 6). According to Kramsch (1995) languages are the central vehicles of culture since all members of a community make use of language to interact with each other, and teaching second languages is an important process in the transmission of cultures to students who are outside those discourse communities. Language and culture are connected on three levels: "the diachronic axis of time, the synchronic axis of space, and the metaphoric axis of the imagination" (p. 85). Language plays a major role in gaining membership of those "real or imagined" (1995, p. 85) communities. Through language we access the cultural products, including literature, the site of imagined and metaphorical dimensions of language, culture and identity. This thesis espouses this complex, dynamic, language-focused view of culture conveyed especially by Geertz (1999), Clifford (1992) and Kramsch (1995). Literature can play an important role in opening up the cultural, historical, linguistic and literary complexities of Italy, past and present, and also help students understand, respect and bridge cultural difference by focusing on similarity (see chapter 6).

2.1.4 Summary

In summary, this section (Part A) has presented the case for literature in the second language curriculum. The value of studying literature in L2 is found in the ability to see, process and use the links between language features and the aesthetic, cultural and social values conveyed by literature. It is in the interplay of reader, reader's ideas and expectations of literature, and author's individual voice as expressed through style within a particular culture that literary texts acquire meaning. Appreciation of these links and ability

to analyse literary texts depends also on students' perception of literature, students' approach to the text and educators' pedagogical choices.

The absence of L2 research investigating students' perceptions[54] and approaches to literature is surprising given the amount of educational research reported in the following section (Part B) showing the importance of students' perceptions of the object of learning for their learning. The thesis attempts to address these gaps with:

1) An analysis of the varying nature of students' perceptions of literature in general (chapter 4)
2) An analysis of their attitudes towards L2 literature and their approach to studying L2 literary texts (chapter 5).
3) The design, implementation and analysis of the effects of a novel pedagogical approach to L2 literature (chapter 6).

The next section (Part B) will focus on how to teach and research L2 literature in view of the current thinking about L2 literature learning. It will broaden the debate by introducing educational material on student perceptions and learning approach, awareness and change in learning, L2 principles such as language awareness and noticing, as well as theories of reading that have particular pedagogical implications for L2 literature.

[54] Carrell (1984) however, had already pointed out that, in an L2 context, that the most valuable information is in students' perceptions and not educators'.

PART B

A review of materials related to theoretical principles and educational theory and practice

Part B discusses key principles and pedagogical issues based on studies from the following research areas: educational research, especially phenomenography; L1 and L2 reading research; and L2 (and relevant L1) literature and language pedagogy. The research discussed was influential in the development of the theoretical framework of the thesis and the design of the methodology I adopted for the research programme.

2.2 A review of key pedagogical issues in student-focused teaching and learning

"The pressure for greater quality of teaching and learning has never been greater" and the challenge facing academics "is to do more and more with less and less" (Stein-Parbury, 1999). How to face this challenge as a language arts educator? Certainly not by succumbing to the pressures caused by quantitative university measurements of what constitutes "good teaching" and "good learning", as reported in quantitative student evaluations of teaching. These may be useful statistical instruments to ensure high quality teaching obtains government funding and gains promotions but they do not show or explain which teaching and learning processes can lead to successful outcomes, including how the quality of teaching and learning is assessed. As Boyer (1990) asserts, it is necessary to redefine teaching and what it means to be a scholar. Teaching "is often viewed as a routine function, tacked on, something almost anyone can do" (p. 23); instead, the scholarship of teaching should be understood as the bridge between students' understanding and teachers' knowledge. As Kramsch (2002) states, "a research project may begin in a 'telling moment' in the language classroom" (p. 196). This was certainly how the research for this thesis began and evolved, in a cyclic process from practice to research and theory, to implementation of an alternate approach to teaching literary texts.

Good teaching and research into teaching is perhaps the best way to face the pressures of academia and "lift" one's practice (Liddicoat & Jansen, 1998) in the process. According to Stein-Parbury (1990), the values embedded in good teaching are:

> "a passion for learning [that] reflects the value of interest in and inquiry about the world in general and one's discipline in specific [...] [and] enables teachers to engage with students in sharing a journey of discovery [...] and remain knowledgeable about developments in their field. An effort to arouse the imagination and engage learners actively [that] reflects a concern and compassion for students' experiences as learners. [...] A generosity of spirit [...] and openness toward them and availability to them [that] reflect an inherent respect for them as people and learners (n. p.).

Stein-Parbury (1990) identifies teaching methods and practices that embody these values as both reflective and reflexive. Reflective in the sense that the relationship with students is seen in terms of quality of learning, ensuring that assessment methods actually allow students to show what they have learnt, leading to evaluation of these methods and adoptions of new assessment approaches if necessary. Reflexive teaching means that the interaction between students and teachers is based on "shared control of learning and is focused on enabling students to learn, not demonstrating how much the teacher knows" (n. p.). Reflexive teaching thus reflects — mirrors — students' interests and goals. Reflexive teaching also takes into account students' prior learning and implies that "**the teacher attempts to see the world through the eyes of students before attempting to extend or alter their conceptions**" (n. p. – my emphasis).

This thesis aims to enhance the role of L2 literature in the learning of Italian language and culture in view of the above descriptions of what constitutes good teaching. This implies enhancing students' potential for learning. The logical departure point in enhancing the role of L2 literature in the learning of Italian language and culture is to look at what students understand by literature and how they approach it. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to move beyond the literature and language debate and trace: 1) students' perceptions of and approaches to literature 2) students' awareness of the links between language, culture and literature; and 3) the role of pedagogy. Thus, the thesis research programme integrates into the L2 literature debate the broader educational literature which explores the role of students' perceptions and approaches to the object of study, ways of expanding students' awareness of the links between language, culture and literature, and alternate pedagogical L1 and L2 literature practices.

In order to fulfil the research aims it is therefore necessary to look firstly at research on students' perceptions and approaches to the object of study and the role of awareness and change in learning, then at theories of reading including current innovative examples of research and pedagogy influenced by hermeneutics, social theory, reader response theory and deconstruction. From the discussion of these relevant theoretical principles and previous studies emerges the theoretical framework for the thesis research programme.

2.2.1 The role of students in learning: a phenomenographic approach to investigating students' perceptions, approaches, awareness and change in learning

Several studies have been conducted into learning perceptions and approaches, and most have used phenomenography as a method of investigation. Phenomenography is an educational field of enquiry and a research method that "has as its aim the finding and systematizing of forms of thought in terms of which people interpret significant aspects of reality" and "is complementary to other kinds of research; it aims at description, analysis and understanding of experiences" (Marton, 1981, p. 177). As Marton (1981) explains, phenomenography distinguishes between two research perspectives. The "first order" perspective, not favoured by Marton, has as its aim the description of various aspects of the world. In contrast, the "second order" perspective, adopted by phenomenography, has as its aim the description of people's experiences of various aspects of the world. Different ways of experiencing phenomena are not considered as individual qualities, but as representing a "relatively limited number of qualitatively different ways" (p. 181) in which people experience aspects of reality (e.g., Marton & Saljö, 1976; Saljö, 1981).[55] These different perceptions or ways of experiencing phenomena in the world around us are represented in phenomenographic research as "categories of description", describing the key aspects of each qualitatively distinct way of experiencing (or understanding) a phenomenon which distinguishes it from qualitatively different ways.

[55] For an overview, see Gibbs, Morgan & Taylor (1980).

As Marton (1981) reports, differences in perceptions of the same phenomena can occur within individuals at different times, and not just between individuals. In reference to the present research, students can perceive literature in different ways, and these different views of literature are not fixed for each student, but variable, depending on various factors (e.g., context; time; pedagogical approach). This has important pedagogical implications, since it implies that perceptions are not fixed and can potentially change within individuals under the right pedagogical circumstances. Marton (1981) highlights that "changes in the individual's way of interpreting certain aspects of reality are often a crucial component of scientific discovery" (p. 186). These changes are linked to dynamic (and not static) conceptions of the world (e.g., Darwin's theory of evolution). Categories of description characterise fragments of perceived thoughts of the world and can be used as an "an *instrument for descriptions* of the way people think in concrete situations and, from the collective perspective, it can be seen as a *description* of thinking" (Marton, 1981, p. 198). In phenomenography, collective awareness of a phenomenon or "the collective mind" (Marton, 1981) can be described as all the different ways in which the phenomenon can be experienced, for example by all the participants in a study. Thus, phenomenography deals with the conceptual, the experiential and the culturally learned levels of individually developed ways in which people relate to reality: its most distinctive feature being the focus on conceptions of specific aspects of reality such as on apprehended contents of thought or experience (Marton, 1981, p. 189).

Some of the first phenomenographic studies dealt with the process and outcome of students' experiences of learning, and described students' approaches to reading a text and their subsequent learning outcomes as relational (Marton & Saljö, 1976; Svensson, 1976). Data on how students approached (process) and what they learnt from (outcome) texts were gathered from qualitative analysis of transcripts of interviews with students. From the transcripts, a set of related categories were constructed to describe the qualitatively different ways in which students described their approaches to learning and learning outcomes. Findings showed that the ways in which students approached reading a text and what they learnt from the text varied significantly between individuals.

The authors indicated that approaches to study were characterized in terms of their structure, "atomistic" to "holistic", and also meaning, "surface" to "deep". Briefly, atomistic and holistic approaches were defined by Svensson (1977) as, respectively, approaching study of the text as isolated parts vis-à-vis approaching it as a whole. A "surface" approach to learning was described as concentrated on the "sign" (e. g., the text in terms of vocabulary items, or only story line) whilst a "deep approach" was described as focused on the "signified" (i.e., the meaning of the text in terms of the author's message).

When reading a literary text in a non native language, the learner needs to focus simultaneously on the words and the meaning of the text. Atomistic and holistic, and surface and deep approaches are not necessarily understood as a dichotomy but rather as complementary, since the L2 literature learner needs to shift constantly from one approach to the other in order to grasp both language form and also text meaning (hermeneutic circle).

Phenomenographic studies on approaches to learning were followed by studies of conceptions (or perceptions) of learning (Säljö, 1979; Marton, Dall'Alba and Beaty, 1993). Marton and Saljö (1984) reported that adult students perceived learning in six qualitatively different ways: 1) learning as a quantitative increase in knowledge; 2) learning as memorising; 3) learning as acquisition of facts and methods; 4) learning as the abstraction of meaning; 5) learning as an interpretative process aimed at understanding reality; and 6) learning as changing as a person). Trigwell & Prosser (1996) explain that conceptions 1-3 are limiting, since they focus on a quantitative increase in knowledge and on rote memorising. As Marton & Saljö's (1984) results indicate, these conceptions of learning are associated with a surface approach to learning, which does not lead to practices linked to higher quality learning. Conceptions 3-6, in contrast, are linked with the adoption of a deep approach to learning and higher quality learning. Therefore, the key shift between categories 1–3 and categories 4–6 consists of a shift from a view of learning as a quantitative accumulation of knowledge to a view of learning as about changes in meaning. As Trigwell and Prosser (1996) have underlined, "students' conceptions of learning are strongly correlated with their approaches to study" and "students who consider learning in

quantitative terms are likely to find it very difficult to adopt a deep approach to learning" (p. 275). Other studies (e.g., van Rossum & Schenk, 1984; Trigwell & Prosser, 1991) have shown that deep approaches to learning are related to higher quality learning outcomes. If conceptions of learning are related to students' approaches to learning, and approaches are linked to learning outcomes, exploring students' perceptions is a crucial stage of research aimed at enhancing the role of L2 literature.

By conducting research into students' perceptions and approaches the researcher, myself, who is concurrently the language arts educator, becomes aware of the different ways in which students see and approach literature, which may be similar or very dissimilar to the idea she holds of literature. This research also provides an opportunity for informing teaching practice, to increase students' awareness of their perceptions of learning and of the possible impact these can have on their study approaches and their learning. So, if the first stage of investigation is to explore students' learning perceptions and approaches, the second stage is to develop teaching practices to improve students' awareness of metalinguistic factors (their own perceptions and approaches to learning) and linguistic and cultural factors (their ability to adopt a deep approach that allows them to see, process and use the links between language and culture in literary texts).

Marton & Morris (2002) point out that "popular and scholarly debate about pedagogy has focused on the forms of working arrangements in classrooms" (Preface, n.p.). In a similar way to debates on second language literacy, in the general education field, there has been a lot of discussion about methods, approaches and classroom techniques for teaching and learning. Higher quality learning, as already explained, depends on individual variables such as students' perceptions and approaches; it is also a function of how the object of learning (the topic) and the approach are enacted by the educator, with the students, in (and outside) the class. A core question throughout the history of education has been: how can educators help students to learn? Evidence from the studies reported in Marton and Morris (2002) shows that what matters is how the object of learning can possibly be experienced by students given the pedagogical arrangements for learning, in other words, what students have the opportunity to experience in the educational context.

Critical variation (Marton & Booth, 1997) is a key element of learning, and awareness and discernment are functions of variation (see "Glossary"). The classroom becomes a "space of variation" when "the teacher-pupil and the pupil-pupil interaction contribute to a rich and shared space of variation, the pupils learn not only from the feedback related to what they say or do, but also from the feedback related to what the other pupils say or do" (Marton & Morris, 2002, p. 140).[56] The "space of variation" has been defined by Marton and Morris (2002) as "what the students can possibly learn in terms of the enacted object of learning" (p. 140) — variation being a necessary step to learning since "discernment is a function of variation" (p. 140) and the chance that students will discern aspects of the object of learning is enhanced when aspects of that object of learning vary in the classroom. These results have strong implications for curriculum choices. As the authors state, the objects of learning cannot be looked up in documents but have to be "found, discovered, developed and constituted together" with the students and "this view implies a conception of the curriculum that is not so much a printed document, but an ever evolving lived reality, a lived curriculum in perpetual evolution" (p. 141). Although this may be a difficult principle to put into practice, it is not impossible. In the preliminary investigation conducted in 1998, I developed and tested the idea of a flexible syllabus, with texts and tasks modified from one lesson to the next, depending on students' replies to the opinion scales of the literary texts already studied.

It is necessary at this stage to move from a description of phenomenography as a field of enquiry and method of research to the explanation of specific key concepts of phenomenography relevant to this thesis, such as awareness and change. As Marton & Booth (1997, p. 99) explain, the phenomenographic concept of awareness is an elaboration of Gurwitsch's (1964) descriptions of human awareness as involving three constituents:

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[56] Key concepts of phenomenography such as "critical variation" and the fundamental role of students' interaction in the class are not dissimilar to the hermeneutic concept of learning: comparing different text interpretations and the class as a hermeneutic community. Similarly, reader-response theory stresses the role of the reader and L2 interactive approaches to classroom learning hightlight the centrality of students in classroom discourse. Results showing the strong impact of feedback on learning from the Marton & Morris (2002) volume confirm evidence from studies conducted on formative assessment practices which are strongly based on feedback.

"the theme, the thematic field, and the margin [...] related to one another by relevancy both in an instantaneous snapshot mode and in a fluid, dynamic mode". If we relate Gurwitsch's concept of awareness to a learning situation, for example when reporting aspects of a student's experience of learning, it is possible to identify "what it is that makes up her theme (of what she is thematically aware and concentrates on) and what is relegated to the margin (what is ignored in this learning effort)" (Marton & Booth 1997, p. 99).

The authors explain that a highly critical aspect of awareness is the phenomenological concept of "appresentation", according to which we perceptually experience something both in the way it appears to one or more of our senses, but also based on our previous experience.[57] "Appresentation" refers to the concept that although phenomena are, as a rule, only partially exposed to us, we do not experience the parts as themselves, but we experience the wholes of which the parts are parts" (p.100).

Closely related to "appresentation' is the way in which certain phenomena and certain aspects of phenomena are experienced as figural and thematised. Phenomenography understands the structure and meaning of experience or perceptions as "dialectically intertwined aspects" of ways of experiencing situations or phenomena. The structure of experience refers to how the parts and the whole of a way of experiencing are discerned and related to each other, and to what is, or is not, focused upon in any particular situation and with any particular phenomenon. These aspects are representative of explicit or implicit dimensions of variation in awareness. In summary, the whole and the parts and their relationship are discerned in terms of various aspects of a phenomenon, such as topics and sub-topics of a text, and the explicit or implicit dimensions or awareness of the phenomenon are discerned by relating the perceived aspects of the phenomenon to "the thematic field against the background of which the phenomenon, and the situation in which it is embedded, is seen" (Marton & Booth 1997, pp. 100-101). Marton and Booth then

[57] "If we look at a tabletop from above [...] we hardly experience it as a two-dimensional surface floating in the air, in spite of the fact that what we see is [...] a two-dimensional surface separated in some mysterious way from the ground. [...] Thanks to our previous experiences of tables, and of the particular table we are looking at, we have learned to know tables in general and this particular table as well. We are familiar with them so that when we see a part of a table we are aware of the presence of the table as a whole" (Marton & Booth 1997, p. 99).

explain that an individual's way of experiencing a phenomenon consists of the discernment and presence in the individual's focal awareness of the various aspects of the phenomenon and how s/he relates them at a particular moment.[58] Therefore, "the key feature of the structural aspect of a way of experiencing [...] is the set of different aspects of the phenomenon as experienced that are simultaneously present in focal awareness" (p. 101). To capture the spectrum of different experiences of a given phenomenon, the researcher explores the variation in experience at the collective level, rather than the individual level.[59]

"Collective awareness", as described by Marton & Booth (1997) bears some similarity to the hermeneutic concept of learning as collective interpretation within the learning community class. Similarly, the importance placed by phenomenography on students' perceptions of the object of study resembles the hermeneutic focus placed on readers' 'pre-comprehended' ideas of literature as a prerequisite to analysis of the literary text (Guglielmi, 1999). Marton (1994) distinguishes two contexts in the process of grouping and interpreting the data: the individual and the collective. He defines the collective context (the "pool of meanings") as "the hermeneutic element of the phenomenographic analysis" (p. 4428). In this thesis the collective context is constituted by categories of description across all students' perceptions of and approaches to literature, whilst the individual context is portrayed in the analysis of individual descriptions of literature (chapter 4) and in the tables of individual students' experiences of literature (chapter 5). Whilst analysis of collective variation provides information useful for syllabus and curriculum choices, the individual context allows an insight into possible associations between students' perceptions, approaches and learning (chapter 5). Complementary analysis in this thesis of these two contexts provides the basis for turning theory into classroom practice (chapter 6).

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[58] "The structure of an individual's awareness keeps changing all the time, and the totality of all experience is what we call that individual's awareness. An experience is an internal relationship between the person experiencing and the phenomenon experienced: it reflects the latter as much as the former. If awareness is the totality of all experiences, then awareness is as descriptive of the world as it is of the person. A person's awareness is the world as experienced by the person" (Marton & Booth, 1998, p. 108).

[59] "To understand the variation in experience we have to understand the collective anatomy of awareness, or in other words, the different ways in which different phenomena can be experienced, as has earlier [been] called "the collective mind" (Marton, 1981). This is a shift from individual awareness that varies as to focus and simultaneous awareness of aspects of a phenomenon to a collective awareness in which such variation can be spied"(Marton & Booth 1997, pp. 108–109)

Marton & Booth (1997) define learning in terms of a change in ways of experiencing a particular aspect of the world. If it can be established that a particular set of students who experience literature in a certain way is more successful in terms of learning outcomes, their experiences of the "object of learning" (pp. 161–64) can perhaps be used to inform a "pedagogy of awareness" (pp. 166–205) to bring about change in the learning experiences of less successful students. The pedagogical approach and the investigative methods of study 2 aim to promote and capture the development of individuals' textual awareness by exposing them to variation in textual levels of understanding, through collective comparison and discussion of the similarities and differences in "the pool of meanings". Thus Marton & Booth's (1997) principle of awareness underpins the research reported in this thesis.

Besides the studies conducted on conceptions and approaches to learning, the phenomenographic studies most relevant to this thesis are those conducted on the reading and interpreting of literary texts (Halász, 1983; Marton, Carlsson-Asplund and Halász, 1992), which include an attempt to implement the principles of awareness and change in ways of experiencing with students studying literature (Marton, Carlsson-Asplund & Halász, 1994). The repeated reading approach[60] attempted by Halász (1983) with literary texts in the native language of the students, yielded results at the individual level, as did the subsequent study by Marton et al (1992). In their 1992 study, Marton et al (1992) found a correlation between students' having an advanced understanding of a text and engaging in "reflective variation" — looking at the text from within to understand its meaning, and shifting one's perspective from one reading to another (p. 2). Their conclusions were that neither repeated reading alone nor the adoption of a deep rather than surface approach to reading is sufficient to gain an advanced understanding of the text. Both a deep approach to reading and an ability to shift perspective, when reading, are necessary for students to achieve an advanced understanding of the text. However, when the researchers attempted to

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[60] Whilst the repeated reading approach (Halász, 1983) was aimed at soliciting advanced interpretations of L1 literary texts, Krashen's notion of "narrow reading" (1981) was mainly directed at developing students' L2 competence. Students, by reading "narrowly" (e.g., texts pertaining to a specific content area and/or by the same author), build up the vocabulary, syntax (linguistic features) and become aware of the cultural and rhetorical schemata of the author.

"shape reader awareness" by transferring the reflective variation approach used by some students to other students, the experiment had the reverse effect, that is the taking of different perspectives when reading was reduced rather than increased amongst students.

Marton et al (1994) attributed this reverse effect to students' focussing too narrowly on the reading instructions rather than on experiencing the text. It is possible that the results were also due to a strong focus by the researchers on reflective variation as the 'best' approach, a lack of consideration of personal variables and no shared reading and reflective practices. As will be explained in the next chapter, Halász's (1983) procedure informed the design of study 1 in this thesis, but was substantially modified to avoid a strong focus on directed instruction, rather than on the text, combined with incorporation of other theoretical principles and adoption to an L2 environment.

2.2.2 Expanding educators' awareness of learners' perceptions of literature and students' attitudes to language and literature

Studies into students' perceptions, responses and attitudes to language and literature have been largely quantitative. Surveys conducted by Gardner (1982) and Gardner and Lambert (1972) showed that students' attitudes towards language could affect learning. Baker (1992) also indicated that students' attitudes could be used to predict language proficiency. One of the largest empirical studies of achievement in literature was the one conducted by Purves (1973) across ten different countries with two age levels of school students: 14 and 18.[61] Findings most relevant for this thesis are that cross-nationally different stories elicited different types of responses from students. These results underline the importance of text selection. As Purves (1973) deduces, "literary stimulus determines the reader's approach" (p. 314) and the student's response is determined by the story read. The type of questions asked by students is influenced by cultural differences.[62] Personal variables, such as

[61] 14 is the highest age at which all students were still at school (usually the last year of Middle school) and at age 18 students are usually in their last year of high school. The report on the International Study of Achievement in Literature (IEA) was carried by Purves and the International Committee for Literature in the following countries: Belgium, Chile, England, Finland, Iran, Italy, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United States (Purves, 1973, p. 15).

[62] For example, history and background were more a concern of students in Italy (not surprisingly, given the historically-based Italian school syllabus at that time) than students in Finland; and Swedish students asked more evaluative questions than students in the U.S.A. (Purves, 1973, p. 314).

students' reading interest and background, were also found more influential in determining achievement than type of school or programme.

In summary, Purves (1973) concludes that "response to literature is a learned behaviour [...] modified by what the student reads and [...] affected by his culture, and, presumably, by his school as an inculcator of that culture" (p. 315). Response to literature can therefore be defined as a cognitive style, a way of thinking about a literary experience, "a way of ordering that thinking for discourse" (p. 315). It follows that if response to literature is learned, educators, curriculum and syllabus makers must consider the implications of choosing texts and assessment also in view of students' cultures. Purves' (1973) findings reaffirm the need for investigating students' perceptions of literature in general as well as students' background in literature and taking them into account when making syllabus and curriculum choices — both issues are addressed in the research conducted and reported in this thesis.

More recently, still in the area of response to L1 literature, a team of researchers and educators at the University of Alberta have conducted several quantitative and qualitative studies. I will only report the results of a questionnaire survey of students' motivation for studying literature, as they will offer a useful comparison with the results of my studies (chapter 4).[63] The questionnaire was administered to 120 first year university students of English.[64] The most interesting results for this thesis is that many students in Canada emphasized the epistemic nature of literature and had expectations that literature, like no other type of text, expanded one' feelings and knowledge, and offered insight into oneself and into others (Miall, Kuiken & Gifford, 2003). These findings are similar to those of Levorato's (2003) qualitative study, which investigated the emotional responses of 75 undergraduate students at Padua University, to Poe's, *The oblong box* (translated into Italian). Levorato found that the salient dimension for enjoying the text was "involvement". This dimension, also defined as "engagement", was linked to responses such as "curiosity,

[63] The questionnaire was initially designed and used by Barsch and Zyngier (2000) in Brazil and Germany, then adapted and used in Canada (Miall, Kuiken & Gifford, 2003).
[64] Students' responses to open and closed questions in Canada were cross-validated with results from a previous survey of students' literary response (Miall & Kuiken, 1995).

excitement, interest, pleasure, memorability and suspense" (p. 7). The other two dimensions identified were "evaluation of the outcome" of the story and "cognitive evaluation", the latter related to the literal and analytical comprehension of the story.

Levorato (2003) found that students' cognitive responses were at the basis of their emotional responses. These results underline that even when reading literature in one's native language, comprehension factors can affect enjoyment of the text. In an L2 environment, these factors are of course exacerbated by literacy factors (which should neither be exaggerated nor overlooked in L2 literature pedagogy -- see section 2.2.3 below). These results will be discussed further in chapter 4, through comparison of results obtained with the survey I used in 1998 and 1999.

Some surveys have investigated students' beliefs, attitudes, opinions and expectations of literature, culture, civilization, language learning and teaching, and humanistic techniques.[65] I will report the studies that are most relevant to this thesis. Lafayette and Buscaglia (1985) provided ideas for the development of an instrument which I used in the 1998 preliminary investigation, the "Student opinion scale of literary texts". Glisan's (1987) survey, conducted at the University of Pittsburgh, found that beginning Spanish students' indifferent attitudes towards their Spanish university courses were partly attributable to their lack of training in culture and literature in high school. This seems to be a concern also voiced in the Australian school context (Stone, 1990), and is relevant to results of how Australian students of Italian approach the study of literature (chapter 5). Edmondson (1996) analysed students' replies to a questionnaire focused on positive and negative influences on students' language learning (e.g., rock music or literature) in Hamburg, and found that a very limited number of students indicated that literature was a positive factor on their language learning.

Davis et al (1992) used a questionnaire to investigate attitudes toward the study of L2 literature and factors affecting students' opinions of 175 students of French and Spanish at

[65] For example, Frey & Sadek, 1971; Moskowitz, 1981; Ludwig, 1983; Rossi, 1983; Horwitz, 1985; Horwitz, 1989; Hirvela & Boyle; 1988, Morello, 1988.

Pennsylvania State University, University of Arizona and Dickinson College. Their questionnaire provided some ideas for the development of the survey used in my research and their findings were influential in deciding the research direction for the thesis. The major findings were that differences in teaching styles (e.g., interactive *vis-à-vis* instructor-directed) affected attitudes of students who highly valued oral fluency. Teaching that gives students some freedom in reading choices and encourages the expression of students' opinions was found to improve students' motivation. Personal variables, such as background and preferred learning style, also affected students' attitudes. In view of these findings, Davis et al (1992) concluded that besides focusing on literal comprehension and "unfamiliar cultural referents" (p. 326), L2 literature pedagogy should also consider students' individual responses so that they may see the relevance of literature. Furthermore, since instruction influences motivation, the researchers suggested that changes they proposed for curriculum and instructional practices would positively affect students' attitudes.

2.2.3 Expanding students' awareness of the links between language, literature and culture — L2 consciousness raising principles, language awareness, focus on form and stylistics

The term "consciousness", also used in phenomenography as a synonym of awareness (Marton & Booth, 1997), will be discussed in this section, together with language awareness, and focus on form and stylistics. "Consciousness" is a second language research field that explores the role of awareness, attention or "noticing" of language features as a necessary factor in the learning of languages. Similarly to phenomenography-derived pedagogy, consciousness research aims to promote "deep and lasting changes in educational practices" by turning the classroom into a "subject of inquiry" (Hulstijin & Schmidt, 1994, p. 6). Although research in this thesis is not guided by rigid grammar standards, language learning remains an important factor crucial to enhancing the role of L2 literature. I suggest that "consciousness-raising" and "focus on form" principles linked to stylistics, within an intercultural language teaching framework (ILL), can make a non-obtrusive contribution to L2 literature pedagogy.

Unlike L2 acquisition theories (e.g., Krashen, 1982, 1985), which focus on the unconscious aspects of internalizing L2 languages and marginalizes conscious apprehension (learning), research on 'consciousness' (e.g., Schmidt, 1990; Ellis 1995) stresses the role of awareness and 'noticing' in language learning (Schmidt, 1993).[66] Schmidt (1994) distinguishes intentionality, noticing, awareness and control as the four major aspects of consciousness in language learning. Learning cannot take place without some form of noticing (not unlike Marton's discernment), and students' ability to think metalinguistically during the learning process (explicit learning) and to control output are seen as fundamental aspects of learning. Schmidt (1994) distinguishes between explicit and implicit learning (without awareness), explicit and implicit knowledge (learning products) and explicit and implicit instruction, rather than acquisition and learning. Language and consciousness cannot be separated and both develop contemporaneously within the class as a "subject of inquiry" where "experience can be organized, controlled and evaluated" by students and teachers (Hulstijin and Schmidt, 1994, p. 6). These aspects and principles of "consciousness" are all relevant for the thesis research since, like phenomenography, they stress the role of awareness in learning and, like hermeneutics, they seek to promote shared control of classroom activities and learning.

Similarly, focus on form (e.g., Long 1983, 1991) refers to instruction procedures aimed at focusing students' attention on specific L2 formal and semantic aspects. Linking grammar to meaning is crucial to language learning (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1998); although it seems obvious that grammar communicates meaning, students can overlook how intrinsically connected form and topic are. In this thesis, I argue that a focus on form linked to a focus on style can be stimulating in the L2 literature classroom and can lead to

[66] For a critical overview of "noticing" in L2 acquisition, refer to Truscott (1998).

an awareness of the links between language and culture in literary texts, since it allows for "discourse to acquire a meaning without this meaning becoming pure information" (Todorov, 1977, p. 233). Instead of trying to memorize individual words to expand their vocabulary (the literary text as pure information), L2 learners can capture the literary dimension of words and phrases, that is, the way the author uses language to evoke feelings in the reader, or to foreshadow what lies ahead or to represent a disappeared world (e.g., Benni's (1994) "La casa bella", chapter 6). This level of reading in L2 requires awareness of the textual interplay between form and discourse, of how, with a particular style, writers make their language "speak"[67] to readers in the silent interaction with the text. A focus on style in L2 literature pedagogy can achieve at once the double purpose of language and culture learning.

Stylistics is "an area of mediation between two disciplines", language and literature, (Widdowson, 1975, p. 4), and a point of intersection among linguistics, literary criticism, language and literature. As such, it can play an important role in the study of L2 literature, since it focuses on the author's particular arrangement of linguistic, literary and rhetorical features within the text. Stylistics can therefore be used to develop students' linguistic and literary abilities simultaneously. Thus, it offers another element towards enhancing the role of L2 literature in language learning. In her investigation into the effects of a theoretical sequenced approach to reading Hemingway's, *Soldier's Home*, Gadjusek (1988) found that explorations of style were related to "a greater awareness of the text" (pp. 248–250). A focus on the author's style can also help address a crucial aspect of L2 literature pedagogy, bridging gaps in students' cultural background through intercultural reflection on style variation and the links between style, culture and education. According to Kramsch (1996), the maximum challenge that readers of L2 texts face is "how to position themselves as readers" (p. 162), since authors usually write texts addressed to readers of their discourse community. Kramsch (1996) compares summaries of a German literary text by students of German in German schools, with American and French students, and shows that overall students "follow the schooled rules of genres learned in their native genres" when they

[67] "Die Sprache spricht als das Geläut der Stille", Heidegger (1959). [Language speaks as the ringing of silence].

write in a foreign language" (p. 171). By becoming aware of their stylistic choices, in reference to different choices made by students from other countries, learners also achieve a wider understanding of the link between culture and style in their own native language and in other societies (p. 173).

This section has reviewed L2 learning and linguistic concepts relevant to the development of the thesis' theoretical framework and research methodology. These concepts are closely related to the reading process, and the following section provides an overview of important developments in reading theory in the foreign language area in relation to reading literature.

2.2.4 An expanded awareness of the reading process: developments in reading research and pedagogy

My discussion of reading theory in this chapter focuses first on developments in L1 and L2 reading relevant to the thesis, considered with reference to their potential pedagogical application to literary texts. The notion that reading in a second language, particularly reading literary texts, should only occur once students have enough vocabulary and morphosyntactic knowledge of the target language was a consequence of formalist and structuralist views of reading — views concentrating on structure rather than meaning; on text rather than reader. Reading was seen as decoding the text, understanding it linguistically rather than culturally, or both. The underlying assumption was that linguistic understanding would lead to conceptual interpreting. This notion of reading was text based, and implied that if a text was syntactically and lexically "simple" it could be adopted with less advanced students of foreign languages. For this reason the use of modified or "simplified" L2 texts, including literary texts became widespread in the 1970s.

Since the mid 1960s, reading has been considered an active skill in first or native languages, "a psycholinguistic guessing game" (Goodman, 1967), a means of making sense of the world and at the same time constructing other worlds. The view of reading as an active process entailed that a view of reading as a more complex process than previously thought and that the ability to read could no longer "be adequately considered as a mere

technical skill denoting the ability to decipher strings of letters on a page" (Säljö, 1997, p. 89). If readers were actively using parts of their brain, it meant that the meaning of what they were reading was also created in their minds and did not rest with the printed text. In literary theory, notions of literary competence, author's intent and reader authority were redefined as the focus shifted from author to text to readers (Rosenblatt, 1978; Eco, 1979).

In his survey article on L2 reading, Davis (1989) emphasises the importance of schema theory and Iser's (1972, 1978, 1980) reader-response theory. If schema emphasizes cognitive processes, reader-response theory stresses emotional processes associated with reading literature, and both theories describe reading as a reader-focused process. According to Iser (1980), readers have to fill the gaps within the text with their personal experience and imagination in order to be able to create meaning. In short, the implied reader, Eco's (1979) *Lector in fabula*, in an ideal interaction with the text, co-produces the text with the author. This has important implications for reading in L2 from a linguistic point of view as the L2 reader may compensate, for instance, for shortage of vocabulary, with imagination and experience. However, from a cultural point of view, it may be more difficult to overcome or avoid misunderstanding. Literary themes are not always universal, and even if they are, they often emerge from the subtext and are expressed through the particular style and discourse choices of the author.

More recent studies comparing visual versus printed texts have found that students tend to focus their attention and retain vocabulary better when they read printed texts (Chun & Plass, 1996). In particular, the use of animated pictures or video has led, in some instances, to a decrease in mental effort in comparison to static pictures (Chun & Plass, 1996; Schnotz & Grzondziel, 1996). Salomon (1983) also found that children perceived television material as more superficial than printed texts, and that they invested less mental effort in comprehending it (Chun & Plass, 1997). Some studies also found that when students are directing their attention to different media, there can be "task interference between modes of processing" (Chun & Plass 1997, p. 7). For example, when watching a film learners are trying to comprehend visual clues and, at the same time, process messages in a foreign language, as well as listen to the music score (Kirby, 1993 quoted in Chun & Plass, 1997,

p. 7). All these different modes of presentation can compete for perceptual resources and have deleterious effects on learning (Chun & Plass 1997). It therefore seems crucial, in order to develop students' L2 literacy, to continue to use written texts in the class and resist the strong push for visual texts, and to be cautious when presenting texts in multimedia environments. Furthermore, Chun (2001) reported that in her study with students of German literature, which analysed different approaches and attitudes to reading text in printed form and on the net, some students perceived visual aids as interference rather than learning tools.

Having briefly overviewed major developments in reading theory that had a strong impact on L2 reading and have implications for L2 literature pedagogy, I will now focus on the terms, principles, aspects and studies most relevant to the research conducted and reported in this thesis. This includes L2 interactive models and approaches to reading (Carrell, Devine & Eskey, 1988): bottom-up and top-down processes; schema theory; background knowledge and reading strategies, and the relationship between L1 and L2 reading. Schema theory, which emerged from the Gestalt psychology of the 1920's and 1930's, affirms that "a new experience is understood by comparison with a stereotypical version of a similar experience held in memory" (Cook, 1994, p. 9). Schema theory could be used to explain cognitive processes such as inferring, remembering and problem solving, thus highlighting that readers had a critical role in the reading process, as they constructed meaning by relating incoming new information to their own background knowledge. This relational process emerges from constantly linking words on the page to meaning, and vice versa, by "matching the words on the page [bottom-up] with the global meaning emerging from the text [top-down], and in turn by matching their global hypothesis [top-down] with the individual words on the page [bottom-up]" (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994, p. 28). The reader's previously acquired knowledge is organized in structures called "schemata", mental representations that allow readers, for example, to anticipate word meaning from the context or infer the text outcome.

As Cook (1994, p. 10) has underlined, schemata also have the potential to hinder comprehension and understanding, since in order to adjust to new information and

experience, the mind must build new schemata. He distinguished discourse into three main types: schema reinforcing, preserving and refreshing. Cook (1994) defines literature as "schema refreshing" discourse, and argues that literary texts "are representative of a type of text which may perform the important function of breaking down existing schemata, reorganizing them, and building new ones" (p. 10). Since schema research is based on the concept that readers only make sense of what they are reading if they can relate it to their pre-existing knowledge of the world, a major concern of schema is also the relationship between culture and reading.

The nexus between culture and reading is stressed by Steffensen and Joag-Dev (1986), who empirically demonstrate the influence that background knowledge has on reading and comprehension. This is exemplified by the idea that readers fill their cultural gaps by "distorting" the meaning of the text to make it fit into their own understanding of the world.[68] Schema-related reading processes may not always be automatic. In L2 reading, an important question was how schema theory could be applied to L2 readers to improve their L2 reading comprehension, and also, how it could be integrated into L2 reading instruction to activate students' previous schemata so they could be "triggered by the ideational content and by the linguistic and discursive structures of the text (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994, p. 28). This gave rise to a whole body of research, models and approaches based on developing students' reading strategies (e.g., Hosenfeld, et al, 1981; Barnett, 1988; Carrell, 1991). Reading strategies are defined as "the mental operations involved when readers purposefully approach a text to make sense of what they read" and "may be either conscious techniques controlled by the reader or unconscious processes applied automatically" (Barnett, 1989, p. 66). Research on reading strategies underline readers' active participation in the reading process, seen as "actions that readers select and control to achieve desired goals or objectives" (Carrell, 1991, p. 167), and as such, in line with schema theory, they constitute the basis for interactive models and approaches to reading (Carrell, Devine & Eskey, 1988).

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[68] Di Pietro (1987) provides some practical ideas of how to apply schema research to the teaching of Italian literature. He suggests using *scenarios*, similar to role-play, to immerse the students in the historical and cultural setting of the text they are approaching. The topic of the *scenario* should mirror the main theme of the text in order to familiarize students to it.

In this thesis I have already made an argument for the inseparability of language, literature and culture. I also argue that no matter which strategies or principles are adopted in classroom practice, it should be within an integrated approach (Widdowson, 1978) to teaching and learning, so that abilities such as reading, writing, speaking and listening can develop simultaneously within a cultural context. Research has actually shown the benefits of reading for other abilities, for example, good reading has been linked to good listening and good writing (Chamot & Kupper, 1989). Chamot and Kupper conducted a longitudinal study investigating the learning strategies of students of Spanish. The study found that students who read effectively in Spanish transferred their L1 strategies to the L2; for example, they focused on sentences rather than single words and guessed the meaning of unknown words. The same happened with the writing task; successful students applied their L1 techniques in Spanish and, before writing they planned the composition and then revised it at the end. However, the ability to transfer reading, listening and writing strategies from first to second language is not always automatic. For educators, the major difficulty is how learning strategies can be internalized and used by less successful students. As already discussed in this chapter, principles of phenomenography and the hermeneutic learning class are essential to the process of learning to learn.

Another important issue, especially relevant when reading literature, is whether students can transfer their L1 reading strategies and competence to reading L2 texts. "Reading in a foreign language: A reading problem or a language problem" (Alderson, 1986) debated whether reading is a transferable skill. For example, if reading is transferable, effective L1 readers should also become effective L2 readers, despite language difficulties. After analysing and discussing several studies, Alderson came to the conclusion that L2 reading seemed to be a reading as well as a language problem, with stronger evidence pointing to a language problem for lower level foreign language students. Fecteau's (1999) study, comparing English (L1) and French (L2) reading comprehensions of literary texts and students' inferring skills, was conducted at the University of Illinois with 42 students. Significant findings from two background questionnaires, recall test and multiple choice tasks, were that L1 and L2 reading skills were interrelated with more proficient L2 learners,

and proficiency in L2 contributed less to L2 comprehension than L1 reading skills. The lack of focus on form was attributed by Fecteau to a combination of literary competence and low proficiency, and was therefore primarily a "language problem". Although Fecteau's (1999) study did not consider instructional factors, her findings will provide a useful comparison with findings from study 2 (see chapter 6).

In summary, the field of second language reading has undergone important changes since the 1970s. Views of L2 reading have shifted from a focus on reading as a code-deciphering language-based skill which excluded the role of readers' background knowledge, to an active strategy-based interpretative process constructed in the interaction between text and reader, to a process of authenticating texts within the L2 class by negotiation of various text interpretations. In the late 1970s and early 1980s reading research shifted the focus from the text to the reader. Meaning is not found in the text *per se*, but in the transaction between text and reader. By transacting with the text it is the readers who create the meaning. L2 reading research into L1 skills transferral, strategy building and schema activating, should be conducted in relation to what students bring to the text, as should L2 instruction.

A strong focus on reading strategies, for example, may cause students to concentrate on directed activities and miss the discursive and cultural levels of the text, responding solely as bottom-up L2 learners and not as active readers of literature. An approach to teaching and learning L2 literature based exclusively on L2 reading research is limiting since it does not take into account aspects such as students' perceptions and responses, nor does it consider, as phenomenography and hermeneutics do, the relevance of comparing different text perspectives. This thesis proposes that students should first experience the text freely (Rosenblatt, 1995), then compare their responses, and focus on language and the links between grammatical and rhetorical structures, vocabulary and culture, their background knowledge and the world presented in the text through the particular voice and style of the writer (see chapter 6).

All theories and principles presented in this section emphasize reading and the role of the reader as an active process. Rather than "teaching" strategies, it is more productive to lead

students to notice their own approach to reading the text and attempt to discover it at an individual level first, and then share their expertise or lacunae with the class (see chapter 6). The following section presents alternate examples, mostly eclectic, of L2 literature pedagogy. The principal aim of presenting innovative examples of literature pedagogy and research into classroom practices is to turn the classroom into a research site to provide a research grounding for answers to the questions discussed in Part A.

2.3 Innovative current thinking about literature pedagogy and its scholarship

"After years of functional approaches to language learning that helped learners approximate the target speech community, there is a renewed interest for the individual voice and the creative utterance" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 131). What is needed is a reorientation from traditional methods and also communicative approaches[69] to literary texts "toward a pedagogy of dialogue that elicits and values diversity and difference" (Kramsch, 1993, p. 131). This section firstly reports relevant investigations and proposals of alternate

[69] In regard to the Australian secondary school context, which will be relevant for the discussion on how students perceive literature reported in chapter 3, Stone (1990) observes: "'The Great God Literature', as non-believers were (and probably still are) wont to call the noble study of the world's *belles-lettres*, received a particularly bad press some twenty years ago [...] one writer saw literature as being "*dans une sorte de purgatoire pédagogique* [Nataf, 1970] [...]. Two things can probably be said with regard to the teaching of literature in secondary schools: firstly, that many teachers were frightened away from treating literature with their senior classes when communicative competence became the yard-stick with which to beat those who taught in accordance with the old line-by-line translation methodology; and secondly, that the teaching of literature is precisely one of those areas which have suffered terribly from an absence of the spirit of creative enterprise. [...] I have already [...] bemoan[ed] that stultifying rigidity of methodology which turns students off literature for good [Stone, 1987]. [...] Traditionally, many of the teaching problems arose from a misunderstanding of the nature of the beast called 'Literature'. Thankfully, works such as Bernd Kast's *Jungendliteratur im kommunikativen Deutschunterricht* [Kast, 1985] have burst on the scene, not only opening our minds to a much wider definition of the term literature than was formerly the case, but also showing us that literature is an ally, rather than an enemy, of teaching oral competence (p. 18). [...] Finally, let me spell out the message that dynamic teaching requires us to take risks in our lessons from time to time, not only to motivate our long-suffering students, but also to keep ourselves on our toes. Risk-taking in the domain of literature study liberates students from the compulsion of treading only on well-worn pathway: it implies granting individuals the freedom to explore for themselves some of the soul-uplifting by-ways of the affective reals [sic]. Indeed, teachers who can be motivated enough to experiment with methodology will soon be wondering who on earth was first responsible for putting about the crass furphy* that students always find literature irrelevant and boring (pp. 20-21). * Australian English for "unsubstantiated rumor"

approaches to L2 literature that reflect current innovative thought in the area; and secondly, presents L2 language principles and concepts relevant to the research programme (as a bridge to the next chapter). I will concentrate on the proposals and studies in L1 and L2 that have either influenced the thesis research design and data analysis or are useful for comparing and making assumptions about research findings.

From the 1990S, a few classroom-based studies and some innovative proposals have emerged focusing on what and how L2 literature contributes to language learning[70], and a few theses have analysed different aspects associated with L2 literature.[71] Three studies in the L2 area (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994; Maxim, 1997; Fedorchuck, 2003) and one chapter from the L1 area (Luperini, 1998) and other relevant articles are discussed. The first two studies have used social and cultural theories and a discourse perspective, whilst Luperini's chapter proposes a hermeneutic approach to L1 literature pedagogy. Kramsch and Nolden's (1994) study in particular, with its critical overview of L1 and L2 literacy theories, provides the link for a review of linguistic and reading theories relevant to the thesis. The authors' view will be confronted with different perspectives of reader-response theory, which they deem as inadequate in an L2 context, presented in the third study (Fedorchuck, 2003), and the hermeneutic approach (Luperini, 1998) in relation to the present thesis research approach.

I will start by examining Kramsch & Nolden's (1994) study because it provides a useful critical evaluation of language, literacy and social theory. Already, in the 1980s, Kramsch (1983) had pleaded for a change in the orientation of classroom discourse from teacher-controlled to discourse-based discussion of literary texts, to restore "classroom students to their full creative role as a community of autonomous and responsible readers" (p. 364) — not unlike the class as a hermeneutic community. She made a strong case for using a

[70] For example: Bouvet, 2000; Maxim 1997; Kramsch and Nolden; Carroli 2000a, Carroli 2003a; Maurer, Carroli & Hillman, 1999.

[71] For example: Bouvet (1998) investigated the literary reading of L2 Intermediate French learners; Tomlison (1997) investigated the role of visualisation in reading L2 literature, Chan (1994) conducted a series of studies and experiments a revised version of Carter's methodological criteria (Carter 1982, 1986) with ESL literature students and teachers in Hong Kong, Talif (1991) thoroughly surveyed the teaching of ESL literature at secondary level in Malaysia, and Yeoh (1995) investigated the selection and role of literary texts in the ESL secondary classroom in four metropolitan schools in Melbourne, Australia.

discourse perspective in the teaching of literary texts.[72] Ten years later Kramsch, with Nolden (1994), presents a strong argument for a "reassessment of the 20th century split between language study and literary/cultural studies" (p. 28) and a redefinition of literacy in foreign language in view of the renewed interest in literature as a source for intercultural discussion. The authors pose the question of whether this new literacy should not be more student-centred and "based more on cross-cultural awareness and critical reflection" (p. 28). In the article they make a case for using a cross-cultural L2 approach for teaching literature at the intermediate language levels since, according to them, it gives teachers the chance to rethink "the fundamental educational paradox" they must confront: "the obligation to socialize their students into a given social order and the responsibility to make them develop their own particular voice by contesting the social order" (p. 28).

Kramsch & Nolden (1994) argue for an "oppositional practice" framework (de Certeau, 1980) which, "is better suited to take into account the unique (op)positional stance of the foreign cultural reader interacting with a foreign cultural text" (p. 28). The findings from the application of this framework are reported through the analysis of examples of students' summaries of a short story by Yüksel Pazarkaya (1980), "Deutsche Kastanien"[73] which,

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[72] "Finally, the discourse between a literary text and its readers and among readers of the same texts can serve as the link between communicative language teaching and the teaching of literature. [...] Readers understand a literary text as they understand themselves and each other responding to and rewriting the text. The pleasure they derive from it is both individual and communal. A discourse perspective can help build the social reality of the student group and at the same time sensitize each student to the [a]esthetic, game-like quality of all language interaction" (Kramsch, 1983, p. 364).

[73] As the authors reported in note 19 (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994, p. 35), Pazarkaya's story is reprinted in the second year textbook by Ronald W. Walker, Erwin Tschirner, Brigitte Nikolai and Gerhard F. Strasser, *Assoziationen: Deutsch für die Mittelstufe* (San Francisco: McGraw Hill, 1991) 201. The prose narrative was read by students in their third semester of German in the USA and deals with discrimination against Ender, a young boy of Turkish origin who sees German as his native language, by his favourite playmate, Stefan. When Ender goes home from school he asks his parents whether he is German or Turkish, his mother remains silent because she does not know how to explain why his friend considers him a foreigner; his father answers him that he is German but was born in Turkey. Students were given the following assignment "Fassen Sie die Geschichte in 4-5 Sätzen zusammen" (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994, p. 30). [Write a summary in 4-5 sentences]. [My translation].

like all L2 reading and writing activities, should be considered as paradigmatic examples of oppositional practice (p. 29).[74]

Factors such as individual and collective dialogue are deemed as necessary steps toward "change" not just in social theory but also in educational, hermeneutic, L2 discourse-based language. As Chambers (1991) observes, "oppositional behaviour does not *seek* change, although it may produce it, because it does not perceive power as illegitimate (even though it is experienced as alienating)" (p. 6). Instead of challenging the established power, oppositional practices try to solve immediate problems. For example, as reported in Kramsch & Nolden, L2 learners, in trying to find their "authorial voice" in a language and about a culture other than their own, have the chance to be "other in their own language and to be themselves in someone else's language (1994, p. 30). This context provides the opportunity for a cross-cultural "dialogic literacy" in which students can grow cognitively, critically and aesthetically. As the authors explain the term, cross-cultural is understood as "the relational *process* of border crossing" and the teaching of cross-cultural literacy as "facilitating the students' understanding of the essence of particularity and how this particularity is inscribed in the very language that people use". Oppositional practices can be developed "by exploiting to the full the dialogic encounter between a literary text and its foreign cultural readers" (Kramsch & Nolden 1994, p. 30) and can be used to distance students from obvious contexts and forms of talk so they can notice and debate them.

Kramsch and Nolden (1994) illustrate the "discourse of oppositional reading", applied in the prose narrative classroom with thirty American low-intermediate students in their third semester of German, by showing "how students can be helped to identify the particular voice with which they as 'authors' responded to the original" (p. 30).

[74] De Certeau's social theory of oppositional practice is not resistance, dissidence or contestation. It just claims the right of readers to position themselves at equal par with, i.e., in (op)osition to, the text, by virtue of the very linguistic and conceptual power the text has given them. By becoming aware of their oppositional stance, readers can enter into dialogue with the text and with other readers and eventually, through this dialogue, experience "changes in desire" that potentially lead to social chance (Kramsch & Nolden 1994, pp. 29–30).

The authors identified three main ways in which the students rewrote the story "Deutsche Kastanien": 1) "re-evaluation of the events; 2) restructuring and re-weighting of the information; and 3) re-location of the story's meaning" (pp. 30–31). In the first way, Kramsch & Nolden (1994, pp. 31–34) found four types of story evaluation, which they categorised as implicit, intradiegetic, extradiegetic and global. In brief, the evaluations moved from summaries closely related to the original story to a focus on the characters' motivations and feelings, to "authorial evaluations of the theme of the story" at the end of the summary, and finally, to synthesis, focusing on the problem faced by the protagonist. In the second type of summary, students evaluated the story with their authorial voice and also restructured the information by changing the narrative sequence and the value placed on the facts in the story. In the third way of transforming the story, "the student authors" inserted "their own valuation and evaluation of the original textual events into their hypertext," and "refocussed the information structure in the very syntax they used", thus relocating "the meaning of the story into a new discursive structure (pp. 32–33). The authors remarked that, in this last type of summary, the L2 students' discourse ability exceeded their linguistic ability.

Overall, Kramsch and Nolden (1994, pp. 33–34) found that all students' summaries were defined in opposition to the original text, restructuring and relocating its central meaning. As the authors explain, misreadings were discussed in class, not to teach students the proper interpretation, but to highlight the fact that summaries are actual interpretations and ways of rewriting somebody else's story, from the perspective of the students' own cultural and social background and context.[75]

I agree with the authors that learners must be treated as potential "heteroglossic narrators" and not as "deficient monoglossic writers". I also agree that oppositional practice, or indeed other practices influenced by phenomenographic, hermeneutic and reader-response principles, must be validated by the teacher in order to acquire meaning and be

[75] "The development of cross-cultural literacy entails making visible the myriad ways in which foreign readers enter into dialogue with a text when they do as simple an exercise as summarizing it. It requires also a conscious reflection with the students on the linguistic and cultural context of their own and of the original text" (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994, p. 34).

transformative. In an L2 literature context, L1 theories in particular (e.g., reader response) need to be integrated with other principles and practices that help L2 readers notice cultural and linguistic differences and similarities (see chapter 6). I also agree that the essence of literacy — an expansion of aesthetic and critical consciousness — should be included in developing cross-cultural competence, by placing the text in its production and reception context by individual students as "authors/readers" (p. 34). Finally, I agree that "oppositional practice" "opens up the literary text to a variety of readings rather than asking for one affirmative response", and requires "social commitment, for it implies that literacy in a foreign language is not an isolated individual achievement, but a social process of rewriting one-self through dialogue with another" (Kramsch & von Hoene, 1995).

The view of literacy proposed, applied and analysed by Kramsch & Nolden (1994) is certainly "educationally sound because it makes learners conscious of the way their language, be it first or second, shapes the very reality they live in" (p. 34). Nonetheless, I would argue that some of the aims and principles of phenomenographic research or hermeneutics, albeit in an L1 context, are not dissimilar; for example, the necessity for the educator to highlight students' variations in textual readings as a way of encouraging reflection, discussion, and potentially change. The focus on respecting and valuing students' responses and interpretations is also a strong element of reader-response theory, while the importance placed on situating the text in its context of production and reception is a principle of reception theory.

Similarly, the work of another social theorist, Bourdieu (1991), on language and symbolic power, and Derrida's (1982) idea of différance, proved very apt in Maxim's (1997) bold experimental study conducted with beginner students of German at the University of Texas. The study compares students' learning of grammar and development of cultural awareness through conventional grammar lessons and textbook readings, and through the reading of a 142-page popular literature novel.[76] As Maxim (1997) reports, the popular novel was

[76] The experimental group (27 students) read the popular novel during the semester, in addition to following the standard syllabus of regular grammar instruction classes, including edited readings and culture notes from their textbook, *Zusammen*. The control group (32 students) followed only the standard syllabus. Both groups followed the same syllabus for the first three weeks of the semester and then sat for a pre-test of their reading

chosen because it adopted a Western, rather than strictly German, cultural perspective and the researcher wanted to investigate whether an authentic text in a culturally familiar genre, which contained familiar features taken from American print media romances, film and television could, with pedagogical mediation, facilitate the critical thinking capabilities of beginners. Since American students were presumably familiar with the genre and many of the topic and features in the novel, they could use their schemata to access the text, rather than relying exclusively on their language ability. Exercises on the text were conducted in English for the first three chapters to facilitate students' ability to identify and characterize the cultural implication of character's behaviours and events, along the lines of Bourdieu's symbolic power theory, and subsequently they performed their analytical tasks in German, aided by peer work and familiarity with textual features and genre.

The training program aimed at helping beginners "identify how textual language signals cultural difference" (n. p.), investigated whether students of the experimental group would be disadvantaged by a reduced focus on explicit cultural content, as presented in the textbook, and whether an authentic text which contained culturally familiar material could increase students' cultural awareness of the L2 culture. In brief, the treatment consisted of cultural sensitivity questions based on Derrida's notions of différance and difference which had three components, identifying: 1) différance; 2) what a text defers or omits talking about; 3) how texts differ from views by others or in other texts.[77]

A post-test for cultural awareness, reading and word-recognition ability, conducted in the last week of the semester showed that the experimental group improved their pre-test scores 120% more than the control group, based on the grader's assessment. More striking was the

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ability, cultural awareness and word recognition ability. For the rest of the semester the experimental group replaced all textbook reading assignments with the popular novel, with daily class readings of 4–5 pages, and spent half of each class hour reading the novel instead of reading the textbook excerpts.

[77] Maxim also used a series of exercises whose sequence was aimed at increasing cognitive and linguistic competence, and pair and group analysis, guided by questions aimed at recognizing what Bourdieu (1991) calls symbolic power by "recognizing the utterances, characters, and behaviours that exercise symbolic power" so that students could gain "access to the underlying system of thought within the novel. [...] and extrapolate this analysis onto a larger plane and assess the broader culture out of which the novel arose" (n. p.).

qualitatively different answer styles developed by the students.[78] Maxim reported that, based on their post-test scores on the recall protocols, the experimental group's reading comprehension increased 89% more than the control group, and they performed as well in the language test, even though they had spent half an hour of each class reading the novel. As Maxim underlines, "such findings [...] affirm a pedagogy for the lower division that enables adult students to use their cognitive capabilities to assess an authentic text as a cultural document" (n. p.). Not unlike Kramsch and Nolden (1994), Maxim also stresses the need to provide students with "the forum to critically examine authentic texts in order to discover for themselves their cultural significance" with the help of key reading strategies.

Fedorchuck's (2003) pilot study provides an example of how Byram's (1989) framework for L2 cultural studies and Kramsch's (1993) principle of the inseparability of language and culture can be combined with reader response theory.[79] The study was based on Fedorchuck's teaching experience with students in their 5th year of an English major at the Lviv National University in Ukraine. Fedorchuck (2003) gathered 27 descriptions of students' reading processes with literary texts[80], using two types of analysis: content analysis of the students' reading process in both languages (Ukrainian and English); and contrastive reading (in Ukrainian (native) versus English (target) language) in interpreting literature. Briefly, the aim of the study was to compare reading processes while reading literary texts in L1 and L2, to investigate "how readers signal[led] their own culturally-based process of reading and interpretation in their native and target (English) languages" (p. 1).

Fedorchuck adopted Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional approach to reading, which distinguished between "efferent" and "aesthetic" reading. According to Rosenblatt (1995), "efferent" reading is focused on analysis, with the reader's main aim being to carry away

[78] Whereas the control group could identify relatively few contrasting features between the sample text and American equivalents, the experimental group had developed a sense of difference in the sense of Derrida. They consistently looked for ways in which texts were different, deferred ideas, and differed from English language counterparts (transparency) (n. p.).

[79] Other articles provide interesting applications and investigations of reader-response theory in the L2 classroom (e.g., Ali, 1994; Paran, 2001; Carlisle, 2000).

[80] Neither Fedorchuck (2003) nor Maxim (1997) provides the titles of the literary texts read.

information from the text, whilst "aesthetic" reading is focused on understanding somebody else's experience, hence the affective dimension is more prevalent than the cognitive one. For example, whilst reading a sociological essay, readers must concentrate especially on the "impersonal, publicly verifiable aspects of what the words evoke" (p. xvii) and take away information from the text; this type of reading is thus defined as "efferent". Instead, Rosenblatt explains that a more affective reading of texts is necessary, besides efferent reading, in order to read literary texts.[81]

Rosenblatt also explains that these "reading stances" or "shifts of attention" between efferent and aesthetic reading, are "not opposites but form a continuum of possible transactions with a text" (p. xvii) and readers continuously move and adjust their stances while reading texts. Rosenblatt uses the term "transaction" instead of interaction because, as she explains, interactions describe "two distinct entities acting on each other", whilst transaction is less mechanistic and "permits emphasis on the to-and-fro, spiralling, nonlinear, continuously reciprocal influence of reader and text in the making of meaning" (p. xvi). This meaning takes place "during the transaction between the reader and the signs on the page" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. xvi).

Fedorchuck attempted to capture these shifts in students' text perception with comparative analysis of native-foreign reading processes. The study found that most students evaluated reading in L1 and L2 as not very different, and a few students indicated as main reasons for any difference either "losses in reading due to unknown vocabulary" (Fedorchuck, 2003, p. 4) or cultural differences, for example difficulty in understanding English humour. Findings from the content analysis of students' comments on the reading process in Ukrainian and English revealed a movement along the continuum, "efferent (educative) aesthetic (entertaining) reading" (p. 5). The aesthetic stance was found to be considerably more prevalent in L1, and efferent or aesthetic-efferent more dominant in L2 reading processes. The movement occurred in opposite directions: from aesthetic to efferent stance

[81] "To produce a poem or play, the reader must broaden the scope of attention to include the personal, affective aura and associations surrounding the words evoked and must focus on — experience, live through — the moods, scenes, situations being created during the transaction" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. xvii).

in L1 and from efferent to aesthetic in L2. This difference was partly attributable to the "switch code" (Kramsch, 1998, p. 84) which occurs when readers switch from L1 to L2 culturally and psychologically. As the researcher suggested, the difference in L1 and L2 reading processes may also be attributable to other factors, such as cultural attitudes towards reading literature.[82]

By combining L2 principles of L2 language and culture teaching with efferent and aesthetic principles of reading, coined by Rosenblatt, who can be considered the forerunner of reader-response theory, Fedorchuck (2003) quite successfully compared L1 and L2 literature reading processes, linked the results to linguistic and cultural factors and highlighted some important pedagogical implications: "students should be helped to become aware of how their own cultural background influences their own [...] process of reading" and educators "need to help students see clearly how both aesthetic and efferent components make up a literary interpretation and that comprehension and competence is[sic] based on both aspects of reading (Fedorchuck, 2003, p. 7).

Some principles and ideas pertaining to L1 theoretical models, such as reader-response and hermeneutics are therefore useful in building a theoretical framework for research into L2 literature pedagogy. In his book on how to reform literature pedagogy in Italian schools, and in particular in the chapter "La classe come comunità ermeneutica" "The class as a hermeneutic community", Luperini (1998, pp. 13–20)[83] strongly advocated a hermeneutic reading of literary texts as a way to encourage young students to learn to compare and negotiate their views with those of others. He proposed a pedagogic model that opposed the structuralist models of text reading used in Italian education since the 1970s.

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[82] The shortcomings of reader-response theory are attributable to the fact that it is "modeled on the paradigm of national literatures read by native readers" and therefore it does not highlight "the gaps in a literary text as culture specific phenomena" (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994, p. 29). Nevertheless, we owe the focus on the reader largely to reader-response theory and to Rosenblatt the aesthetic-efferent notion of reading which "captures the dialogic nature of reading and meaning-making (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994, p. 29).

[83]The model is based on Hans George Gadamer (1975) whom Luperini defines as the founder of "new" hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1976).

For Luperini, the structuralist model, focused too strongly on descriptive exercises on the text, was partly to blame if young people had distanced themselves from reading literature. The model he proposed, the class as a hermeneutic community, has the 'inquiring' class as its central aspect. In this model, with their attempts to give meaning to the text, students also learn to confront, compare, divide and collectively recompose the text, and ultimately come closer to 'the pleasure' (Barthes, 1973) of reading literary texts. In the section 'Yes, there is a text in this class (1998, pp. 17–180), Luperini insists however that the first reading stage should not disregard students' ability (or inability) to read the text effectively (at the structural level), whilst in reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1995; Fish, 1980) the emphasis is more on encouraging students to experience the text and express their own feelings and interpretations. According to Luperini, teachers should be first of all intellectuals who pose themselves questions about the meaning and the value of texts and of literary tradition, and their greatest ambition should be to transform students into intellectuals (1998, p. 127). He firmly believes that the literary text is the only text capable of offering students a path towards learning to respect others' opinions whilst also defending their own.

Luperini's concept of the class as a hermeneutic community is based on Gadamer's (1975) philosophical hermeneutics, which stresses the notion of "Verständigung".[84] "Verständigung" encompasses both understanding and communicating and involves the teacher as intellectual, as envisaged by Luperini, applying this concept to the class "as an academic practice by making it conscious and reflected, by drawing students' attention to how they are participating in negotiating meaning" (Peck, 1992, p. 5). Thus, theory and practice, the academic and critical can blend in the mediated reflective and interpretative process, and if research is conducted into this process, as Gadamer states, it becomes the matter or object of study (same term as used in phenomenography).[85]

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[84] "The dialogue is a process of reaching understanding/communication [*Verständigung*]. Thus as part of every genuine dialogue, one enters into the other person, allows [that person's] viewpoints to really matter, and projects oneself into him insofar as one wants to understand him, not actually as this individuality but what he says. What is to be understood is the real legitimacy of his perceptive so that we can agree with one another in the matter [*die Sache*]" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 363). Translated and quoted in Peck (1992, p. 5).

[85] "In the foreign language classroom, in particular, where communication and communicative competence are the central issue, difference emerges between the familiar and the alien, and the political import of power strategies in such hierarchies comes to the fore. [...] The self-subjects must therefore deconstruct the power

This process of "de-authorising" positions in the class is essential to classroom dialogue, as "understanding emerges when participants in this discourse recognize how their own histories shape their "reading' of the classroom, this newly textualized situation" (Peck, p. 5). The class as a hermeneutic community (Luperini, 1998; Peck, 1992), like other pedagogical propositions presented in this section, provides examples of alternate approaches to the traditional lecture format or language-based methods of teaching and learning L2 literature. These alternate approaches are also good examples of how to conduct investigations into the study and learning of L2 (and L1) language and literature, and as such, provide ideas for conducting further investigations as well as providing insights into L2 literature pedagogy and students' literature learning in other countries.

2.4 Conclusion

In summary, Part A of the chapter has considered the concepts of language, literature and culture and their relationships, and analysed how concepts from literary theory, pedagogy, applied linguistics, social cultural theory and philosophy have contributed to shaping the debate on the role of literature in the L2 curriculum. It has also discussed key issues that have spurred the debate on the role of L2 literature, yet have yielded sparse data-based research. Particularly lacking is research into students' perceptions of literature in general and of the inclusion of L2 literature in the L2 curriculum.

Part B has reviewed how thinking about literature and its role in the L2 language curriculum has evolved in the 20th and 21st centuries. It has also highlighted the lack of studies focusing on students' perceptions of this role and its impact on their learning. Finally, the chapter has introduced theories and investigations relating to literary studies,

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position inscribed for them by the institution and acknowledge their subjective imprint [what Gadamer calls prejudice [*Vorurteile*] on the knowledge and understanding mediated in the classroom [...] (Peck, 1992, p. 5).

literature and language pedagogy, educational theory, philosophy and social-cultural theory, drawn upon in the next chapter to develop a research design and analytical method to answer the thesis research questions.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

"There is not a real world 'out there' and a subjective world 'in here'. The world is not constructed by the learner, nor is it imposed upon her; it is *constituted* as an internal relation between them."

(Marton and Booth, 1997, p. 13).

3 Introduction

This chapter provides a personal note in defence of my research approach and a description of the research methods used to conduct the studies reported in the thesis on the basis of the theoretical, conceptual and pedagogical principles presented in the previous chapter.[86]

The research reported in this thesis was not conducted according to an objectivist metaparadigm characterised by a focus on external reality, separated from subjective imagination and based on oppositional relations between subject and object with the aim to of presenting an objective picture of reality through quantitative methods; the methods used for the research instead are based on a qualitative hermeneutic metaparadigm which focuses on "human life in context", stresses the importance of language as "a source and expression of meaning" which "requires interpretation" (Higgs, 1998, p. 27), and a phenomenographic paradigm that stresses the centrality of learners and their perceptions of, and approaches to the object of study. The number of students involved is too small for a representative statistical analysis from a quantitative perspective interested in quantifying for example number of lexical items learnt after reading a text. My aim instead is to provide qualitative

[86] Having been a student of languages, literature and linguistics first and later also a researcher and educator in those fields, what struck me in particular after conducting research in literature and linguistics was how disconnected the objects of research were. Separating pedagogy from how students acquired grammar or ignoring the complicated nuances of classroom dynamics to obtain neat statistical data did not satisfy my interest in human relationships rather than numbers. My strong literary background and passion for literature caused me to become frustrated when students seemed not to share my interest and looked at me perplexed and almost amused or angry when they got their assignments back. During my Masters' studies on Italian narrative in Adelaide (Australia) and Bologna (Italy) I studied literary theory and the history of literary criticism and was particularly taken by reader-response theory, hermeneutics and feminist theories of reading and writing. All focused on the subject rather than the object of reading and were not canon-focused. I had already deviated as far as possible from the canon by choosing an almost forgotten female author, half Italian half Cuban, who started writing about women's issues and dilemmas in the 1930s — a complete waste of time according to a prominent professor whose course I was following in Bologna. Even then I was dissatisfied with the predominant attitude of lecturers who did not take into account students' perceptions of what was taught or if it was ever learnt, and their hard judgement of some of the students' choices. That is why when I became a tertiary educator and decided to pursue doctoral research, I decided to unite topics and research areas that are often split in L2 pedagogy: language and literature; teaching and learning; applied linguistics and pedagogy. The problem was, how to reconcile these areas, which would help me design studies and pedagogical approaches to best support my research aims? I found no examples in applied linguistics at the time, and was never convinced that instruction makes no difference to learning. I was drawn to phenomenography and hermeneutics in particular because of the focus on the learner and the emphasis on learning as a collective process that can lead to change.

descriptions of how students perceive, approach and understand the object of study. The phenomenon studied, students' perceptions, approaches to, and understanding of literature, is considered far more important than the research methods, however, precisely because the type of methods, used are qualitative and interpretation of results is subjective, it is crucial to provide a detailed description of the methodology and measures undertaken to avoid biased and overly subjective interpretation of the results.

For the research, carried out at the Australian National University between 1998 and 2000 with students of L2 Italian, I adopted a cross-sectional design and a staged, cyclic approach. I was concurrently the researcher and the language arts educator of the students with whom I conducted the investigations outlined in Table 3.1.

For all three investigations, at the beginning of the semester I administered a "Survey of Italian attitudes toward the study of literature" (appendix B) which sought information on the students' background and attitudes towards literature through a combination of open and closed questions. The following sub-sections outline first the thesis' general methodological approach and then describe separately the study samples, methods of data collection and analysis of each investigation: preliminary; studies 1 and 2.

Table 3.1 —Outline of investigations and main methods of data collection

1998: Preliminary investigation

- Survey of Italian students' attitudes towards the study of literature
- Pre and post study reading, comprehension and lexical analysis exercises
- "What is literature"? — Interactive classroom exercise
- Students' opinion scales of each of the literary texts read.

1999: Study 1

- Survey of Italian students' attitudes towards the study of literature
- Interviews
- Students' journals
- Teacher's notes

2000: Study 2

- Survey of Italian students' attitudes towards the study of literature
- Cycles of repeated reading/reflection/writing/comparison/discussion/re-writing of 3 related literary texts
- Final written assignment on 3 literary texts
- Evaluations of change (students; marker; educator/researcher)

3.1 General methodological issues

This section presents the purpose of the research programme, the context in which it was undertaken, and expands the research questions already outlined in chapters 1 and 2. This is followed by an overview of the thesis methodology and defence of its appropriateness for the research programme, which includes issues of validity, reliability and generalisability.

3.1.1 Aims of the research programme

As already stated in chapters 1 and 2, the primary aim of the research is to enhance the role of literary texts in second language learning, specifically, L2 Italian. In order to fulfil the thesis' primary aim, the research programme will investigate aspects and factors deemed as crucial for optimising students' learning experiences of L2 literary texts. This research programme views learning and teaching, language, culture and literature, as inextricably intertwined. Ultimately, the aim of the research is to show that to enhance the role of L2 literature it is necessary that both educator and students perceive learning as a circular process based on educators' awareness of students' background and perceptions, students' expanding awareness of the object of study and their study approach, my expanding awareness of students' text understanding and study approach, the whole class expanded metalinguistics awareness and text understanding through comparison of variation, discussion, negotiation, and the students' and my change in perspective, perceptions, schemata of the world of L2 literature learning.

3.1.2 Context of the study

The research was conducted at the Australian National University (ANU), a small research-oriented university situated in Canberra,[87] the Australian capital, renowned internationally for its high quality research outcomes. The Italian Program is part of the School of Language Studies, located in the Faculties. Until 1998 the Program consisted of a 3-year major formed by core language subjects and additional optional courses in Italian literature, politics and culture, and the possibility of completing honours (4th year) mainly by research. The optional courses, including literature subjects often were withdrawn because of low enrolments, and literature was not required as part of the Italian language major. In 1997 the Italian Program also added a new optional course, Women in Italian society, since it was expected that it would attract more students. During 1998 the Italian Program underwent a major revision and was restructured into 4 language levels, each subdivided into two semester courses:[88] Italian Studies — Introductory 1 & 2, Continuing 1 & 2, Intermediate 1 & 2 and Advanced 1 & 2, which replaced the 3-year structure. The new 4-level structure was implemented in 1999.[89] The new structure of the Italian Program was intended to facilitate the enrolment of students with previous knowledge of the language as well as providing introductory students with the opportunity to further develop their language abilities in the Continuing level.

The preliminary investigation, carried out in 1998 in a changing curricular context was conducted with 27 students enrolled in Italian II. Students who had been enrolled in first

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[87] ANU was founded in 1946 exclusively as a research university. In 1960 undergraduate studies were added after the amalgamation with the Canberra University College and the formation of two parts: The Faculties (teaching and research) and the Institute of Advanced Studies (research and postgraduate studies).

[88] In Australia, the second semester begins in the middle of July and ends at the end of October. Exams are then held in mid November. Students enrolled in Italian Studies-Continuing 2 have either done three semesters of Italian at university, starting as complete beginners, or have had some previous experience with the language, for example three years of high school, or an intensive course in Italy.

[89] The 4th year is still offered with the possibility of undertaking an advanced course in Italian or in comparative European courses or in combination with other disciplines (combined Honours degree). A placement test was also introduced for students enrolling for the first time in Italian Studies with previous experience (e.g., secondary school, travel or work in Italy, family language background) of Italian. As convener of the Italian Program, responsible for the program revision, from 1997 to 1999 I redesigned all language core subjects to include literature, cinema, art and history components.

year Italian were in their third semester of language study and had read a few brief literary texts. There were also some students with previous knowledge of Italian, some adult students with extensive literature knowledge and conversely, some young students from high school with very limited or no background in literary reading. The students' language proficiency level was also quite varied, with a high percentage of students with limited proficiency language levels and conversely, small numbers of students with high and medium language proficiency levels. Students read short stories, poems or excerpts every two weeks and had a 1-hour face-to-face literature class per week. Students also attended 2 hours per week of focus on form and culture and 1 hour of video/audio in the Language Centre.

Study 1 was conducted with 12 students in semester 1, 1999, after the Italian Program was changed to a 4-level structure, with students of Italian Studies — Intermediate 1. Some students were in their 5th semester of Italian at ANU whilst others entered the Intermediate level because of their previous knowledge of Italian. As in 1998, language proficiency and literary abilities and experiences were quite dissimilar. Students read a selection of short stories and poems, mainly from an anthology of literary texts (Italiano & Marchegiani Jones, 1992). Besides the literature component, the Intermediate level course consisted of 2 hours of "focus on form and culture" classes and a 1-hour aural/video autonomous learning in the Language Centre. On average, students read a short story every two weeks with a 1-hour face-to-face literature class per week.

Study 2 was conducted in the latter part of semester 2, 2000 with 16 students of Italian Studies — Continuing 2, some in their 4th semester of Italian at ANU, some with previous knowledge of Italian, in an authentic learning environment (rather than under strict experimental conditions). Language proficiency levels and literary abilities were more homogeneous than in the 1998 and 1999 samples, with more medium level proficiency students. Students read three brief short stories and had a 2-hour face-to-face literature class per week. Students also attended 2 hours weekly of focus on form and culture classes and a 1-hour autonomous video/audio in the Language Centre.

All three investigations were classroom-based. The literary texts were fully integrated into the language curriculum but treated first and foremost as 'literature', and not just as 'tools' for learning grammatical structures (as is often the case within communicative teaching approaches) or analysing 'issues' (as often happens in the cultural studies approaches), embedded in a pedagogical approach based on the inseparability of language and culture (Kramsch, 1993). The pedagogical classroom approach taken for all three investigations was interactive and discourse-based, but two further dimensions, variation and class comparison of variation, were added to the pedagogical design adopted for study 2, the hermeneutic class, understood as a locum of enquiry.

3.1.3 General research questions for the thesis

As highlighted in chapter 1 (1.2), the thesis aspires to address a number of issues arising from the primary research aim, enhancing the role of L2 literature in learning L2 Italian language and culture. Key questions underlying studies 1 and 2 are outlined in the table below to clarify the scope and evolving nature of the research programme:

Table 3.2 — Outline of key questions for studies 1 and 2

Study 1 (1999) Stage 1: *Survey* Stage 2 — *Approaches to the study of L2 literary texts* Do students read literary texts in their native language? How do students approach reading L2 literature? How is it different from reading in their native language? Do they approach texts as story, as language, as culture, as an aesthetic experience or all of these aspects? What processes, strategies and techniques do students use to assist their reading? What kind of pedagogical support do students need in their literary courses? What characterises students' approaches? Are these approaches linked to students' perceptions of literature in general or their perceived role of L2 literature as emerged from the questionnaire? Are there any relationships between particular perceptions, approaches and learning achievements and outcomes as shown in their learning journals and in their final grades?
Study 2 (2000) Pre-process: *Survey* Process: *Course design*: What kind of pedagogy can encourage learners to see the meaningful links between language and culture in literature as well as the aesthetic, universal and cross-cultural aspects of literature? What type of instruction and tasks and activities can unobtrusively help students detect key textual aspects that will lead them to discover these links by themselves? What role can the language arts educator play to encourage language, cultural and literary awareness at home and in the classroom? What role can students play to enhance their learning and their peers' learning? Can there be change in learning? How does change occur? What theoretical principles and pedagogical practices of educational, language, literary, philosophical and social cultural can contribute to enhance the learning and teaching of L2 literature? *Pedagogical cyclic process: repeated reading and writing:* Can a pedagogy based on individual repeated reading of texts, writing, collective comparison of response variation, discussion and re-writing contribute to make the L2 literature study experience meaningful for students of Italian, in terms of personal growth and also improvement in linguistic, literary and cultural abilities? *Evaluative process — students*: At the end of the process, how do students perceive the pedagogical cyclic process? Do they perceive any changes in their approach to the study of Italian literature, their reading approach and their general achievement in Italian? To what do they attribute these changes? *Evaluative process — educator/researcher; first marker:* How do the researcher/educator and first marker evaluate the group as a whole in terms of change at the end of the process?

3.1.4 The research approach

The questions outlined in the previous sections, all aimed at enhancing the role of literature in learning and teaching L2 Italian language and culture, can be addressed best with an eclectic research approach. Building a theoretical framework and a methodology drawing solely from L2 theory and research to attempt to answer these questions is problematic, because available investigations into L2 literature do not look at learners' perceptions or the links between learners' perceptions, approaches and change in learning or the impact of pedagogy on the overall learning experience of L2 literature students.

In order to fulfil the thesis' primary aim it was also necessary to identify which were the key factors in determining the literature experience as reported in previous discussions and investigations conducted by other educators and researchers in chapter 2. Some of these key factors emerged in chapter 2. For example, L1 theory and research into reading and responding to literature and psychological and psycholinguistic reading studies stress the crucial role played by readers' background and background knowledge in understanding new texts. Reader response theory also stresses the importance of knowing students in order to be able to select appropriate literary texts that will engage and stimulate students. This engagement also relies on students being allowed to experience the text and express their first emotional responses freely.

In a non native language environment however, as underlined by L2 reading studies there are linguistic constraints such as vocabulary and language structures that can hinder literal comprehension, whilst rhetorical and stylistic constraints can result in the inability to relate language form to the intrinsic meaning of the literary text as well as cultural worlds and social values. In this respect, research reviewed in chapter 2 points to the crucial role played by awareness, noticing, consciousness of the object of study and approach to study. For example, phenomenography and L2 consciousness-raising theory maintain that awareness is a key element of the learning process. Phenomenography, similarly to hermeneutics, points to variation as another key element of learning to be brought to the fore in classroom reflection and discussion. General educational studies, mainly phenomenographic, have shown that perception of the object of study is linked to students' study approach (Marton & Säljö, 1984; Trigwell & Prosser, 1996) and study approach to learning outcome (Marton & Säljö, 1976; van Rossum & Schenk, 1984; Trigwell & Prosser, 1991).

In view of these findings and theoretical principles, the debated relevance of L2 literature for learning language and culture, the lack of studies into students' experiences of L2 literature as well as the curricular situation of the ANU Italian program, I opted for an eclectic research approach that would allow me firstly to understand students' perceptions of literature and the role of L2 literature within the language and culture curriculum, as well

as students' approaches to the study of literary texts and how these affect their learning. Secondly, taking into account findings from the research on learners' perceptions and approaches, I investigated the effects of a pedagogical approach aimed at enhancing the role of literature in the L2 classroom by enhancing, at every reading cycle, students' potential for an overall learning experience, as will be explained in detail in section 3.4 of this chapter.

Methods of data collection and analysis for studies 1 and 2 were qualitative, except for the survey into students' language and literature background and students' attitudes towards the inclusion of literature in the L2 Italian curriculum. The pre and post test design and opinion scales of literary texts used in the 1998 preliminary investigation were found inadequate, since they provided mainly quantitative indications of how students' marks changed at the beginning and at the end of the semester and quantitative ratings of texts and tasks. They did not however offer any insight into the reasons behind the improvement or students' lack of learning achievement. The most insightful data in 1998 was students' written and oral responses to the exercise delving into their understanding of "literature" because it revealed a surprising variety in the ways in which students defined certain texts as literary or not literary. These results led me to reflect on my own perspective on literature and spurred me on to research into students' approaches to the study of L2 literature and to look for suitable qualitative theories and research methods.

On the whole, phenomenography was the methodology that had more influence on the thesis' research approach because of its focus on awareness in learning as well as the existence of a considerable body of phenomenographic research, including tested methods of data collection and analysis, linking students' perceptions of the object of study to their study approaches and their learning outcomes. The relational conceptual interpretation of teaching and learning, research and practice underlying phenomenography is particularly suited to the research aims of this thesis, seeking to bring research into practice and use research findings for teaching and learning practice.

According to phenomenographic theory, there is a limited number of qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptualise, understand, perceive and learn various phenomena. Methodologically, these differing experiences are characterised in terms of categories of description. These categories aim to describe the variation within different ways of understanding phenomena, in this case, students' experiences of literary texts. A crucial point made by Marton (1981) is that variation occurs not just between, but also within individuals, thus a student's perceptions and approaches to the study of literature is not constant and fixed but, for example, can show variation within a short space of time, or change as a consequence of a particular pedagogical approach. Part of the research approach involves a search for logical relationships between categories, such that they build on each other in the form of hierarchies of inclusive awareness as will become evident in the results chapters (4, 5 and 6).

This ordered set of categories of description is called the outcome space of the phenomenon (Marton, 1992). The organization of data into hierarchically related categories according to level and simultaneity of awareness and understanding of phenomena is a crucial aspect in phenomenographic methodology which deserves further explanation (Marton & Booth, 1997, pp. 107–109). Phenomenographically, a way of experiencing phenomena occurs when learners simultaneously discern constituent parts or aspects of phenomena, in this case L2 literature. In other ways the various parts or aspects of literature (e.g., language, culture, universal and aesthetic values) emerge in students' awareness at the same time. Some ways of experiencing literature may show a simultaneous awareness of other aspects of literature such as previously read texts or linking the text read to one's own background experiences. Conversely, other learners' experiences of literature may reflect a simultaneous awareness of fewer aspects (e.g., language parts; cultural information).

The more complex and inclusive ways of understanding literature, according to Marton and Booth's (1997) conceptual reasoning, are also the more advanced, or comprehensive, because they include awareness of more aspects of the phenomenon. Conversely, when students focus on fewer aspects of literature, their experience is less advanced because their view and awareness of the phenomenon is constrained and limited. The results chapters

will show that more advanced perceptions, approaches and ways of understanding literature, are more inclusive and holistic. While there is some evidence to support the idea that, in learning, more inclusive understandings are associated with greater enjoyment, growth and academic success, this is not the definition of advanced/inclusive in phenomenographic terms. This hierarchical structure of variation in experiencing phenomena, as the authors explain, is empirically grounded as it emerges from an iterative interpretative data analysis process, conducted by the researcher, often with the participation and feedback of other researchers:

> The better experience or understanding of a phenomenon (whether text, problem, principle, or whatever) is thus defined in terms of our, the researchers', analysis of the qualitatively different ways of experiencing or understanding the phenomenon, and less advanced ways of experiencing it are partial in relation to more advanced ways of experiencing it. They reflect a simultaneous awareness of some aspects of the phenomenon reflected by a more advanced way of experiencing it (p. 107).

As Marton & Booth (1997) state, the ways in which researchers categorise and describe variation in participants' understanding of a phenomenon reflect both the data and the researchers' views of the critically significant differences in ways of understanding. Although my perspectives as researcher and educator inevitably play a role in the interpretive research reported in this thesis, it is not simply the researcher's view of what is the most advanced understanding that should determine the organization of the categories. In any interpretive research, including phenomenography, the research findings are seen as an interplay between the data and the researcher, since full objectivity is not possible. I will therefore clarify my interpretive process, so that readers can be assured that I have applied my judgement professionally and not in a biased way.

Marton & Booth (1997) define awareness in terms of different ways of experiencing a particular aspect of the world, at a particular moment, in a certain context, and learning as expanding awareness. These different perceptions, in this case, the experience of literature, are always limited and definable in key aspects, and can potentially be modified through the intervention of the teacher, in order to make the learning experience more rewarding and successful. If it can be established that a particular set of students who experience

literature in a certain way are more successful in terms of learning outcomes, their experiences of the "object of learning" (Marton & Booth, 1997, pp. 161–64) this can be used to inform a pedagogy of awareness (Marton & Booth, 1997, pp. 166–205), to bring about change in the learning experiences of less successful students, as was attempted in study 2. Such pedagogy does not favour particular teaching methods; conversely, it can be integrated with any teaching approach. Table 3.3 summarises the research conducted in 1998 and 1999:

Table 3.3 — Research conducted, aims, methods (1998–1999)

Date/student no. / Level	**Research**	**Aims**	**Methods**
March 1998 Ital 2004 26 students in their third semester of Italian 1. April 1998 2-3. March–June 1998 4. June 1998	**Preliminary investigation** 1. Pre-Survey and analysis of Italian students' attitudes towards the study of literature 2. What is literature? Features; shape; aims. Are these texts literature? Why? 3. Data collection and analysis of students' reaction to different literary texts and pedagogical approaches 4. Post-Investigation survey	1. Gather information on students' perceptions of literature; attitudes to L2 Italian literature; language and literature background; reasons for studying Italian 2. Investigate which texts students perceive as literary or non-literary and why; verify if and how students' perceptions of literature differ from educator's; integrate in classroom practice 3. Investigate impact of text selection, tasks and treatment on students' learning; integrate into pedagogy to enhance students' experience of literature 4. Compare students' replies pre- and post-course; identify significant changes and issues that need further investigation	1. Open-ended and closed questions in a questionnaire filled out in class 2. Classroom task: open-ended and closed questions; comparison with peer's replies 3. Opinion scales of literary texts studied 4. As in March survey
March 1999 Ital 2007 12 students in their 5th semester 1. March 1999 2. April-May 1999 3. March–June 1999	**Study 1** 1. Survey 2. Interviews: Analysis of themes and patterns in students' answers to semi-structured interviews with students 3. Analysis of students' experience of reading literature	1. As in 1998 2. Expand and deepen investigation into perceptions of literature and role of L2 literature; investigate approaches to literary text and link to implications for pedagogy and further research 3. Encourage reflection on own experience of literature; obtain rich description of students' text approaches	1. As in 1998 2. Naturalistic and elicited questions 3. Learning journals — Guided student journals focused towards critical reflection on own approach; educator/researcher's notes

Table 3.4 below outlines the research conducted in 2000 (Study 2) with seventeen students in their 4th semester of Italian Studies — Continuing 2 (Ital 2006). The 2000 study starts by

repeating the survey used in 1999 with the new cohort of students, followed by the introduction of a series of cycles of reading, reflection and writing.

Table 3.4 — Outline of research methods for Study 2 (2000)

Date	Aims	Methods
Sept. 2000	1. To become aware of students' language and literature background and their attitudes towards, and perceptions of literature 2. Use this awareness for course and research design	Survey — As 1999
Sept. 2000	**Cycle 1**: 1.Investigate/encourage students' ability to notice links language, style, meaning and own experience to predict text outcome through repeated readings 2.Promote hermeneutic learning practices to increase awareness and change through discussion on critical variation 3.Investigate effectiveness of approach	1. Repeated readings of beginning of literary text; inferring text outcome; metareflection (at home) 2. Comparison and reflection on variation (group, in class) 3. Re-writing (individual, in class)
Oct. 2000	**Cycle 2:** 1. Investigate/encourage students' ability to notice links language, style, meaning and own experience to process texts through repeated readings 2. Promote hermeneutic learning practices to increase awareness and change through discussion on critical variation 3.Investigate effectiveness of approach	1.Repeated readings of tale 1; metareflection (at home) 2.Comparison and reflection on variation (group, in class) 3.Free recall tale 1 (individual, in class)
Oct. 2000	**Cycle 3** 1.Fill gaps by focusing on difficult linguistic, cultural, rhetorical aspects of texts 2. Investigate/encourage students' ability to notice links between language, style, meaning and own experience and other texts 3.Investigate effectiveness of approach	1.Interactive lecture on 3 tales (read by students at home) 2.Re-readings tale 2 & 3+ metareflection(class/home) 3. Exercise on metaphors
Nov. 2000	**Cycle 4** 1.Investigate overall effectiveness of approach 2.Investigate students' perceptions of learning process 3.Investigate students' perceptions of own change 4.Compare with researcher and evaluator's perspective	1.Written assignment on 3 tales; link with other texts 2.Students' evaluations of process 3.Students' evaluations of own change 4. Researcher/educator and evaluator's evaluations

3.1.4.1 Validity, reliability and generalisability

In this qualitative non-dualistic research approach, validity is understood phenomenographically in terms of the correspondence between research outcomes and human experience of the phenomenon (Uljens, 1996) — the underlying implication being that the process of interpreting qualitative data is in fact the researcher's experience of the

data (Marton & Booth, 1997) and cannot be entirely objective when reporting quantitative results. Particularly important is to ensure that researchers are committed to an "interpretative awareness" (Sandberg, 1996, p. 137) — a vigilance towards their subjectivity during the data analysis process. This notion is particularly relevant to this thesis since I was concurrently researcher-language arts educator-course designer. It was therefore crucial to take measures to avoid bias that could unduly influence the collection and interpretation of data.

To this end, "Communicative validity checks" (Kvale, 1996) were included at different stages of the research process. For example, analysis of students' replies in the 1998 and 1999 surveys were conducted firstly by me and secondly in conjunction with two ANU colleagues from the Centre for Educational Development and Academic Methods (CEDAM), both phenomenographers (Dr. Gerlese Åkerlind, my advisor, and Ms. Mandy Lupton, Associate Lecturer). This provided a forum for defending and legitimising my interpretation of the data by comparing it with interpretations of researchers pertaining to the relevant research community to avoid imposing a random or biased subjective interpretation of the replies. Further communicative checks of all three investigations (1998, 1999, 2000) were carried out by presenting both overviews of the research programme at a phenomenography symposium held at ANU (Carroli, 2003a), which included substantial feedback from expert phenomenographers,[90] as well as papers on aspects of the thesis presented at international linguistic, literary and assessment conferences (Carroli, 2000a; 2000b; 2001a, 2001b; 2003a). Study 2 represents a sort of *internal* "pragmatic validity check" (Kvale, 1996) of the 1998 and 1999 research outcomes in the sense that they provided me, the educator and therefore also part of the intended audience (Uljens, 1996), with the necessary knowledge to design, apply and investigate an alternate pedagogical L2 literature approach.

A three-way evaluation was undertaken for Study 2. Students' replies to process questions as well as their written assignments were marked firstly by a colleague who taught the

language and culture section of the course.[91] The effectiveness of the alternate pedagogic approach, in terms of change, especially in students' interpretation and reading strategies was evaluated by the students themselves, my colleague, Ms Pais Marden, as well as myself. Students' written texts responses to the short stories read and their reflections on their reading strategies, were firstly marked by my colleague. This provided an unbiased assessment of students' competence and also the assessment of eventual changes in their responses. I instructed my colleague to mark as she normally would any students' papers. Ms Pais Marden was better able to detect change since she had been marking the students' compositions for the whole year. At the end of the semester, she also provided a qualitative report focused on changes that occurred in students' written responses at the literary as well as language level.

Whilst validity refers to data interpretation, reliability concerns the use of appropriate procedures which in turn are linked to research aims and final outcomes of the interpretative process. Two "dialogic reliability checks" (Kvale, 1996) were conducted to ensure that my interview questions and data emerging from the process were not unduly influenced by my perspective. The semi-structured "Open-ended interview guide" used in Study 1 (1999) was piloted with staff and students of the School of Language Studies (ANU) to check that the questions were not biased or leading to a particular reply, and yet that they were focussed enough to provide me with rich data. A pilot analysis of three interviews, representative of the three key experiences of literary texts was conducted with Dr. Åkerlind to strengthen the "dialogic communicative reliability" of my analytical interpretation of students' responses (Kvale, 1996).

A principal aim of phenomenography is to capture variation in experience, therefore study samples should be as heterogenous as possible. Despite the relatively small number of students involved in my investigations, all samples were varied in age, language and

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[90] The Symposium, organized by Dr. Åkerlind (CEDAM) was attended by international guests, including Professor Ference Marton, the "father" of phenomenography.

[91] Ms Pais Marden has a degree in comparative Italian and English literature from the University of Bologna. Her first language is Italian. She was ideal for the task since she had been marking students' written work since the beginning of the year and was therefore able to detect changes in students' performance. Ms

literary background. This variety should enhance the generisability of the research findings reported in chapters 4, 5 and 6. As Åkerlind (2005 in press) underlines, since phenomenographic studies focus on the "*range* of understandings", it is necessary in this kind of research to provide detailed information regarding the background of the sample so that audiences may be able to compare the characteristics of samples used in the present research with his/hers.

For all three investigations students signed consent forms, prepared in conjunction with CEDAM, giving me permission to use the data in my research, and I in turn agreed to treat the data with the utmost confidentiality. Students' names therefore are never mentioned in the thesis.

3.2 Preliminary investigation (1998)

The 1998 investigation was carried out to evaluate the introduction of literary texts in second year Italian. On the whole, the investigation sought to understand how literature could be effectively introduced into the L2 Italian language and culture curriculum at ANU by evaluating: 1) attitudes towards literature pre and post investigation; 2) a "mobile" syllabus which took into account students' attitudes and background in literature and their opinions of literary texts; 3) the impact of a pedagogy that encouraged students to actively participate in pre-reading background discussions; predictions about the text and focus on form and meaning on students' development of L2 comprehension abilities, semantic analysis, textual coherence and cohesion, oral and written production about the text. Results from this investigation formed the background for the development of study 1 and study 2. As for study 1 and 2, I will use quantitative data obtained with the questionnaire to describe the subjects who participated in the investigations.

Marden, then a part-time lecturer at ANU, is now full-time in the Italian Department at the University of Woollongong.

3.2.1 Subjects

The sample for the 1998 investigation, which occurred before the introduction of the sub-division of Italian Studies into 4 levels, consisted of 27 students in their third semester of Italian, seven male and twenty female. This is a fairly characteristic gender balance in Italian classes at the Australian National University. Most students (12) were aged below twenty; one was aged between twenty five and twenty nine (1); 7 students were aged thirty-six and above; 5 students were between 20 and 24 years of age and 2 students were aged between thirty and thirty-five. As revealed by the survey, students' language and cultural background as well as their age and reasons for studying Italian, were quite varied. English was the native language of 24 students whilst for the remaining 3 students the native language was Croatian, Polish and French respectively. 26 students spoke English at home, 3 spoke also Italian, 1 spoke Swedish, one Polish and one French. Most students had not studied Italian in high school (18) although some had studied it for 5 years (4) and 5 students had had experience with Italian for 4 years or more.

3.2.2 Data collection methods

The evaluation design combined quantitative statistical methods such as surveys and opinion scales[92] and qualitative approaches such as open-ended questions and minute-papers (Angelo & Cross, 1993). The main instruments of data collection were: 1) Pre and post investigation survey of Italian students' attitudes towards the study of literature; 2) Pre and post study reading, comprehension and lexical analysis exercises; 3) "What is literature? — Interactive classroom exercise"; 4) Opinion scales of literary texts, tasks and treatments. The multi method data were collected in a variety of contexts (e.g. formal pre-test with set questions in class; narrative recall of literary texts at home) to evaluate overall trends and to gain an insight into the changes in attitudes towards literature of individual learners. Possible links between these changes and the learners' reading and comprehension skills in the target language were also investigated.

[92] The Opinion scale of literary text, based on Lafayette & Buscaglia (1985), was modified and expanded in conjunction with CEDAM, ANU.

I administered the survey in the first and last weeks of semester 1, 1998. The questionnaire was developed as the means of gathering qualitative data about: 1) students' descriptions of 'enjoyable literature' and the role of L2 literature (open-ended questions); and quantitative data concerning: 2) their attitudes to the study of L2 literary texts; 3) their reasons for studying Italian; 4) their language and literature L1 and L2 background. This information was used in the selection of texts, pedagogical class treatment of literary texts and take-home tasks. The post questionnaire was administered to investigate whether there would be any changes in students' attitudes and views of L2 literature.

Students sat for the pre-investigation reading, comprehension and lexical analysis classroom tests in the second week of the Australian university semester (12.3.1998) and the post-test in the last week of the semester (11.6.1998). The text, comprehension questions, lexical, coherence and cohesion exercises, were similar to those used at a similar level in universities for foreigners in Italy (e.g., Perugia's Università per Stranieri). The pre-test was aimed at gathering information concerning students' reading, comprehension, lexical and writing abilities, whilst the post-test measured students' improvement in the above abilities after a semester of studying L2 literature.

Students' descriptions of literature in the open-ended section of the questionnaire I administered in the first week of the semester yielded diverse perceptions and preferences. These divergent opinions emerged in classroom discussion which was often dominated by mature age students. To ensure the participation of all students in the classroom dialogue, a workshop entitled: *"Che cos'è la letteratura?"* [What is literature?], was carried out over a two-week period to explore issues as well as raise questions concerning the "nature" of literature. As the educator of the course, I also wanted to compare my beliefs in regard to literature to those of the younger students in the class. The instrument devised for the exercise contained a selection of texts: newspaper articles, visual poetry, advertisements and excerpts from novels. Students were instructed to read each text, reply whether according to them the text could be described as literature, and explain why.

I collected students' opinion scales of literary texts fortnightly throughout the semester for each text read. In the second half of the semester the evaluation instrument was modified to elicit students' evaluations of tasks and pedagogical treatment, and comments on how specific exercises and my class presentations or explanations had, in their view, impacted on their learning. The aim of students' evaluations was fourfold: 1) to choose further texts; 2) to reflect upon and if necessary, modify tasks and treatments aimed at encouraging students' engagement with texts whilst improving their reading skills; 3) to investigate the impact of literature on students' learning as well as the level of enjoyment or frustration experienced by students when reading the texts; 4) to encourage students to focus on their reaction to the text as well as my pedagogical practice and the impact it had on their learning.

3.2.3 Texts

In the pre and post-investigation test I used a short story by Giovanni Celati, "Mio zio scopre l'esistenza delle lingue straniere" [My uncle discovers the existence of foreign languages"] set in 1900 Northern Italy and dealing with family relationships and migration against the pervasive foggy Po' Valley climate. Celati, like Tondelli (1980), is a "narratore delle pianure" [narrator of the planes] and writes in a style defined by Testa (1997) as "stile semplice". During the semester I used a selection of texts, chosen biweekly. The pedagogical assumption behind the type of syllabus adopted for the investigation, a "mobile", student-motivated syllabus, is that perhaps it is not adequate to prescribe literary texts without students' input and without knowledge of students' language background, attitudes, tasks, treatments and topic preferences. In 1998 the syllabus included texts from Falcinelli and Servadio (1989) such as an expert from Agnelli's autobiographical novel *Vestivamo alla marinara*, Buzzati's short story "Il medico ideale", the beginning of Morante's novel *L'isola di Arturo,* a poem by Penna, "La vita...e' ricordarsi di un risveglio" ["Life...is the remembrance of an awakening"), and a selection of contemporary texts written by young Italian authors such as Ballestra (1996), Brizzi (1996) and De Carlo (1991) in the 1990s which I entitled: "Narrativa: La generazione degli Anni '90" on topics

relevant to the young generations such as peer relationships, Bologna youth life style and music preferences.

Since students in 1998 had expressed a preference for "entertaining' texts in the surveys, many of the texts chosen had an ironic tone or subtext, whilst one text, Buzzati's "Il medico ideale", was overtly comical and, like Celati's short story, more distant temporally. In the post-survey students expressed again a preference for "entertaining" texts, and also texts relating to their experiences. Overall, the text that students preferred was Buzzati's short story, because it was comical.[93] For semester 2 therefore, I prepared a selection of texts that included short stories written by young writers of the 90's generation such as Enrico Brizzi and Silvia Ballestra. However, most students found the young Italian writers very difficult to comprehend, because their writing contained cultural and linguistic references specific to Italian youth, some use of regional Italian and frequent use of informal spoken register, especially Brizzi. Regrettably, these texts were then excluded in 1999.

3.2.4 Analytic procedure

Only the data collected under open-ended question 8, "Provide your own definition of enjoyable literature", collapsed with replies from the 1999 survey, will be analysed and discussed in chapter 4. The remaining research findings from 1998 will only be referred to in the results chapters to elucidate my decisions in relation to research methods and course content for studies 1 and 2. As for the subsequent studies 1 and 2, quantitative questionnaire data were tabulated into two sections, the first on students' background information (age, gender and language background) and reasons for studying Italian, ranked in order of priority (language; culture; literature; other studies; employment; travel; family/friends; other) along a 1–8 scale. In the second section "Attitudes towards literature" data concerning students' L1 and L2 literature reading habits as well as their beliefs about the introduction of literature at the different levels of the curriculum and how it may contribute to language and culture improvement, were tabulated along a 1–7 (7=not applicable) scale. Students' replies to question 6 of section 2, "indicate your favourite kinds

[93] As Barthes (1973) and Eco (1985) underlined, 'pleasure' is an important dimension of the reading process.

of literature" were tabulated according to students' 1–4 ranking of different types of texts: novels; poetry; plays; short stories; other. As in 1999 and 2000, quantitative data were analysed statistically to find out students' language and literature background and their attitudes towards literature in general, the role of L2 literature in the L2 curriculum and which types of texts students preferred.

Students' scores in the pre-investigation reading, comprehension and lexical analysis test were collated and compared across abilities to identify students' major strengths and weaknesses and used to provide an appropriate syllabus and instruction, whilst students' scores in the post-investigation test were compared with the pre-investigation test to identify students' improvement. Students' replies to the exercise "Che cos'è la letteratura" were collated and presented to the students the following week. After a brief introduction, I showed each text on overhead with students' replies; students then compared, discussed, elaborated and clarified the different reactions to the texts. The results of the exercise "Che cos'è la letteratura?" will be referred to in chapter 4.

Students' quantitative ratings and qualitative explanations of their evaluations ("please explain") of each literary text read in the opinion scales were collated and analysed biweekly statistically to investigate how students had rated the text along a 1–7 scale in terms of difficulty, "enjoyable", "valuable", other comments. The information was used in the selection of the subsequent text. From the second half of the semester, the instrument included opinion scales of tasks and treatment. Their replies were collated and analysed to provide an insight into the impact of tasks and instruction on enjoyment of the text and language and culture learning. At the end of the semester the quantitative rankings of all texts and treatments were compared to find out which texts students preferred and whether, as emerged in students' comments and rankings, there were any associations between text enjoyment and pedagogical treatment.

3.3 Study 1 (1999)

In 1999, the first study expanded the preliminary investigation to include students' approaches to the study of literary texts gathered with qualitative methods such as reading journals, interviews with students and classroom observation notes. The aim of study 1 is not to pinpoint a causal explanation of the phenomenon, but to provide a descriptive and analytical interpretation of students' perceptions of literature in general, the role of L2 literature, students' approaches to the study of literature, and to suggest possible links between perception, approach and outcome (chapter 5).

3.3.1 Subjects

The sample for this study consisted of twelve students, nine female and three male, in their 5th semester of Italian studies at ANU. The survey administered at the beginning of the semester indicated that nine of the twelve students were aged from below twenty to twenty-four and three, from thirty-six and above. There was a considerable age gap between the majority of students and the three students above thirty-six. English was the native language of all students and also the language spoken at home, with the exception of one student who spoke Spanish at home. Seven students had studied Italian only at university whilst the remaining five had studied Italian in high school. Most students (9) had had no experience with Italian outside school or university whilst two students had 1 year and one student had four years experience with Italian.

3.3.2 Data collection methods

For study 1 the data collection was conducted primarily with qualitative methods such as interviews, students' journals, open-ended survey replies and students' written interpretations of literary texts. The survey used in 1998 was expanded[94] and administered at the beginning of semester 1, in March 1999; semi-structured interviews were carried out in May 1999; students' journals and my notes of classroom dialogue were collected throughout the semester. The following two-stage methodology was adopted:

Stage 1

Survey (distributed in week 1 of Semester 1, 1999): "Survey of Italian students' attitudes towards the study of literature". In 1999 the survey was used especially to collect qualitative students' descriptions of 'enjoyable literature' and the role of L2 literature. Quantitative data concerning students' attitudes to the study of L2 literary texts, their reasons for studying Italian and their L1 and L2 language and literature background were collected mainly for syllabus and curriculum purposes.

Stage 2

In the second stage of the data collection audio taped interviews conducted when students had completed 4–5 weeks of the first semester, were aimed at leading students to reflect on their experience with literature, gathering students' overall experience of the literary texts read as well as in-depth information about their reading and learning approaches. The interviews were conducted to gain an in-depth insight into students' approach to reading literary texts and to expand the data obtained with the questionnaire on students' experience of literature in general and their approaches to the study of L2 literature. These data were supplemented by students' learning journals and teacher's notes. The interviews investigated students' approaches to reading literary texts and also clarified their replies in the questionnaire. Journals and my notes were useful in filling gaps and discrepancies in students' replies in the questionnaires and in the interviews.

Semi-structured taped interviews

I held the semi-structured interviews in March and April 1999 in my office at ANU almost exclusively in English, the native language of students, to avoid misunderstandings and inhibition caused by limited L2 language abilities. Since the language of instruction was Italian, a few students had developed their oral competence enough to feel confident in expressing some of their views in Italian. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 60 minutes and aimed at probing students' understanding of literature, and strove to encourage

[94] In 1999 a question was added to the survey asking students to clarify any difficulties or problems they may associate with reading L2 literature (see appendix B).

students to describe in detail their approach to the study of L2 Italian literature. The ten[95] tape-recorded and then transcribed interviews with ten Intermediate students of Italian constitute the main instrument used in the collection of data. The interviews, conducted with individual students, were loosely based on an "Open-ended Interview guide" (see appendix C) that contained a list of issues and questions. The guide provided a framework for the interviews to develop initially into a discussion about broad issues, such as students' general experience of literature in the Italian course, and subsequently it funnelled into more precise structural issues such as students' approaches to reading literature. My office was arranged with a coffee table and armchair and coffee, tea and biscuits were provided during each interview to provide a comfortable, more natural setting for the interviews and encourage students to be open in their replies. At the beginning the interviews started in a conversational style, with greetings in Italian and contextual questions such as clarification about the aims of the interview, the questionnaire already filled out and my study in general.

The primary questions included also some "prompt" questions to elicit further explanation. The questions were subdivided into two main sections: broad questions about 1) students' personal experience of reading and studying literature in general and "feeling" (e.g., how they felt about the L2 Italian literature curriculum) and at the ANU, and "structural" 2) how they approached the study of literature. This was followed by closing clarification questions and greetings.

Teacher's classroom notes

In class or after each class I took notes of students' reactions to the texts as they emerged in classroom discussion. Dialogue tended to focus on the cultural issues addressed in the texts. My classroom notes provide a way of comparing students' statements and reflections expressed in the interviews and their interactions within the classroom discourse community.

[95] Two students had changed course in the first two weeks of the semester.

Students' journals

Students wrote one entry for each short story to be handed in every fortnight and also cumulatively at the end of the semester, focused on reaction to the literary texts and on students' reading processes.[96] Students' learning journals offer an insight into students' learning outcomes, in terms of their language and literary development as perceived and reported by them. Journals were also useful for clarifying students' comments about perceptions and approaches revealed in the interviews, the questionnaire and in class. Writing in the journals was aimed at encouraging students' feedback on my pedagogical practice and their learning. For students, journal writing potentially provided an instrument to develop awareness of their own approach and critical reflection on their own text understanding.

Whilst part of the data on perceptions from the first stage of the project will be analysed in chapter 4, results from the remaining data on perceptions to the role of L2 literature is reported in chapter 5 with results from the second stage, constituted by students' interviews, students' journals and teacher's notes. Thus the focus of chapter 4 is the discussion of students' perceptions of literature in general (1998 and 1999 samples) and the focus of chapter 5 is students' perceptions of, and approaches to the study of L2 literature (1999 sample). Students' initial responses in the survey were useful as a data management strategy to help map the sample "territory" since they gave me an indication of the variation within the group. This variation, characterised by two opposing attitudes at broad ends of

[96] Students' Journals (=10%) (throughout the semester; collected by the teacher every 2 weeks)
The purpose of the Journals is to encourage reflection about your experience of literature and to develop your critical thinking skills. In the Journals write, in English or Italian, what you have learned - for example about Italian language, culture; what you have found enjoyable or frustrating about the text and why - for example, did you have to stop reading to look up words? Did you learn any knew words and expressions? Did you focus on the style of the short story? If you had any difficulties, indicate how you overcame them. Did the information about the author, the glossary, the pre-reading exercises provided in your textbook *Incontri attuali* help you understand the short stories? Which were most helpful? Why? Include also comparisons with other experiences of literature in English or in other languages. You may also include your thoughts and feelings about the literary texts, the literature classroom and any other issues relating to the literature section of the unit, always in relation to your own experience of literature. Marks will be allocated solely on content of diaries, not on language form. Assessment criteria for journals are: regular entries; depth and detail of your personal entries on the texts and other aspects of the literature component of the unit; progression from a focus on storyline to a focus on process. Since journal writing is a cumulative exercise that aims to expand your awareness of how you experience literature, marks will be given when students resubmit the whole journal towards the end of the semester, no later than week 12.

the spectrum of perceptions towards L2 literary texts was instrumental in the preparation of the interview guide. Questions were aimed at delving into students' approaches and linking them to the perceptions shown in the questionnaire and in class and ultimately to learning achievement.

3.3.3 Texts

The selection of texts for study 1 (1999) was influenced by students' replies in the survey and also by the outcome of the preliminary investigation. In 1998 students expressed a preference for "entertaining" texts, and also texts relating to their experiences in the questionnaires, and the one they said they enjoyed most, overall, was Buzzati's short story, because it was comical. In 1999 students read a selection of texts from the anthology *Incontri attuali* (Italiano & Marchegiani Jones, 1992). They included three short stories: Dacia Maraini's "L'altra famiglia", Alberto Moravia's "Regina d'Egitto" and Martina Vergani's "Catastrofi e non nella vita naturale dell'uomo". The range of literary texts for 1999 was selected on the basis of analysis of students' questionnaire responses, especially their perceptions of enjoyable literature, and the function literary texts should play, in their view, in second language learning. Other factors, such as length, difficulty level and theme also played an important role. Another dimension of variation emerging from students' open-ended responses that informed the syllabus was the preference for certain themes or issues. Texts focusing on these themes were selected to engage students in topics in which they were interested. In the texts selected, however, these topics were re-presented in oblique and 'estranged' fashion. This encouraged the students to search for answers at a deeper level of the text, instead of simply focusing on the storyline; it also favoured students' exchanges and lively discussion in the classroom.

For example, the first text, "L'altra famiglia" by Dacia Maraini, was selected because it fitted the main key themes in students' descriptions in 1999 and their perceived L2 literature role (see chapter 5). The text was also selected because it fitted with the "Focus on form class" and the textbook cultural theme discussed in the first two weeks of the semester, "Il matrimonio in Italia" [The institution of marriage in Italy]. So did the second text, "Regina d'Egitto" by Alberto Moravia, chosen also to compare the different points of view and

narrative approaches of the two authors. Both texts were also selected because they subvert the stereotyped view of the traditional Italian family, still too often represented in textbooks to challenge students' views of Italian culture, including Italian-Australian views and provide a lively forum for discussion. When selecting literary texts it cannot be assumed, however, that Italian literary texts are always culturally more distant than texts written by Australian authors. As Hasan (1996, p. 34) points out, cultural distance is relative. Culture is certainly not static or uniform across time, space or societies, or even within societies. Dante might be almost as culturally remote from a teenager in Italy as in Australia. Maraini's text was distant enough to make students feel almost totally estranged from the text on first impact. This distance may depend on a number of factors, including cultural, social and economic ones, as well as educational background and individual preferences. There are, nevertheless, cultural patterns that belong to particular societies, and make it difficult for 'outsiders' to interpret texts, especially those like Maraini's "L'altra famiglia", which signify and subvert those cultural practices. But such texts provide an excellent opportunity for cross-cultural comparison in classroom discussion and Maraini's short story elicited diverse and heated reactions. The previous two short stories were included in the anthology under the heading "La condizione della donna" [The woman's condition]. The third, "Catastrofi e non nella vita naturale dell'uomo" included in "La condizione esistenziale dell'individuo" [The existential condition of individuals], in a subtle ironic tone, from the male but subordinate point of view of the driver, addresses the "concerns" or catastrophes (traffic; staff etc.) of the modern, upper class and successful working woman (and not man, as the title underlines). During the semester students also read a variety of literary texts, poems, short stories, which were included in their textbook, *Crescendo* (Italiano & Marchegiani Jones, 1995)

3.3.4 Analytic procedure

I analysed the data according to phenomenographic criteria, taking students' perceptions by constituting different categories of perceptions on the basis of students' written descriptions of literature (chapter 4), students' perceptions to L2 literature and their approaches to the study of L2 literary texts (chapter 5). Students' general perceptions of literature and their experiences of L2 literature have been constituted for analytical purposes from an analysis

of students' written descriptions of enjoyable literature, their attitudes (stage 1) and approaches to the study of L2 literature (stage 2) gathered with the methods described in section 3.3.2.

The 1999 descriptions were collapsed with students' replies to the same question (question 7) in the survey administered in 1998 to form a larger sample. The survey data gathered in 1998 and 1999 consist of 39 open replies. Chapter 4 analyses the results of students' descriptions of literature from surveys and discusses them in relation to educators' and theorists' perceptions of literature. I analysed descriptions of 'enjoyable literature' across students' responses to determine collective perceptions. From observation of the data I derived a set of categories from students' descriptions for classifying their perceptions of literature in general. Furthermore, eight descriptions of literature were selected to analyse variation in the perceptions of individual students.

Since one would expect students' perceptions of L2 literature to influence their learning approaches I decided to analyse students' perceptions in conjunction with their approaches to the study of L2 literature. The results of this analysis are reported in chapter 5. Once I had identified the primary themes emerging from students' survey comments on the role of L2 literature, students' replies were organized in categories identified with illustrative quotations, and analysed in terms of the critical variation between categories and non-critical variation within categories.

Apart from the survey data, the 1999 study consists of 12 hours of recorded interviews, 60 students' journals entries and teachers' written observations. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by an expert linguistics researcher who had extensive experience with discourse analysis.[97] I worked closely with the transcriber to ensure the process was carried out verbatim and that chunks of the conversation and book titles in Italian were appropriately transcribed. I also listened to all the tapes to check the accuracy of the transcription of each interview. The data were analysed mainly following phenomenographic

[97] Given my considerable work load as a full time lecturer, convener of the Italian Program and also part time PhD candidate, I unfortunately could not transcribe the interviews myself.

criteria. Interview data were treated holistically to capture the range of students' approaches to the study of literature: a phenomenographic procedure aimed at describing the variation within the group as a whole. Categories for the description of the range of approaches evolved after an iterative process during which students' interview transcripts were analysed several times looking for differences and similarities in the way students described their approaches.

At first, as suggested by Prosser (1994), I focused on some of the distinctive ways in which interviewees had responded to the questions. This came naturally, since some of the interviewees described some of the reading processes and also their experience of literature in strikingly metaphorical terms (see chapter 5). These metaphors became the themes that lead to the construction of a coherent set of logically related categories of description. The themes that emerged from this process were used as main headings descriptive of the categories. Throughout the process, which involved hours of reading, highlighting, separating and grouping similar and different aspects in the replies, I gave particular attention to the inclusion in the emerging categories of perception to the full range of variation between students' responses. Once the categories were formed I checked them against data obtained from the other sources (responses in survey and students' journals) and with a "data validity check". Dr. Åkerlind read three interview transcripts representative of the different tendencies within the group; subsequently, we checked her feedback with my set of categories and, after the ensuing discussion and a further iteration of the data, I reconstructed the final set of logically related categories incorporating her perspective on the data.

As in qualitative educational research (Marton & Säljö, 1984; Trigwell & Prosser, 1996), I attempted to identify possible links between students' perception, approach and learning by analysing the variation found in four individual experiences of literature.

3.4 Study 2 (2000)

For study 2 I designed and implemented a pedagogical approach intended to promote awareness and change based on cycles of individual readings and reflection on literary texts, and reflection on students' own reading approach. This was followed by collective comparison, reflection and discussion in class. Because of its multifaceted scope, this study was conducted from a mixed theoretical perspective, integrating key elements of phenomenography such as awareness, variation and change in learning (Marton & Booth 1997; Halász 1983; Marton et al, 1992; Marton et al, 1994); of hermeneutic pedagogy such as the hermeneutic circle (Gadamer, 1975; Luperini, 1998); of reader response theory such as aesthetic and efferent reading (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1995); of interactive L2 reading approaches such as the role of schemata (Carrell, 1984; Carrell et al, 1988; Carrell, 1991), and of L2 learning and acquisition such as the role of "noticing" and "consciousness raising" in L2 language learning (Schmidt, 1990; Schmidt, 1993) and the "narrow" reading approach (Krashen 1981); L2 theoretical principles such as "focus on form" (Long, 1991); and stylistics (Widdowson, 1974, 1982; Kramsch, 1996). The pedagogical framework was based on the premises that content, that is the object of learning, is inseparable from approach: the act of learning. In the same way, language is inseparable from culture, of which literature is part.

In this framework, advocating the inseparability of language and culture, proposed by Kramsch (1993), literary texts are fully integrated in the L2 language curriculum, and classes and assessment are conducted almost exclusively in Italian. The texts are approached first and foremost as literature, then as cross-culture and cross-language in action. Because the texts are in "another" language and stem from "another" culture, and because they are integrated into a curriculum which is also part of a university degree structure, the educator must negotiate between "free" reading and "guided" reading, endeavouring to foster optimal learning outcomes for all students. The guided reading tasks however should make the reading experience more pleasurable and encourage students to discover the links between literary style and meaning, local cultural meaning (culture 1 and 2) and universal values. In this framework, literary texts allow students to become

"intercultural travellers" (Carroli, Pavone and Tudini, 2003) as they experience another culture "from within" (Byram, 1989, p. 49) by reading the texts and relate it back to their own culture or to other texts, ie "observe it and understand it from without" (Byram 1989, p. 49). Students are encouraged to discover the often "invisible" culture present in language (Lo Bianco, 2003), to notice the inextricable link between language form and meaning, and share their learning experience in the class. These were the premises for promoting awareness and change in text perception and understanding and reading processes in study 2.

Study 2, building on the 1998 and 1999 research results, investigates the effects of an alternate pedagogic approach to L2 literature by analysing how students' levels of understanding of three related tales by Benni (1994) and their reading processes changed through pedagogical cycles of individual reading and writing followed by classroom comparison of students' responses, text re-reading and re-writing. Study 2 takes as its starting point three studies conducted by Marton, Carlsson-Asplund and Halász published between 1983 and 1994. The main method used was the repeated reading approach firstly attempted by Halász (1983) with literary texts in the L1 of the students. In study 2, the repeated reading method was combined with Krashen's (1981) notion of "narrow reading", expanded by Carrell (1984): students, by reading repeatedly a text pertaining to a specific content area and/or by the same author, build up the vocabulary and syntax (linguistic features) and become aware of the cultural and rhetorical schemata of the author. For L2 students reading further L2 texts by the same author should therefore become more accessible.

Halász (1983, p. 243) explored Ingarden's argument that artworks, because of their complexity, place too many demands on the information processing ability of readers: "A literary text is [...] always a struggle between the writer and readers" therefore readers can react by "simplifying and distorting" it (Ingarden, 1931). Halász (1983) compared students' processing of literary texts (a Hungarian classical text with a traditional structure and a text by Kafka with a metaphorical structure) and 'non-literary' variations (summaries of the two stories) under repeated exposure over a two-month period. The repeated exposure to the

texts yielded no systematic changes in either group however the responses to the two short stories were more complex than the responses to the summaries. A later study (Marton et al, 1992) revealed a correlation between students' advanced understanding of the text and 'reflective variation': the ability to look at the text from within to understand its meaning was linked to the capacity to shift one's perspective from reading to reading. The researchers concluded that several key factors are crucial to an advanced understanding of texts: the repeated reading method, students' taking a deep approach to reading and also critical variation (students' ability to shift their perspective).

The same study found that there were substantial differences in how students understood literary texts in L1. The students who best captured the meaning of the story were those who attempted different interpretations of the story and looked for a range of possible interpretations. In a later study, the researchers attempted to direct readers to adopt this process, which they called "reflective variation" (Marton et al, 1994). However, the attempt failed as the students focussed too strictly on the instructions rather than on experiencing the text. When the researchers attempted to "shape reader awareness" by transferring the "reflective variation" approach to other students, the experiment had the reverse effect, that is the variation in reading was reduced rather than expanded. According to the same study, students focused too strictly on the instructions they provided instead of experiencing the text.

In my view, the reduction in reflective variation may have been caused by a lack of consideration of personal variables and by a research design that did not favour the development of dialogic classroom practices. My methodological framework for study 2 substantially modified the design and methods used in Halázs (1983) and Marton et al (1993, 1994) to address such issues as well as to adapt the method to a second language environment. As a result of the modified research design, which allowed for classroom group reflection, discussion and writing, students first had the opportunity to experience the text individually, secondly to compare their responses and thirdly, to provide a further response following classroom reflection and discussion. In my study, a hermeneutic classroom approach to learning was adopted for study 2 to elicit more advanced reading

and understanding of the text by having students contrast and compare their written responses (in Italian and English) to the texts.

Luperini (1998, pp. 13–20) in the chapter entitled "La classe come comunità ermeneutica" (The classroom as a hermeneutic community) proposes a pedagogic model that opposes the structuralist models of text reading used in Italian education since the 1970s. According to him, "logotecnocrati" (logo technocrats) imposed such models, ignoring new directions in reading and literary theory based on reader-oriented and reception theory focused on readers' interaction with the text rather than on the text. For Luperini (1998), the structuralist model, focused too strongly on descriptive exercises of the text, is partly to blame if young people have distanced themselves from reading literature. The model he proposes, the class as a hermeneutic community, has the 'inquiring' class as its central aspect. Students, with their attempts to give meaning to the text, also learn to confront, compare, divide and collectively recompose the text and ultimately come closer to 'the pleasure' (Barthes, 1973) of reading literary texts. In the section "Yes, there is a text in this class" (1998, pp. 17–180), Luperini (1998) insists that the first reading stage should not disregard students' ability (or capacity) to read the text effectively (at the structural level). According to him teachers should be first of all intellectuals who pose questions about the meaning and the value of texts and of literary tradition, and their greatest ambition should be to transform students into intellectuals (1998, p. 127). He states that the literary text is the only one capable of offering students a path towards learning to respect others' opinions whilst defending their own. Luperini's (1998) model was adapted to the L2 context and to a perspective of L2 that does not separate language from culture or form from content but rather integrates them.

In summary, the research approach used in my 2000 study took Luperini's (1998) central idea of the class as a learning community and combined it with 'reflective variation' (Marton et al, 1992), 'awareness' (Marton & Booth, 1997), Halász' (1983) repeated reading approach, L2 consciousness-raising, focus on form and stylistics principles, the narrow reading notion (Krashen, 1981; Carrell, 1984) further broadened to include stylistic analysis, intra-textual and intertextual awareness and interactive classroom practices. The

concepts acted as a springboard for the development of an alternate model for learning and teaching L2 literature. The aim was that the L2 literary class as a hermeneutic community where students learn from each other while enjoying their language and literature learning experience.

3.4.1 Subjects

All students were female, 7 aged below twenty years of age, 4 aged between twenty and twenty-four and 3 aged thirty-six and above. Their L1 was English and only two spoke an L2 at home, one spoke Italian and one spoke Spanish. 8 students had never studied Italian at school, 6 students had between 1 and 6 years of schooling in Italian. All students had studied Italian at university between 1.5 semesters and 4 semesters and 3 students had had between 1 and 4 years previous experience with Italian. Two students did not fill out this section of the questionnaire. More detailed information about the study sample, for example students' reasons for studying Italian and their attitudes to L2 literature will be provided in the survey results section of chapter 6.

3.4.2 Texts[98]

The choice of texts was informed by individual variables such as students' replies in the survey (their prior background, their literary competence, their text preference, their attitudes to reading L2 literature, including the amount of free voluntary reading); pedagogical issues (appropriate linguistic, cultural, rhetorical level, appropriate length); research driven issues (time available, length of texts); theoretical issues (Krashen and Carrell "narrow reading", choosing texts written by the same author). Given that the students were only just in their 4th semester of Italian, and that some of the readings had to be carried out in class, the text had to be quite short and accessible. At the same time, it was crucial to use an engaging text, aimed at stimulating students' curiosity and willingness to

[98] For study 2 the section on "texts" is reported before the data collection since the selection of the three short stories was a crucial stage in the research and pedagogical design. My choice of texts, as the results will show in chapter 6, was fundamental to the outcome of the study.

seek its meaning. Students read three related short stories, the "Tre racconti del viaggiatore" (The Three Tales of the Traveller), from the collection of short stories entitled *L'ultima lacrima* by a well-known contemporary author (Benni, 1994)[99].

The first tale chosen entitled "La casa bella (Primo racconto del viaggiatore)", was 2.5 pages long. The second text, "L'uomo puntuale (Secondo racconto del viaggiatore)" is 2.5 pages and the third, "L'inferno (Terzo Racconto del viaggiatore)" is 4 pages long. Very briefly, the first tale in the trilogy begins with a description of the beautiful house in which the narrator used to live when he was young. The perfect picture of life in the countryside is gradually corrupted by inside dangers and outside pressures, especially the overwhelming influence of the media. At the end of the tale, the protagonist leaves because the 'beautiful house' is no more. Paradise is lost. The descent towards hell begins. Using literary texts at the Continuing Level, by the same author, one text under repeated readings, and two tales later proved particularly useful as this combination reinforced students' comprehension at the language level as well as at the rhetorical and cultural level. Benni's three tales are also appropriate for this level because they contain universal themes as well as particular historical references to Italy. Students therefore can draw on their background to access a different cultural world.

3.4.3 Data collection methods

The main instruments of data collection were the survey already used in 1998 and 1999; students' written responses to the texts which included metalinguistics and metacognitive observations pre and post reflection on variation in class; end-of-process class assignment on three tales, evaluation of the learning process and of their own development during and at the end of the cycles. Students read the first tale repeatedly, individually and collectively. With the "reflective variation" procedure and the hermeneutical classroom approach I sought to promote active reading practices. My aim was to make reading literary texts an enjoyable, shared learning experience, and ultimately bring about change and empower

[99] Students also read the short stories included in each chapter of their textbook, *Crescendo* (Italiano & Marchegiani Jones, 1995) and completed the comprehension, grammar and oral production on cultural content exercises set up in the textbook.

students to take charge of their reading practices and "own literary meaning" as proposed by L2 literature practitioners (e.g., Paran, 2001b).

The main methods used in the study were a modified and expanded version of the repeated reading approach (Halász, 1983) and reflective variation (Marton et al, 1992 and 1994). The major difference between the above mentioned studies and my study is methodological. Marton et al (1994, p. 293) pointed out that two methods could be used in such studies, students "could either be asked to reflect on alternative ways of understanding the phenomenon (the literary text) or "explicitly be given these alternatives and subsequently be asked to reflect on them". Marton et al only used the first method of analysis whilst study 2 reported in this thesis used the second one, classroom reflection on students' interpretations, which Marton et al (1994) did not attempt in their study on change. The second major difference is that, since students were reading in L2, the study investigated also how they read in L2 and L1 and their level of literary competence.

Questions aimed at investigating students' reading strategies and activating background knowledge, were therefore included in the instruction sheets. The purpose of such questions was to test generally accepted theories of L2 reading, for example, that L2 readers are usually able to overcome language difficulties (lexicon, syntax) by using top-down strategies (schemata, inferring) and other data that support the hypothesis that reading competence and literary competence in L1 have a stronger impact than knowledge of the L2 (Fecteau, 1999). Finally, in my research approach I opted for a more authentic learning situation rather than rigorous experimental conditions. The overall view of the classroom, as a learning or 'hermeneutic community' (Luperini, 1998) — similarly to Marton and Booth's (1997) 'awareness' and 'critical variation' — aims to bring about 'change' in students' understanding of literary texts through students' collaboration and classroom reflection. Unlike Marton's study, this project linked reading to reflection, discussion, and writing in a cyclical pattern. The repeated reading approach (Halázs, 1982) developed for this study incorporates and greatly expands "narrow reading" (Krashen, 1981; Carrell, 1984). Students, by reading repeatedly a text pertaining to a specific content area and/or by the same author, build up vocabulary, syntax (linguistic features) and become aware of the

cultural and rhetorical schemata of the author. For students, especially reading in a second language, reading further texts by the same author should therefore become more accessible. Narrow reading (Krashen, 1981), reading in depth in a content area, or texts by the same author, is an efficient method of language acquisition because the vocabulary and the structure are recycled. Carrell (1984) adds that "from the perspective of schema theory, narrow reading allows appropriate schemata to develop and grow" (p. 339).

Reading texts by the same author provides an excellent source of discovery and recognition of patterns of form and meaning, especially if the texts, as in the three tales used in my study, are part of a trilogy, but do not have obvious narrative links. Appropriate schemata, particularly the rhetorical schemata of the writer can be difficult to grasp in L2 literary texts. In order to notice narrative links between different stories students have to focus closely on how the author uses form to convey meaning. Through contrasting and comparing the stories learners discover patterns and deviations and how they represent or convey a particular representation of a particular culture. By comparing their different responses, students become aware of the active processes involved in reading. Krashen's narrow notion of reading competence, aimed particularly at language acquisition, fits into the broader view and aims of this study because it allows students to notice language features, in particular vocabulary. It is useful as a starting point for noticing form and also, especially within a hermeneutic reading approach, the connections between form and meaning.

The main objective of the repeated reading method was to investigate whether learners, when exposed several times to the same literary text as well as different students' predictions, interpretations and reading strategies, could gain a more advanced understanding of the text. Instructions were provided in Italian with an English translation in brackets. Instructions to all tasks sought to promote students' awareness of: the association between syntax, lexicon and meaning; intertextuality; links with their background. Instructions for written tasks and in class discussion indirectly coaxed students into finding those links by themselves firstly (e.g., Does this story remind of anything you have read before? Which structures and vocabulary better convey the tale outcome? Why?); secondly by comparing and contrasting

their answers to those of other students, then rereading the text, then writing again about the text and about their approach and perspectives. The anticipated optimal outcome was an overall more effective reading of the text. My notion of effective reading is based on principles of L1 and L2 reading as well as literary theories of reading, as already discussed in chapter 2 (Rosenblatt, 1995; Carrell et al, 1988; Carrell, 1991).

When applied to literary texts read in a non native language, effective reading entails the capacity to become aware of and link several aspects of texts contemporaneously (e.g., form features such as grammar and vocabulary, storyline; discourse: narrative arrangement of events; author's style, cultural and rhetorical content). I suggest that effective L2 literature reading can be achieved by firstly promoting reading as an interactive individual process between text and reader, focused on the pleasure of discovering how style and language form are arranged into discourse to convey cultural meaning and foreshadow text content and outcome, and secondly, by promoting reading as a collective interpretative process inclusive of all class readings and reading strategies, contributing to students' progress in text understanding. Pedagogically, the treatment therefore aimed to promote active readers of literary texts, aware of the links between form and content and of their own reading approach. Another important objective of the study was to make reading literary texts an enjoyable, shared learning experience whilst developing students' writing and oral competence, cultural awareness and literary competence.

Repeated readings of the first tale, "La casa bella" (see appendix D) were followed by readings of tale 2 and 3. The cycles of repeated readings of the text, the instructions, the reflection and discussion were aimed at making students aware of how even small grammatical units (*comparativo di maggioranza*) are used by authors in their particular narrative style to provide the reader with the necessary clues to foreshadow the outcome of the text. The pedagogical process attempts to lead students to notice items in the text (bottom-up strategies), to then be able to understand the deeper meaning (top-down), as well as make students notice, monitor, and if necessary change their own reading approach. As outlined in chapter 2, L2 specialists have stressed the importance of making students

become aware of links between meaning and grammar (Celce-Mursia & Larsen-Freeman, 1998). Table 3.5 below shows the main cycles of study 2:

Table 3.5 — Study 2: Process cycles

Pre process (week 4)	Survey
Cycle 1 (weeks 8–10)	Repeated readings of the beginning of "La casa bella" and inferring story content and outcome (at home) Students' responses: Reflection and discussion; Re-writing (in class)
Cycle 2 (weeks 10–11)	Repeated readings of the entire tale (class+home) Class reflection on differences and similarities in students' responses to the tale. Individual written activity: write everything you recall about the tale and your readings of the tale
Cycle 3 (weeks 11–12)	Teacher's interactive presentation on three tales (in class and further reflection at home) Individual reading of the second and third "Racconto del Viaggiatore" (in class and at home)
Cycle 4 (week 13)	Classroom written assignment on three tales and evaluation of Reading and writing project by students

The 2000 eclectic research method is aimed at providing, through triangulation, a more accurate description of students' processing of literary texts and their learning outcomes as it captures the complexities of such processes.

The collection of data occurred in four main cycles, over 8 weeks (including a two-week semester break). Preceding the cycles, at the beginning of the semester, data concerning individual variables such as students' language and literature background and affective factors, such as reasons for studying Italian and attitudes to the study of literature in L1 and L2 and preferences, was gathered with a survey to facilitate text selection and to familiarise myself with students' perspectives on literature as well as their experience and attitudes to literary texts being included in the Italian language curriculum. I also drew on survey data in my approach to assessment os students' responses. All tasks and assignments were assessed.

Cycle 1 (weeks 8-10)

In the first cycle of the process, the data collected consisted of *students' inferences* about text content, accompanied by substantiated justifications, followed by descriptions of their reading strategies in L1 and L2. Before the mid-semester break, the first two paragraphs of the tale "La casa bella" were handed out to students with the drawing that appears on the cover of the collection of short stories, *L'ultima lacrima* (Benni, 1994): a modern family 'glued' to a television set. Students individually read the first two paragraphs of "La casa bella" and answered questions on the content (mainly inferring about story outcome) and their approach to reading the text. In their replies students were required to write the first 150 words in Italian and had the option of writing the rest of their answers in English. Having students write at least 150 words in Italian and the rest of their replies in English seemed a good compromise. It encouraged students' written competence and vocabulary development through written production in Italian on difficult topics but also allowed them to express their responses in English, if they were unable to do so in the non native language. Instructions were provided in Italian and also in English to facilitate understanding but also to encourage focus on new vocabulary:

Table 3.5.1 — Cycle 1 Exercise 1

CYCLE 1 ***ESERCIZIO 1[Task 1] (=5%) (a casa / at home)*** *[Risposte in italiano (ca. 100 parole) / inglese (nessun limite)]* **Settimane 8–9 [weeks 8–9 = mid-semester break]** Leggete i primi due paragrafi del testo narrativo di Stefano Benni intitolato "La casa bella". Cosa pensate che succeda in seguito? Perché? Su quali informazioni, descrizioni, immagini si basano le vostre ipotesi? Immaginate già come finirà? In che modo? Perché? [What are your expectations of the story after reading the first two paragraphs? Why? What was it in the story that led you to formulate your hypothesis? Do you already imagine how it will end? How? Why?] Descrivete i metodi / le strategie che usate quando leggete nella vostra lingua e nelle altre lingue [Describe the methods and the strategies you use when reading in your first language and in the other languages you know].

My decisions about questions for task 1 (Esercizio 1) were guided by theoretical materials and studies conducted in L2 reading, background knowledge and schema (as reported in chapter 2). The questions strove to highlight the guessing nature of reading (Goodman, 1967) and stimulate students' curiosity about the text. At the same time, some questions were aimed at making students focus on the links between form and meaning by asking them to find explanations for their statements within the text. One aim of task 1 was to diagnose students' level of "literary competence", understood here as familiarity with reading literature and ability to recognize genre and narrative techniques. I also aimed to engage students in "reading as a guessing game" (Goodman, 1967) of projections and predictions as outlined in the earlier description of task 1 which encouraged students to infer the outcome of "La casa bella" by reading the beginning of the tale. To this end I nudged students (see task 1 above), to focus on particular images to diagnose whether students could link them to the grammatical structures and stylistic devices (e.g., use of tenses; similes and metaphors) and notice the "magic" link between words and meanings inherent in the printed page and the intrinsic value attached to them. Yet all this enchantment comes alive only if they, the readers, transact with the text, focusing on its different aspects at the same time, relate them to their own background and create a new reading of the texts and of the world in their mind, as discussed in the subsequent class reflective variation cycle on students' response to task 1. As explained below, this discussion occurred in class only after students' analysis of their own responses. I did not wish to lecture students on what reading should or can be; I wanted to become aware of their reading experiences, their understandings, predictions and explanations as they read, compared, reflected on, inquired about, and questioned the variation in their responses.

I handed out a selection of students' inferences and strategies in class. Students were instructed to read them in groups and point out and discuss the similarities and the differences in their predicted story outcome and also their reading approach. Students then reread the beginning of the story in class and commented on whether their understanding had changed and why.

The questions I posed for students about reading approaches, perspective and experience of the text and possible changes in understanding of the story were based on theories such as phenomenography consciousness raising which underline the importance of students' awareness of their reading processes, their language and literary abilities as well as discerning how and why these changes occurred.

Table 3.5.2 — Cycle 1 Class work

Cycle 1 **Settimana 10 — in classe [Week 10 – In class]** Lavoro di gruppo: discutete le risposte al primo esercizio in gruppo e poi presentate l'analisi delle risposte alla classe. Sono simili o diverse le vostre risposte? In che modo? Su quali aspetti del testo si basano le ipotesi degli studenti? [In group: First discuss in your group the responses to Esercizio 1 on Benni's "La casa bella" and then present an analysis of the responses to the class. How are the responses different or similar? What in the text gives students this view about "La casa bella"?] **Esercizio scritto** (individuale/classe): Rileggete i due paragrafi. Che effetto vi fa adesso la situazione nel racconto? È cambiato il vostro punto di vista? Perché? Notate qualcosa di nuovo nella struttura, nel contenuto, nel senso, su cui fondare le vostre ipotesi? Cosa esattamente? Pensate che sia cambiato il vostro modo di vedere il racconto dalla prima alla seconda (o terza o quarta) lettura? Se sì, in che modo? Siete sicure delle vostre aspettative? Siete più sicure di prima? Perché? [**Written task (individual / class):** Read again the two paragraphs. How did you experience the situation this time? Has your perspective on the story changed? Why? Do you notice anything new in the structure, content, and meaning on which to base your hypothesis? What exactly? Do you feel that your understanding of the story has changed between readings? If so, why? How confident do you [feel] now of your expectations? Do you feel more confident [about your understanding of the text] than before? Why?].

Cycle 2 (weeks 10-11)

The rest of the first short story was handed out in cycle 2 (week 9). Students read the whole text at home and completed an "Open recall" task (*ricostruzione libera*) in class:

Table 3.5.3 — Cycle 2

Cycle 2: ESERCIZIO 2 [task 2] (=5%) (At home) *[Risposte in italiano (ca. 100 parole); in inglese(nessun limite)[Answer in Italian (100 words ca.); in English (no limit)]]* Leggete tutto il racconto. Avete letto racconti simili a questo? Quali? Vi sono mai successe cose simili? Per esempio? [Read all the short story. Does this short story remind you of anything you have read before or anything that has happened to you? Please provide some examples] 1. Avevate già affrontato e discusso di simili tematiche? Avevate dimestichezza con il lessico e le strutture grammaticali del racconto. Quali? Perché? [Were you familiar with the themes, lexicon and grammatical structures of the short story? Please provide examples and links]. 2. Descrivete in modo dettagliato il modo in cui avete letto il racconto [Briefly describe in detail the reading strategies you used when reading the short story]

The above instructions were designed to help students to focus on specific components internal to the story, and relate them to external aspects such as their background, personal experience and previous acquaintance with similar topics explored during the year. The research aim was to explore whether students would make the connections to reach a better understanding of the story. Such rationale is backed by schema research and the concept of intertextuality. Encouraging readers to tap into their previous experience of the world and link it to the new information contained in the text, should increase the ability to create new schemata and gain an understanding of the new L2 text which is not just literal but encapsulates several aspects of the text, linguistic and cultural. If related to one's background, the text also acquires more relevance as students understand the cross-cultural nature of literature. Encouraging connections with other literature places the new text in a web of rhetorical, cultural and linguistic relationships that should enable the reader to become more aware of the universality of literary themes, yet expressed in the particular author's language and invested with a particular local cultural historical meaning. As in cycle 1, I handed out a selection of students' responses to the text for reflection on similarities and differences in their interpretation and approach:

Table 3.5.4 — Cycle 2 Class work

Cycle 2 **In classe — settimana 11 [In class — week 11]** Riflettete sui testi scritti dagli studenti (in gruppo). Discuterne i contenuti: in che modo sono diverse, simili le vostre risposte? [Within your group, reflect on the texts written by the students (you); are there any differences or similarities in your replies? Which ones? Do some replies capture the meaning of the text more or less effectively? Why?]

This cycle of individual reading and writing, followed by classroom reflection on variation of understanding, perspective and approach, followed by re-reading and re-writing, was repeated for the first short story over 4 weeks. During classroom reflection students, in groups, read and discussed sections of their replies, previously collated by the teacher, to become aware of differences and similarities in their responses to the text and their approach to reading. Students were then asked to write their first class assignment on the short story:

Table 3.5.5 — Cycle 2 Writing task

Cycle 2 ***Esercizio scritto 2 ((*in class): Ricostruzione libera del testo** (=5%) [Written task 2 – In class: Free recall] [**Recall** everything you remember about the text. Write at least 150–200 words in Italian and as much as you like in Italian or English about "La casa bella", including personal reflections on the text, how they changed, why —50 min. [writing time] — will moderate mark of home exercise 2].

The final marks for each cycle, except the last, were constituted from marks of home and class assignments, added and halved. In this sense, the marks of tasks written after class reflection and discussion moderated the marks of the home tasks, written individually before hermeneutic class activities.

Cycle 3 (weeks 11-12)

Tales 2 and 3 were handed out in weeks 12 and 13 in the third cycle. Students had not been exposed explicitely to the concept of reading strategies prior to doing the tasks associated with their reading of tales 2 and 3. I discussed the three tales with the students and asked students to make inferences about content in an interactive lecture.

Table 3.5.6 — Cycle 3

CYCLE 3
In classe – settimana 12: La classe come comunità ermeneutica
[In class – week 12: The class as a learning community]

Brainstorming: [5 min. da soli — poi insieme] Come siete riuscite ad 'entrare' nel testo? Elencate una o due strategie di lettura che non avevate mai usato prima per la lettura di testi letterari. Sono state utili? In che modo? Siete riuscite a svolgere l'esercizio di 'previsione' nel Test, cioè a fare ipotesi sul testo? Perché? Di quali strategie di lettura vi siete servite?

[Articulate how you were able to get into the text. List one or two useful strategies you had not used before when reading literary texts. How did they affect your approach to reading literary texts? Did it help in the test that you had already done the same exercise before? Why? Did you manage to make hypotheses after reading the II Racconto del viaggiatore? How? Why? What reading strategies did you use?].

Interactive lecture in this context meant that it was not a lecture in the traditional sense, presented entirely by the educator, instead, the students, solicited by the teacher with "leading" questions nudging them to discover meaning by themselves, participated with their individual responses to formulate a collective competent reading of the three tales. Rather than presenting the students with facts, I focused with the students on constituent parts of the tale, particular lexical items and grammatical features to highlight the inextricable connection between form and meaning, and between style, narrative structure and literary tradition to elicit a collective reading of the texts. The classroom thus became a dialogic site for reflection, guessing, discovery, variation and change.

Students had already read the first paragraph of "L'inferno" for a second inferring task included in a mid-semester test. Students had one hour together to quickly read and discuss their understanding of the tale 2 and 3 and link them to tale 1. I coaxed students into making intertextual links by asking if they remembered reading literature with similar themes or structure (e.g., Dante's *Inferno*) that would help them gain an advanced understanding of the tales in preparation for the final written assignment. Students had not read Dante's *Divina commedia* as part of their Italian courses at ANU since they were only in their 4th semester. Most of them had heard about Dante's text and some of them had read parts of it in English and / or in Italian. I purposely abstained from offering explicit

information about the structural and thematic links with the *Divine Comedy* to allow students to discover them first. I then provided a map of Dante's Inferno as well as general information about the structure of Dante's text relevant to Benni's tales. The point I wish to make is that methodologically it was not necessary to include a formal reading of the *Divine Comedy* into the design of the study. In fact, that would have defeated my aim of having students sharing their competencies and readings to discover together deeper textual meanings. Another point I wished to make pedagogically was that texts do not exist in a vacuum, instead they incorporate other texts and continue a long linguistic and cultural tradition as well as innovate it, for example, Benni reverses the journey of his narrating traveller, from heaven to purgatory to hell, rather than from hell to purgatory to heaven, as in the *Divine Comedy*, and hell is made up of train compartments instead of "gironi" [circles].

During the interactive lecture class stylistic exercises I conducted on the use of similes and metaphors in literature and in every day language helped students understand Benni's tales, by linking everyday language use to literary language and highlighting that the 'mechanics' was the same in Italian and English. By highlighting that often exaggerated beautiful language is used in metaphors to convey the opposite meaning or foreshadow tragedy, the interactive lecture helped students to focus on Benni's style, which while playful, conveys a negative perspective on Italian society. Students themselves then had the opportunity to "play" with words by collectively producing their own short texts containing similes and metaphors, to convey images of their culture or other cultures in their own style:

Table 3.5.7 — Cycle 3 Analysis of texts

Cycle 3 *Analisi linguistica e letteraria del testo* [teacher's interactive presentation] Come si fanno ipotesi sul testo? Informazioni implicite (indizi/clues) ed esplicite sul contenuto e forma (stile, genere e atmosfera). [Teacher/ Students' reflection on different levels of "La casa bella", linguistic (syntax, morphology, lexicon), stylistic (metaphors, similes) conceptual (subtext)]. Esercizi di scrittura — (es., Uso della metafora e della similitudine) [Writing exercises — (e.g., use of metaphor and simile)

The second and third tales of the traveller were then read and discussed in class and students were asked to reread them at home and concentrate on specific aspects of the texts as well as try and make intertexual links with other texts read:

Table 3.5.8 — Cycle 3 Exercise

Cycle 3 Leggete il II racconto, incorporando strategie di lettura imparate durante le ultime 3 settimane, o altre già conosciute e indicando quali + discutere brevemente testi degli studenti nel test. [Read the second tale, incorporating reading strategies learnt in the last 3 weeks, or already known strategies and indicate which ones you have used. Also discuss briefly students' responses in the Test.][100] Leggete tutto il racconto, soprattutto paragrafi indicati + titolo III. C'è un filo logico tra i tre racconti? Quale? Discussione in classe. Rileggere a casa e prepararsi per il compito in classe (circa 400 parole in italiano: paragone con il I racconto del viaggiatore + collegamenti con altri racconti letti durante l'anno=10%; riflessione sull'esperienza di lettura, scrittura e riflessione metalinguistica e letteraria). (Es. C. Cassola, Gita domenicale (p. 83); D. Buzzati "Il problema dei posteggi", (*Crescendo*, pp. 264–66; I. Calvino, "La città tutta per lui" (p. 224); Castellaneta, "Guardami alla Tivù". Si possono portare in classe testi e dizionari. [Read the whole second tale, especially the marked paragraphs and the title of the III tale. Is there a logical thread amongst the three tales/ which? Class discussion. Reread at home [the texts] and prepare for the class written assignment (ca. 400 words in Italian: compare with the Ist tale of the traveller and link to other tales read during the year (e.g., *Crescendo,* pp. 264–66; I. Calvino, "La città tutta per lui" [The city all to him self] (p. 224); Castellaneta, "Guardami alla Tivù [Watch me on Tv] = 10%; reflect on your experience of reading, writing and metalinguistics and literary reflection]. You can bring texts and dictionaries to the class.

Cycle 4 (week 13)

In the final cycle, students completed a classroom written assignment on the three short stories focusing on narrative, linguistic and cultural links between the stories:

[100] The Test, on grammar, reading, comprehension and writing, administered in week 12 by my colleague, Mariolina Pais Marden, was based on "L'inferno" ["Hell"] (Benni, 1994). Students read the tale except the last paragraphs and wrote their own endings of the tale.

Table 3.5.9 — Cycle 4

Cycle 4 (weeks 12–13)
Settimana 13: Compito in classe (=15%) 400 parole ca. in italiano; in inglese: nessun limite. [Week 13: Class assignment (=15%) 400 words [at least] ca. in Italian; no word limit in English]

Paragona i tre racconti del viaggiatore: ci sono paralleli tra "La casa bella" e gli altri due racconti del viaggiatore a livello di forma narrativa, sintassi, lessico, tematiche e significati culturali, quali? [=10%] Secondo voi c'è un collegamento narrativo e metaforico tra i tre racconti? Quale? Ricollegandovi anche ai racconti letti durante l'anno e alle tematiche culturali discusse durante il semestre (vita in città e in provincia; televisione), provate a riassumere con 2 / 3 parole i concetti fondamentali dei tre racconti e poi spiegate i motivi della vostra scelta cercando ricollegandovi ai testi. In conclusione, come interpreta Benni l'Italia degli anni Ottanta?

[Compare the three tales of the traveller; are there any parallels with "La casa bella" and the other tales of the traveller on the following levels: narrative form, syntax, lexicon, themes, cultural meanings, which ones? (=10%)]. According to you is there a narrative and metaphorical link amongst the three tales? Which one? Link these three tales to the ones read during the year and to the cultural themes discussed during the semester (life in the city and in the provinces; television) and try to synthesise in 2 or 3 words the fundamental concepts of the three tales and then explain the reasons behind your choice of words, based on the texts content. In conclusion, how does Benni interpret 1980s Italy?

Students also wrote their own reflections on their experience of the literary texts, of the methodology and changes in their approaches and strategies to reading:

Table 3.5.10 — Cycle 4 Writing task

Cycle 4
Riflettete sull'esperienza di lettura e scrittura di testi letterari delle ultime 4 settimane [=5%]: cercate di ricordarvi le vostre prime reazioni al primo esercizio di lettura, alla rilettura in classe e poi scrittura in classe. E' cambiato il vostro punto di vista del testo e dei suoi significati? In che modo? Perché? Sarebbe stato diverso se aveste letto subito tutto il testo invece di leggere solo l'inizio? In che modo? Perché? Gli esercizi in classe sono stati utili? Quali in particolare? Perché? Avete imparato qualche strategia di lettura nuova nelle ultime 4 settimane? Quali? Sono state utili alla comprensione del testo? Perché? La vostra esperienza del testo sarebbe stata diversa se lo aveste letto tutto subito dopo la presentazione dell'insegnante? In che modo? [=5%]

[Write a reflexive text on your reading and writing experience of "La casa bella": how do you feel that the work on the text, and the way it was organised, in cycles of reading, writing and reflection, has developed your confidence in approaching literary texts in Italian? Did your view of the text change with different readings, or as a result or some of the activities in class? How did it change? What kind of activities triggered the change? Did you learn or adopt any different strategy during the last 4 weeks? Which ones? Did they help? How? Would your appreciation and understanding of the text have been different if you had read it once after the teacher's presentation in class? How? Why?]
Grazie mille e buone vacanze!

Assessment design

Since methods of data collection are constituted from students' written tasks, it is appropriate at this stage to provide an explanation of the rationale behind the pedagogical

assessment design. Traditional literature assessment privileges content over language form, so much so that it is not unusual for language students to write essays on L2 literature in their native language. As will be clarified later in this section, I allowed this option only in study 2, for research purposes, provided students wrote the required amount of text in Italian. Unlike traditional assessment of literature (e.g., historical-critical-intellectual, Isenberg, 1990, p. 181) communicative approaches have tended to trivialize content in favour of language form, whilst the cultural approach has focused on discussing texts as themes and issues (Carter & Long, 1990).

Assessing the quality of students' responses to literature in a non native language is rather complex unless one uses communicative summative methods which can yield only one possible answer, such as reading and comprehension exercises, or end-of-course multiple choice exams. These methods may be easy to mark and perhaps provide accurate assessment of students' understanding of the story line of literary texts. I argue however that they would not lead to deep learning approaches to the study and understanding of literature, and therefore would not contribute greatly to forming students' L2 literacy, literary and cultural competence. Other thorny assessment issues are weighting and established criteria of what constitutes literary competence. Some definitions are narrow (Culler, 1975)[101]; others are broad interpretation that includes all possible readings of texts (Fish, 1980). For the present study, I opted for a "third way" view of literature competence to include all readings, including the writer's rhetorical schemata — his reading of the world, and students' re-readings, yet acknowledging that literary reading does require experience and abilities to be able to fully appreciate and enjoy the text. Throughout the process I kept an open mind: gave students questions to help them to notice particular

[101]"To read a text as literature is not to make one's mind a *tabula rasa* and approach it without preconceptions; one must bring to it an implicit understanding of the operations of literary discourse which tells one what to look for. Anyone lacking this knowledge, anyone wholly unacquainted with literature and unfamiliar with the conventions by which fictions are read, would for example, be quite baffled if presented with a poem. His knowledge of the language would enable him to understand phrases and sentences, but he would not know, quite literally, what to *make* of this strange concatenation of phrases. He would be unable to read it *as* literature [...] because he lacks the complex internalised 'grammar' of literature which would permit him to convert linguistic sequences into literary structures and meaning" (Culler, 1975, pp. 113-114).

features and connections, and at the same time encouraged them to express their own responses freely.

I decided to weigh content more than language form (language of course is also content), as illustrated in the tasks description, because I wanted to encourage students to express their responses about the text and their study approach as freely as possible without being constrained by anxiety caused by worrying about making mistakes. This was also the reason behind allowing students to write their replies in English after they had written the prescribed amount of replies in Italian. For this study therefore, assessment methods, understood as instruments for learning, embedded in the teaching and learning process, were predominantly diagnostic and formative as the whole process aimed at developing existing abilities and learning new ones. Briefly, summative assessment modes, such as exams, tend to measure quantitative amounts of acquired knowledge whilst formative methods of assessment, such as writing multiple drafts which include teacher' and peers' feedback, are formative, since they aim to build students' competence; and diagnostic methods, such as first drafts of essays or class discussion, are useful in diagnosing what students' already know or need to learn. The following table summarises the assessment modes used in study 1:

Table 3.6 — Pedagogical process

CYCLES	TASKS	ASSESSMENT MODE
Pre-process: week 4	Questionnaire	Diagnostic
Cycle 1: weeks 8–10	Inferring text outcome **(at home)** Comparison; Reflection; Rewriting	Diagnostic Formative
Cycle 2: weeks 10–11	Repeated readings of tale 1 (at **home)** Reflection variation **(group, in class)** Free Recall **(Individual, in class)**	Diagnostic Formative Summative
Cycle 3: weeks 11–12	Interactive lecture on 3 tales Reading of tales 2 and 3 (in **class and at home)**	Formative
Cycle 4: weeks 12–13	Final written assignment on 3 tales Link with other texts Students' evaluation of process **(in class)**	Summative; Formative Diagnostic

Class reflection and discussion of the variation and similarity in students' responses followed by re-writing of the same or a slightly modified task, were aimed at forming students' abilities. For example, inferring the outcome of "La casa bella" was quite complex and involved several abilities: the capacity to link the beginning of tale 1 to similar stories students had read by tapping into their background knowledge and, by association, create schemata able to identify the genre of the new text. The exercise also involved the ability to link style to meaning, narrative voice and point of view: the child-like exaggerated use of superlatives in similes and metaphors as well as knowledge of rhetorical strategies such as ironic stance and narrative techniques. For instance, the beginning of "La casa bella" is narrated in the first person taking the point of view of the protagonist as a child, but with the subtle yet crushing irony of the adult narrator's perspective. The author thus is able to give readers the momentary illusion, through the child-like language, that the world described is perfect. The almost elegiac tone underlines that that world is no longer. Table 3.7 below outlines the tasks, the competence each task aimed to develop and the criteria used for the assessment of each task:

Table 3.7 — Forming competence and assessing

Competence	**Task**	**Criteria for assessment**
Inferring outcome Stylistic awareness Rhetorical awareness (irony) Literary "competence" (genre)	1. Readings of the beginning of "La casa bella" Form and meaning	Produce response based on clues in 1st paragraph of tale 1; use background and cultural schemata Incorporate class reflection
Ability to recall crucial elements + link to story line + link to style + integrate reflection	2. Free recall after class reflection and discussion	Produce own reconstruction of text Incorporate reflection
Ability to critically analyze the text Ability to link cultural analysis to style and structure Intertextual / Intercultural Abilities Ability to 'imitate' narrative techniques to create own text	3. Written assignment on three tales in class	Identification and linking of key linguistic, cultural and rhetorical elements Incorporate background and class reflection for a deeper reading
Ability to monitor, reflect and modify own abilities; critically evaluate cyclic process	4. Students' evaluation	Identify change and link to processes and tasks

The aim of having students repeatedly read the texts individually at home and provide individual replies was at once diagnostic and formative. Formative, since the tasks lead

students, by repeated readings, to search for answers in the texts and also question their approach while reading; diagnostic, because students' replies allowed me to become aware of their abilities and address them in class discussions. The class process was formative and the written class tasks were both summative and formative since they incorporated what they had learnt during the class process. In summary, assessment practice and methods of data collection were understood as processes aimed at change in students' learning.

3.4.4 Analytic procedure

As in 1998 and 1999, questionnaire data were tabulated and used for selecting the texts and preparing the instructions for the tasks. The survey data were also used in interpreting the results of the cyclic pedagogical process to suggest possible relationships between variables, such as extensive free reading and advanced understanding of texts. The main data on change in students' levels of text understanding is constituted from analysis and assessment of students' written assignments and their reflections on their progress during and at the end of the course.

The analysis of the remaining data collected in 2000 was conducted following phenomenographic parameters (as in Marton et al, 1994) but also content analysis (as in Halász, 1983). The main data used for describing students' understanding of the text and their approach to reading the text were constituted from students' individual written answers to tasks and assignments while the data used for monitoring change is constituted from students' written tasks after classroom reflection and discussion.

A preliminary analysis of the data at each stage of the study meant that the instructions for the following cycle could be modified if necessary. The principal aim of my analyses of students' responses was to establish qualitative differences in the way students had predicted the outcome of the story and link them to their personal variables and their approach to reading, then use students' differences and similarities to enhance their awareness of variation and expand their understanding of the text. In the first two cycles, I read students' responses several times and highlighted, using different colours, similarities

and differences in responses and approaches to reading. Although, following the phenomenographic approach, I did not concentrate on individual responses and treated the data in a holistic way to try and establish the range of variation within the group, some particular ways of predicting the text outcome and reading approach description were particularly striking and were used, in a sense, to label the different tendencies within the group.

After conducting this analytical process, I collated students' responses to capture the breadth of variety of text understanding and approach to reading. In class I subdivided students into heterogenous groups to encourage variation ensuring that in each group there were students with literary experience (e.g., enrolled in an English literature course or with extensive experience of reading literary texts in their native language and in other languages), then distributed the handouts with the selection of collated replies and asked them to read them together and underline how they thought the answers were similar or different. Students thus also participated in "forming" levels of understanding (linked to perspective and approach). This analytical method does not deny different readings and interpretations of the text, it does however recognize that there are various levels of reading a text, not all equal in terms of discovering how the text works, and these different levels of reading a text result in variation in text understanding. This method is consistent with a hermeneutic approach to teaching and phenomenographic analytical methods.

Conclusions about changes in students' understanding of the text were drawn after a second analysis of students' responses in all cycles of repeated readings whilst conclusions about changes in students' approach to reading literature and how these were linked to perspective and qualitative and quantitative developments, were based on my analysis of data collected during the two classroom tasks (recall and assignment on three tales) conducted in cycles 3 and 4. Students' progress evaluations were threefold: my colleague's grades as first marker of students' written assignments and her evaluation of change; my evaluations and students' own evaluation of their progress and process cycles. My evaluation was especially focused on identifying change as perceived by the students, not just in quantitatively, but in their sense of achievement and growth throughout the process. In my

analysis, I was therefore particularly alert to changes in students' responses to the section of each task focused on their approach to reading the texts and how these changes reflected their level of understanding of the texts. Students' evaluations of their own progress as well as the cyclic process were also formative for me, the researcher and educator.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have described in general the approach adopted for the thesis research programme and in detail, the research questions, the samples, the methods of data collection and analysis, the texts used in the preliminary investigation, studies 1 and 2, as well as the context in which the research has been carried out. I also provided a justification for the methods used and defence of the appropriateness of the research approach as a whole. Thus the aim of the chapter was twofold: 1) to make the research approach and methods as transparent as possible by outlining each study separately, yet showing the evolving nature of the programme's theoretical framework as reflected in its application in the investigations and in the pedagogy; 2) consequently, to establish and strengthen the credibility for the results and my interpretation and discussion of them, reported in the following three chapters (4, 5 and 6).

Chapter 4

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF LITERATURE: ANALYSIS OF DATA AND FINDINGS

"I like to read anything and everything."

"Enjoyable literature to me is literature that stimulates a feeling of personal achievement and brings out opinions and emotions."

"A shorter piece, which doesn't demand constant use of dictionaries, but still teaches new vocabulary. Pieces which are not boring in content but address the interests of the class and the Italian culture / society."

(Australian National University: Students' perceptions of literature, 1998 and 1999)

Aim
To establish students' core perceptions of literature in general and discuss them in relation to educators' and theorists' views.

Process
Presentation, analysis and discussion of:
1. Results of students' responses in the questionnaire;
2. Implications of diverging perceptions for teaching and learning L2 literature

Glossary
Description of literature: the entire description of literature or enjoyable literature provided by students especially in the 1998 and 1999 surveys, and also in the additional data
Perception: each view, aspect, perspective expressed within each description in relation to the content and the function of literature
Key theme: category under which the various perceptions of literature have been organized, since each view refers to a special theme of the function or content of literature.

Chapter 4, the first of the three results chapters, presents a detailed analysis of the data on students' perceptions of literature in general collected by questionnaire in 1998 and 1999, as described in chapter 3. Students' perceptions of literature were constituted mainly by students' description of "enjoyable literature" in the survey administered at the beginning of semester 1, 1998 and 1999, and expanded with students' comments during the interviews held in semester 1, 1999, their learning journals and teacher's notes of classroom discussions collected throughout the semester in 1999. Results of the 1998 explorative exercise "What is literature?" and students' preferred kinds of literature in 1998 and 1999 are also reported in this chapter. Findings are then discussed in relation to educators' and theorists' views of literature. Whilst literary theorists' views of literature have informed educators' perceptions of literature and the pedagogy of literary texts, students' views of literature have rarely informed pedagogical practice or theory. This chapter reverses the process by presenting firstly the research findings of the investigations on students' perceptions of literature in general, and secondly, by linking these perceptions to educators', literary theorists' and philosophers' views outlined in chapter 2.

4 Perceptions of literature

As already highlighted in the previous chapters, perceptions of learning, and of the topic studied, have been shown (e.g., Marton & Säljö, 1984) to influence students' learning approaches to topics and in turn students' learning outcomes (Trigwell & Prosser,

1991). An analysis of students' perceptions of literature in general is useful for understanding how students define literature. This kind of awareness empowers the language arts educator to incorporate students' views in the syllabus and also engage in a dialectic relationship with students as students' descriptions can be used in class discussion to highlight different points of view and how these views may affect their learning. In turn, students also become empowered because their descriptions become part of the syllabus and are considered to enrich the learning environment. In this framework the object of learning is inseparable from the act of learning (Marton & Booth, 1997), as students' perceptions serve as a catalyst for discussion and further expansion of students' and teachers' understanding of the object of study: literature. As already discussed in chapter 2, some students transfer their L1 literary competence into their L2 reading.

The aim of the investigations reported in this chapter was to discover: 1) what students generally understood by the term "literature"; 2) what their preferred kinds of literature in general and 3) whether they read literature in their own native language and subsequently: 4) to attempt to establish links between perceptions, reading habits, reading approaches and learning outcomes (study 1, chapter 5). Students, however, in their general descriptions of literature, included comments that referred to the study of L2 literature, perhaps because of their strong concern about reading L2 literary texts as part of the L2 Italian curriculum or maybe because they were not habitual readers of literary texts in their native language. As a consequence this chapter also shifts between L1 and L2 literature as the borders between the two are not always as rigid for students who can look past their language of expression and see both as literature. For the other students who perceive the two quite separately, such barriers can actually be broken down with appropriate choice of texts and their L1 literature background and competence can be applied to L2 texts (see chapters 5 and 6).

The preliminary investigation I conducted in 1998 showed that there were substantial differences in students' and my own views of literature, even in the literal meaning of the term "literature" which I associated first and foremost with genres such as literary narrative, poetry and theatre production. Many young students instead understood literature as a type of written discourse. The following sections report the results respectively of:

4.1 "What is literature?" (Class activity, 1998)

4.2 "Attitudes towards literature" — L1 (question 5, 1998 and 1999 surveys)

4.3 "Favourite kinds of literature" (question 6, 1998 and 1999 surveys)

4.4 "Provide your own definition[102] of enjoyable literature" (question 7, 1998 and 1999 surveys)

Since literature is almost impossible to define, even for literary critics and novelists, I considered "enjoyable" as an appropriate term given the importance attached to pleasure in reading (Barthes, 1973; Eco, 1985) and the possible links between literature, affect and learning (Shanahan, 1987). I aimed to capture what kinds of literature in general students associated with an agreeable reading experience. The term "enjoyable" was intended to describe not just the content of texts but the transaction that particular types of texts elicit in each student.[103] The following analysis of students' perceptions of literature in general reveals that for most students "entertainment" is only one of the key themes they associate with enjoyable literature. In fact, in their descriptions students often specify that entertainment is dependent on cultural, linguistic and aesthetic aspects of the literary text.

4.1 What is literature? Interactive class exercise

In 1998, at the beginning of semester 1, students' replies to the survey were further explored in an activity entitled "What is literature?" The focus of the class exercise which followed students' individual classification of texts as literature or not literature, was on literariness (the formal aspects of literature, as defined in chapter 2) and literature, where it is found and why. I envisaged that a focus on literariness would lead to a focus on the more sophisticated and yet day-to-day usage of language. An array of stylistic and rhetorical devices, such as metaphors and similes, are used in standard every day language, spoken and written, for example in advertisements. Noticing them in different types of texts is the first step towards a meaningful discussion of how

[102] Although "definition" was the term used in the surveys, the term "description" will be used in the analysis of the data since it better conveys the phenomenographic idea that perceptions are not fixed.

[103] An "enjoyable" reading experience does not equate to light entertainment, for example, when I was ten years old I enjoyed reading the *Diary of Anne Frank* and, more recently, Peter Weiss's short story *My House*, because both gave me an insight into experiences of suffering, perishing and survival in styles appropriate for my age.

culture is embedded in written texts and in literary texts in particular. Authors' choice of words in literary texts is intrinsically linked with their cultural background, intended audience and narrative world of the text.

The results of the exploratory class activity conducted in 1998 reported below are relevant to the data analyzed in the next section, since they constitute a different insight into students' varied perceptions of literature as students identified which texts they considered as "literature" and explained why, according to them, those texts could be described as literature. The classification of comments by students as literature or not literature is reported in table format, then the general comments on what for them is literature are discussed. In this exercise the term "literature" was not qualified by the adjective "enjoyable" as in the survey.

Twenty students in total participated in the exercise. The list of texts was meant to be eclectic, to include different types of texts and genres, written in different styles, from the present and the past. As the table shows, students identified literary texts with literariness (e.g., similes and metaphors) and not just with genre or other literary indicators. Students' comments in English are reported verbatim whilst students' comments in Italian have been translated by me into English:

Table 4.1 — What is literature? Results of the interactive class exercise

Text	Yes	No	?	Type of text
1.T. Frescobaldi (1998) "Italia: Luci e ombre verso il '92, *The European, Corriere della sera.*	7	12	1	Article reported in a magazine and a newspaper: "Italy: lights and shadows towards '92"
2. C. Belloli (1943) "Futurista al fronte"	19		1	Futurist poem: "Futurist at the front" (during WW1)
3. Masinata (1932) from *Tavole parolibere*	7	10	3	Visual poem: "tables of free words
4. F. T. Marinetti (1914), from *Parole in libertà*	13	2	5	Futurist poem: "Words in freedom"
5. S. Quasimodo (1930), "Ed è subito sera"	18	2	--	Hermetic poem: "And it is immediately night"
6. 1988, Nonna cocaina, *La Repubblica*	5	15	--	Newspaper article: "Grandmother cocaine"
7. 1987, Il paradiso perduto, *Oggi*	11	9	--	Advertisement: "The lost paradise"
8. C. Zocchi (1996), *Olga*	19	--	1	Novel by a young '90s narrator
9. I. Calvino (1958) Il piccione comunale	11	8	1	Short story: "The council's pigeon"
10. T. Sclavi, *Tutte le donne di Dylan Dog*	6	13	1	Very popular comic in Italy: "All the women of Dylan Dog
11. N. Macchiavelli (1518) *La Mandragola*	20	--	--	Renaissance play

The only text that was classified as "literature" by all students was an excerpt from *La mandragola* by Macchiavelli, probably because it was written in 1500 Florentine. Conversely, an excerpt from Calvino's collection of short stories entitled *Marcovaldo* (1963) "Il piccione comunale", taken from an L2 Italian textbook and included in the hand out with glossary and introduction, was classified by about one third of the class as not being literature. Students' explanations in class revealed that their reasons for defining it as a non literary text were linked to the fact that it was clearly from a language text book and was framed by a glossary and explanatory cultural notes.

Other clarifications of students' classifications emerged from comments to texts 1 and 7: a very poetical newspaper article about Christmas in Italy and a similarly lyrical advertisement for an Italian region. Texts 1 and 6 were perceived as literature by respectively seven and eleven students because of the use of literary language. As students underlined in class discussion, they were confused by the difference between literary language and literary texts. As explained in chapter 2, literariness is not exclusive to literary texts, some of its features can also be found in the language of advertising, sport and in everyday language; conversely, Italian narrative of the 1990s and beyond often includes spoken and regional registers. As also explained in chapter 2, this does not imply that advertisements are literature and 1990s Italian narrative is not, since the uniqueness of literary texts does not reside solely in their formal characteristics, but on the discourse the reader establishes with them.

Some written comments highlighted that students' perceptions of literature did not refer to literary texts (e.g., Yes, because it is writing // Yes – it is a serious text // Yes, because it is a serious text // Paragraphed + uses words to analyse a topic in literature // Yes, because it is a discussion of Italian traditions and society // Yes, because literature is a type of writing that contains information which helps people with their comprehension ability, this applies to all texts).

Those who perceived text 1 as not literature clearly distinguished between information types of texts and perceived literary texts as being pleasurable (e.g., No, because it is an article – it is for information more than pleasure // No, it is an excerpt which limits itself to facts; This text is not literary because this is a text from a newspaper). Poetry (text 5), even futurist and visual texts (texts 2, 3, 4) were classified by the majority as literature

probably because of their style and use of space on the page. Students explanations were tautological (e.g., text 2: "has [an] author therefore [it is] poem or piece // It is a poem, poems are literature // yes, it is a strange poem but it has an historical place in the history of literature).

Only thirteen students out of twenty provided general comments about literature. The most recurrent theme was "reflective thinking", with six descriptions out of thirteen associated either with better understanding of other cultures or better ability to understand other people and also, in one perception, one's own world ("Penso che la letteratura aiuta la gente a pensare e capire [la] il su[a]o mondo" [I think that literature helps people to think and understand their own world]. The second theme was genre and aesthetic qualities of literature with two comments referring to entertainment, one of which also describing the function of literature: "per me, un testo è creativo. L'autore deve usare la sua immaginazione per divertire il lettore – non solo presentare i fatti" [For me, it is a creative text. The author must use his/her imagination to entertain the reader – not just present facts].

Additionally, two descriptions focused on the pedagogic role of literature, its message; two focused on canonic literature and one on literature as all types of writing. These divergent perceptions of literature were discussed in class, highlighting that figures of speech such as similes are not just used in literary texts, but often also in advertising, newspaper articles, and in everyday language; consequently students need not be scared of reading L2 literature since the language of literary texts is not always different from that of other types of texts. I discussed the results of the exercise with the students in class, also to emphasize the interactive nature of reading by explaining that readers' responses create the texts with their different perceptions and interpretations of the text. One of the most rewarding comments that emerged at the end of the 2-week exercise was "I fear literature less" which revealed that literature was indeed a type of writing that some students feared, but the exercise had at least lessened that fear. It was especially in view of the results of the exercise reported in this section that I decided to further investigate students' perceptions of literature, but also approaches to the study of literature in 1999 to gain a deeper understanding of the effects of L2 literature on language and culture learning including the possible impact of students' anxiety (or fear) about reading L2 literature (see chapter 5). The pedagogical process of study 2

(see chapter 6) addresses issues such as apprehension of- and lack of familiarity with literature.

4.2 Attitudes towards literature — L1 (Question 5, 1998 and 1999 surveys)

These results will be reported again and analysed in detail in chapter 5 in relation to students' attitudes towards L2 literature but have been reported here to provide a "picture" of the L1 literature background of the 1998 and 1999 samples:

Table 4.2 — March 1998 and 1999: Students' responses to question 5

I read literature (e.g., Poetry, novels, short stories, plays) for enjoyment in my own language:							
	Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
1998	17	6	3	1	–	–	1
1999	9	2	–	1	–	–	–

4.3 Favourite kinds of literature

Students' responses to question 6 of the survey: "Please indicate your favourite kind of literature (if you indicate more than one kind, rank in order of priority)", are provided below. As shown in table 4.3 below, students had the opportunity to rank their preferred texts from 1st to 4th preference (1-4); however, some only expressed their first preference.

Table 4.3 shows students' preferred type of text in order of ranking: 1) novels; 2) short stories and 3) plays. These results partly coincide with results from students' responses to question 7 ("Provide your own definition of enjoyable literature"), in which students overall defined literature in terms of novels, plays or poetry.

Table 4.3 — March 1998: Students' responses to text preferences question

Type of text	1st preference	2nd preference	3rd preference	4th preference
Novels	18	4	1	2
Poetry	2	2	10	4
Plays	6	5	2	4
Short stories	10	9	5	1
Other (please specify)	-----	-----	-----	-----

Table 4.4 — March 1999: Students' responses to text preferences question

Type of text	1st preference	2nd preference	3rd preference	4th preference
Novels	7	1	2	1
Poetry	3	4	---	1
Plays	5	4	---	1
Short stories	1	---	---	---
Other (please specify)	1	---	---	---

In 1999, after the subdivision of the Italian Program into four levels, rather than three (see chapter 1), the class size was smaller, with 12 students. Results, as in 1998, indicate a preference for novels, followed by plays and poetry. In 1999 two students specified a preference for other types of texts: one student referred to magazines and newspaper articles and another specified "classics (Dante Alighieri etc.)". The following section provides an insight into some of the reasons for students' preferred types of texts as indicated in tables 4.3 and 4.4.

4.4 Descriptions of "enjoyable literature": Variation at the collective level

In their survey descriptions, in their interviews and journals, and in class, students expressed a range of views on literature in general and on why literature is enjoyable. In total I gathered 39 survey descriptions: 27 in 1998 and 12 in 1999. Having established that descriptions gathered in 1998 and 1999 contained the same key themes; I collapsed the descriptions to form a wider sample. I then formed categories of perception constituted from students' descriptions of literature. Most descriptions focused either on

the function of literature (e.g., entertaining, pedagogic) or its content (e.g., text structure, style, language, culture). Most learners' descriptions included comments relating to two or three "perceptions" (or views or perspectives) of enjoyable literature (e.g., ability to hold the reader's attention; author's style). Some comments took the form of caveats to the enjoyment of literary texts, for example the length and level of language difficulty. This indicates an L2 literature focus since the students instead of providing their general view of enjoyable literature, concentrated on problems associated with L2 literature. Descriptions ranged from less to more complex. The most complex descriptions were usually also the most inclusive, one in particular covered nine aspects, from type of text to style, method, content, and reader's response, while the less complex were also the least inclusive and covered one aspect (entertainment; cultural issues; reflection during and after reading) or two particular aspects, such as genre and purpose of text.

The descriptions that contained only one perception, as will be explained later in the section on individual responses, are not necessarily less meaningful than the most complex. Sometimes it is rather a matter of being exclusively focused on one particular aspect or purpose of literature. This does not necessarily have any negative implications for how students approach texts, although usually a strong focus on one genre or theme may influence students' reaction to texts and consequently their approach to texts that do not fit their preferred genre and theme. All perceptions are equally important in pedagogical terms and equally significant in the research results reported in this thesis. Overall students' descriptions revealed a "passive" approach to reading literature as they focused on what the text can do to readers (e.g., entertain them; teach them; make them relax).

From the analysis of students' descriptions I identified twelve distinct perceptions of enjoyable literature which I labelled as:

- A trigger for reflection
- A source of stimulation
- A source of personal development
- A source of entertainment
- A source of knowledge of the language

- A source of knowledge of the world
- A window on culture and society
- A source of aesthetic pleasure
- The literary canon
- A trigger of affect
- An accessible sample of second language
- All types of writing

The twelve perceptions have been grouped according to the key themes expressed in the perceptions, and ordered into seven main categories. These key themes, listed below from the most common to the least common, are indicative of the critical variation between the categories describing the different perceptions of enjoyable literature in the samples investigated in 1998 and 1999:

1. Literature as entertainment
2. Literature as knowledge (ethical, didactic, social, of the lexicon, of the canon)
3. Literature as reflection, stimulation and personal development
4. Literature as aesthetic pleasure
5. Literature as L2 language
6. Literature as affect
7. Literature as all types of writing.

The classification of some comments was particularly dependent on my interpretation of the data. For example, where literature has been defined as providing "a feeling of personal achievement", I interpreted personal achievement in terms of a personal sense of growth or personality development, rather than extension of knowledge. I interpreted comments about expanding one's horizons as "literature as reflection, stimulation and personal development" when they referred to the individual's feelings of growth, and as a "literature as knowledge" when referred specifically to aspects of the object of learning, such as culture. In another example, I interpreted a student's comment that literature "must lead somewhere" as being about text structure and classified it under "literature as aesthetic pleasure".

I have first conducted an analysis across students' descriptions within the seven categories to illustrate the predominant perceptions of enjoyable literature which is reported in this section. Secondly, in order to highlight the distinctness of each description, as well as the main theme within individual descriptions, a representative selection of 1998 and 1999 individual descriptions have been analysed in their entirety. The seven key themes are listed below in order of frequency in students' descriptions, from the most common to the least common, with examples of students' comments as expressed in their descriptions of enjoyable literature (reported verbatim from the surveys):

Table 4.5 — Students' comments expressing critical themes in their perceptions of literature

KEY THEMES	STUDENTS' COMMENTS
1. Entertainment	Attention catching stories Wise and witty writing Transports you into another world
2. Knowledge	Uplifting and edifying and teaches you something Literature that concentrates on social issues Literature that teaches new vocabulary Literature which is a good example of a period, style or theme
3. Reflection, stimulation and personal development	Makes you ask questions Expands your horizons A new insight into an ordinary thing
4. Aesthetic pleasure	Attractive to read due to pleasing use of words and expressions
5. L2 language	Language of a suitable difficulty level so that 'translation' or sorting out the meaning of the text does not become so arduous that reading for themes/message is lost
6. Affect	Personal stories are good so you can relate to them If you can relate to characters and experience a reaction eg laugh, cry etc
7. All types of writing	I like to read anything and everything

In the following sub-sections I present detailed analyses of each perception.

4.4.1 Literature as entertainment

The perception detected most frequently in students' descriptions was "literature as entertainment". There were in total twenty three instances in which students included comments on the entertaining quality of literature. These ranged from a focus by the students on reader's attention to more specific comments about content and genre. Literature that has the capacity to hold readers' attention was mentioned most frequently:

a. Writing which holds your attention
b. Hold the reader's attention
c. Something that holds my attention beyond the first chapter
d. Literature that keeps the reader's attention throughout it
e. Makes you not want to put it down until you have finished it
f. It is literature that keeps you captured [...]
g. Literature [...] which keeps you involved [...]
h. A novel that draws me in [...] fantasy worlds or world novels

The above comments are strongly text-based and support the view that entertainment is a crucial element of enjoyable literature. There are subtle differences amongst the comments, for example, 'a', 'b' and 'c' only refer to texts capable of holding attention, perception; 'a' describes literature using the general term "writing" and perception 'b' mentions the "reader". The next three comments ('c','d' and 'e') instead also include the length of reading attention: "beyond the first chapter"; "throughout it"; "until you have finished it", which suggests that if texts are not entertaining they are also quickly discarded. The last comment "makes you not want to put it down", strengthens the ability of the text to act upon the reader ("makes you") and keep him or her glued to the text, unable to detach her/him self from the text. Comments 'b' and 'd' refer to an impersonal reader, implying that all readers would react to a text in the same way since the meaning or ability to entertain is intrinsic to the text.

Comment 'f' increases the link between text and reader by describing the interaction with the verbal phrases in the passive form "keeps you captured" and "keeps you involved". However comment 'g' portrays a more active image, since

the term "involved" suggests engagement between text and reader, a productive effort on the part of the reader, and not full dependence on the text for entertainment. Instead, 'h' specifies the type of text and genre.

The other comments did not specify exactly which qualities of the text would cause them to devote their full attention to it. The types of text mentioned together with genre are fantasy worlds, probably referring to romance novels, war novels and "murder mystery novels". In total there were seven comments that referred to the type of content viewed as a necessary element of enjoyable literature, listed below, from the most general to the most specific and the most inclusive:

i. Not boring in content
j. Written works which are enjoyable to read
k. Something that is interesting
l. Something which is interesting to read
m. Enjoyable literature should be interesting
n. Comedy
o. I like to read murder mystery novels
p. Wise and witty writing
q. Attention catching stories, usually fictional with interesting and amusing twists
r. Literature that I find enjoyable has to be interesting and original

Comments 'i' to 'm' were the least specific and described literature in the more general terms "not boring' or "interesting". Neither comment explained the qualities of "not boring" nor "interesting" literature, assuming perhaps that exciting or boring content are not subjective concepts. Besides mystery, fantasy and war novels ('o'), another genre and type of content is referred to in perceptions 'n' and 'p': "comedy" and "wise and witty writing". "Comedy" could simply mean "humour" however it can also refers to a genre (theatre plays) whilst 'q' is more inclusive and descriptive, since it could refer to any genre or type of text which is amusing, intelligent, and conveys wisdom. Comment 'o' refers specifically to 'murder mystery', a genre aimed at entertaining the readers, and types of text, 'novels'. Comment 'r' is the most inclusive of the entertainment axes since it includes the elements of attention, genre (fictional) and also a description of

preferred content: "interesting and amusing twists", literary devices usually associated with popular literature but also with traditional literature (e.g. Boccaccio).

There were also four comments focused more on the physical dimension of enjoyable literature ('s', 't', 'u' and 'v'):

s. Literature that you read for pleasure
t. Literature one picks up easily and often for pleasure
u. Literature I enjoy is literature I read for relaxation
v. Literature that is pleasurable and relaxing to read (and interesting)

Enjoyment in reading literature is associated with an effortless experience especially in comment 't' whilst perception 'v' includes that it must also be interesting but in brackets, suggesting that the most important elements of enjoyable literature are pleasure and relaxation.

Finally, I have included comment 'w':

w. Transports you into another world

voiced during the 1999 interviews, under "entertainment" because it conveys an image of escape from the stresses and problems of this world which I have interpreted as being associated with feelings of well being. This comment does not exclude literature representing meaningful "possible worlds" (Bruner, 1986) rather than the artificial worlds of Mills and Boon literature, defined in Italian as "pink" novels.

4.4.2 Literature as knowledge

The variation within this perception was quite broad, so it has been subdivided into four sub-categories: knowledge of the world; knowledge of the culture and society; knowledge of the canon, genre and narrative techniques; and knowledge of the language. This category becomes the second largest category with twenty comments. One focused on literature as a way to increase knowledge about the language (new vocabulary); two focused on gaining an insight into culture and society, four focused on gaining knowledge of the canon, genre and narrative techniques whilst the remaining perceptions focused on literature as a way to gain some sort of wisdom about the world.

The concept of the didactic power of literature (with a strong point to it; teaches you something; with a message), was held by authors and theorists such as Gramsci (1950) and Sartre (1948), who believed in literature not just as entertainment, but as a possible catalyst for change, personal and social. Comments referring to development have been included under "knowledge" when they imply an increase in knowledge not notionally, but in the conceptual and spiritual sense. The four subcategories I identified are listed and analysed below in order of frequency.

4.4.2.1 Increasing one's knowledge of the world (the "pedagogic" role of literature)

Eleven perceptions referred to a view of literature focused on the purpose of literature understood in pedagogical terms:

a. Something which is [...] educational
b. Teaches you something
c. Literature which [...] teaches you things you never knew
d. [Language of a suitable difficulty level so that 'translation' or sorting out the meaning of the text does not become so arduous that] reading for themes/message/ purpose is lost
e. Poetry is enjoyable. When its message comes across clearly
f. Poetry, novels with a strong point to it
g. Something with a moral
h. Comedy, something with a moral to understand
i. Uplifting i.e. edifying
j. Something you can [...] gain either knowledge or inspiration from
k. Educational and enlightening

These comments emphasize aspects of the moral and spiritual value of literature. Comment 'd' clearly refers not to literature in general but to L2 literature and expresses a strong concern about L2 language of a suitable difficulty which will not prevent enjoying the text and understanding its message, theme and purpose. Comments 'e', 'f' and 'h' focus on the genre, and 'e' restricts enjoyable literature to poetry that conveys its message clearly, whilst the remaining comments are all focused on the pedagogic, ethical and moral role of literature. Perception 'h' shows awareness of the fundamental ingredients of comedy, its moral, which need to be experienced – dramatically –

understood and learnt. This comment reflects a classical concept of catharsis (Aristotle's *Poetics*), comedy with a moral to uplift and edify the audience. Thus enjoyable literature is two-fold, entertainment is linked to the ability to understand the wisdom expressed in the moral behind the comedy. Comments 'g' and 'j' include the moral benefits as well as the spiritual value of literature (edifying, uplifting) whilst 'k' strengthens the educational dimension by adding that literature should be "enlightening" – it should bring about the acquisition of knowledge and the learning of new things.

4.4.2.2 Increasing knowledge of the culture and society

The following four comments highlight the cultural content of literature:

l. Literature that concentrates on social issues (taboo and controversial issues that are sometimes difficult to address)

m. It opens the windows and gives insight into other cultures

n. Written works [...] which give you an insight into another culture

o. Pieces which [...] address the interests of the class and the Italian culture/society

There are slight differences amongst the comments, for example, 'l' focuses strongly on literature addressing taboo issues; reading such literature would presumably offer an opportunity for facing and discussing these topics often avoided in society or class discussion because of their sensitive nature. The next three comments ('m', 'n', 'o') all expresses a perception of literature as culture: 'm' and 'n' perceive culture in universal terms, whilst 'o' refers specifically to Italian culture and society. Comment 'o' adds an interesting dimension: knowledge about the class interests of which presumably the educator should be aware. In this sense, this view addresses the role of L2 literature rather than literature in general and how educators should take into account what kind of literature is appealing and engaging for students. It may seem surprising that there are few descriptions of literature as culture.

Students refer to culture more often in their comments about the role of literature in L2 and even the above perceptions indicate that literature gives insight into cultures other than one's own. This seems to suggest that there is a difference in students' perspectives of L1 and L2 literature and the purpose of reading L1 and L2 literary texts. Enjoyable

literature in the native language is perceived more as having to be entertaining, pedagogic in a philosophical sense and aesthetically pleasing, whilst L2 literature is more often associated with knowledge of the L2 culture and society (see chapter 5). Such distinction, probably linked to students' expectations of L2 literature syllabuses, may play an important role in students' motivation and approach to texts and should therefore be carefully investigated for example when making syllabus choices.

4.4.2.3 Increasing knowledge of the canon, genre, narrative techniques

Three comments describe enjoyable literature as literature belonging to the canon, renowned literature, or define literature in terms of a specific genre, period or narrative technique:

p. Modern European playwrights from early 1900s to present day

q. Modern plays and short stories

r. Literature which is a good example of a period, style, theme, or a text which 'everyone has read or heard about'

In contrast to traditional views of literature, as a precise *corpus* of works responding to certain prerequisites, principally aesthetically focused, the samples investigated did not restrict literature to a repertoire of renowned or representative texts. The perception of literature as canon is actually expanded to include renowned works, which may not necessarily be part of the canon.

4.4.2.4 Increasing one's knowledge of the language

Increasing vocabulary is mentioned only once in the descriptions and seems to depend on the length and the lexical difficulty of the text. It is however addressed later in section 8 of the questionnaire: "The possible role/roles of literature in language learning" and in the interview (see chapter 5):

s. (A shorter piece which doesn't demand constant use of dictionaries) but still teaches new vocabulary

The expansion of lexical knowledge indicates a reading approach focused on the micro-level, also defined as bottom up reading, concentrated on individual language items rather than on a holistic perception of the text which views the literary piece in its entirety, as discourse (top down reading). As already explained in chapter 2,

both strategies occurring contemporaneously, bottom up and top down (L2 reading theory), or seeing the parts in relation to the whole where phenomenography and hermeneutics overlap, are necessary for an advanced reading of the text.

4.4.3 Literature as reflection, stimulation and personal development

There were fifteen comments referring to literature as a type of discourse that leads to personal growth through a process of reflection, stimulation and / or expansion. This was the third most widespread category. This view of literature goes beyond the acquisition of knowledge (ethical, didactic, linguistic, canon driven or social / cultural). In this category enjoyable literature is viewed as a dialectic process which leads to enquiry ("it makes you ask questions") and to changes in perspective. Some comments focused instead on "stimulation", which is slightly different and more powerful than reflection, since it attaches some sort of action or change to enjoyable literature. The comments listed below, from reflection to stimulating to literature as a catalyst for change, reflect the readers' values and the significance they assign to reading literature:

a. It must cause me to think about its content
b. Something that makes the reader think about it even after it has been finished eg l'attrafamiglia!!! ("L'altra famiglia")
c. Literature…you find yourself thinking about the concepts and issues it presents long after you have finished reading it.
d. Makes us reflect on issues
e. Brings out opinions
f. Makes you ask questions
g. Novels are enjoyable if they are stimulating
h. Enjoyable literature should be [interesting] and stimulating
i. Stimulates your mind
j. Stimulates the imagination
k. Helps me improve my appreciation of whatever interest I have at the time
l. Stimulates a feeling of personal achievement
m. Expands our horizons
n. Enlightening
o. It is something which perhaps gives the reader a new insight into an ordinary thing

The comment about personal development ('m': expands our horizons) was mentioned once in the questionnaires but voiced several times during the 1999 interviews, especially in regard to the first L2 Italian text studied, *L'altra famiglia* by Dacia Maraini (Italiano & Marchegiani & Jones, 1992, pp. 75-88). Comments 'j' to 'o' imply a development or change in perspective and have therefore been interpreted as a sort of personal development as a result of either broadening one's horizons (listed also as literature as knowledge in the next section) or seeing something in a new light which consciously or subconsciously, based her/his description of literature on a feeling not dissimilar to "estrangement", one of the tenets of Russian formalism. Such views of literature may be considered as having the strongest impact on students since they imply change in perspective and may lead to personal and academic development. However, what remains to be seen in a non native context is how a description of literature as personal expansion impacts on learning (see chapter 5). Another view of literature as personal expansion, expressed in the interview, is of literature as another world ('p'):

> [...] Novels and stuff take me to a totally different place [...], whereas reading about real people and real things happening in the world today is not nearly as exciting, I don't know. [...] I just read *Heart of Darkness* [...] it was amazing [...] he's like put the novel together with so many different narratives [...] it just comes together very well and I also find the ending really intriguing, like you're just left wondering [...].

The above interview excerpt refers specifically to L1 literature and provides a good example of how literature can be entertaining (exciting) as well as stimulating, also because of its narrative techniques. This kind of literature transports the reader into another world without being escapist, it represents a "via d'uscita", [a way out] (Calvino, 1986) from a chaotic reality. It also leads to appreciation and development of knowledge about narrative techniques as well as reflection which will linger on, even after ending the book, shown in the comment about the novel's open ending. The perception of accessing "a totally different place" has also been included in the knowledge and aesthetics section because it shows a strong appreciation of the text's narrative structure as well as implying acquisition of new knowledge about how through narrative techniques the author can construct possible literary worlds that are both enticing and formative for the reader.

4.4.4 Literature as aesthetic pleasure

I identified fourteen comments that referred to aspects related to the art of the text. Five referred specifically to form, style, (method of writing), and lexicon. Two mentioned the structure of the text (plot, thesis; narrative structure); another was related to the development of characters and the background and setting of the novels, and the last two referred to the original qualities of enjoyable literature. These descriptions can be broadly subdivided into two traditional perspectives of literature, the first ('a' – 'h') is literature as *belles lettres*, fine writing where the use of words has to be aesthetic. The second perspective ('i' – 'l') is more focused on aspects of narrative structure and refers to prose rather than poetry. In 1827, the English poet Coleridge defined prose as "words in their best order" and poetry as "the best words in the best order".[104] The following comments disregard theoretical and critical developments viewing literature as discourse between text and reader. Instead they uphold Coleridge's romantic description of literature:

a. Well written
b. Well written prose
c. Cleverly written
d. It must be well written, so that the prose is attractive
e. Attractive to read due to pleasing use of words and expressions
f. When you can appreciate the form and beauty of the language
g. The method and style of writing is definitely the most important thing
h. Aesthetically (subjective) pleasing
i. The work must develop characters & plot to a believable extent
j. Must lead somewhere
k. Excellent character development and use of the descriptive (mainly fantasy worlds, or war novels)
l. The work as a whole should be well constructed with a plausible plot or well argued thesis

These comments convey a strong focus on the art of the novel as opposed to writing as discourse, with a focus also in comment 'k' on the ability to create a fantasy world in which to escape. The last comment shows a strong appreciation of style and narrative craft, and also a focus on "plausible plot", an element of literary narrative and also a

"well-argued thesis", a description more appropriate perhaps for defining academic writing rather than literature. Although the term "romanzo-tesi" [novel with a thesis] certainly exists in Italian, in such novels usually the thesis emerges from the sub text rather than being openly argued, as was also the case in Enlightenment literature (e.g., Voltaire's *Candide*). I have included in this section also two comments that could refer to form, theme or text structure:

m. Has to be [...] original

n. An original idea is always great

These are the only two comments emphasizing the importance of originality in literature. Originality in literature in general can depend on a particularly innovative use of language (especially in poetry but also in narrative and plays) or a striking narrative structure or unusual graphic arrangement of words within a poem which can include images or drawing (visual poetry) or also a new fictional perspective on a certain world or period (e.g., Eco's (1980) *Il nome della rosa*).

4.4.5 Literature as L2 language

The following comments highlight the concern with reading L2 literature by including in their descriptions of literature in general possible problems associated with studying L2 literary texts. Seven descriptions included comments on students' anxiety about reading literature. Concerns voiced were over the length and difficulty of L2 texts. In chapter 5 I will explore whether this anxious perception of literature is somehow linked to students' approaches to studying L2 literature. Comments 'a' to 'e' focus entirely on comprehension, which I interpreted as being a "literal", word by word atomistic understanding of the text and related these perceptions as being about reading literature in an L2, rather then literature in general. Comment 'a' separates L1 literature (A novel that draws me in with excellent character development and use of the descriptive (mainly fantasy worlds, or war novels) already reported in 4.4.4 by indicating that low language fluency may prevent appreciation of the text:

a. This is hard to get in a language where you are not fluent.

b. Literature you can understand (!)

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[104] *Table-talk*, 1827, published 1836, quoted in Tambling (1990), p.11.

c. Novels are enjoyable [...] without being too difficult to understand

d. Literature that can be read and understood without having to refer to a dictionary all the time

e. A shorter piece which doesn't demand constant use of dictionary [but still teaches new vocabulary]

f. Language of a suitable difficulty level so that 'translation' or sorting out the meaning of the text does not become so arduous that [reading for themes/message/ purpose is lost]

While 'a' to 'c' reveal only their concerns, 'd' and 'e' explain also one of the reasons why literature may not be enjoyable, i.e. if one needs to continuously resort to dictionaries to be able to understand the text. Comment 'a' actually implies that it is very difficult to enjoy reading L2 literature, since lack of fluency does not allow insight into narrative aspects such as characterization and description of settings. This again underlines the importance of choosing appropriate texts, which may not necessarily need to be children's literature, but perhaps written from a child's point of view (cf. chapter 6) and therefore suitable linguistically to students in their 3rd or 4th semester of Italian.[105] Comment 'c' may possibly refer also to reading particularly difficult L1 novels, such as Joyce's (1992) *Finnegan's wake* or Calvino's (1973) *Il castello dei destini incrociati* [*The castle of crossed destinies*].

Interpreted as referring to L2 literature, these comments uncover an atomistic, or bottom up reading focus, where, rather than trying to grasp the meaning from the context or discourse of the text, the reader looks at the individual parts and is unable to give them meaning by relating them to the whole text. However, with L2 literary texts, the misunderstanding of one single word may sometimes jeopardise the interpretation of the whole work. So ideally bottom up and top down reading should be combined, and atomistic and holistic reading should occur simultaneously.

The last two comments, 'e' and 'f', are more specific and yet more inclusive: 'e' highlights that length is crucial, implying that if the text is not overwhelmingly long,

[105] As I have argued in chapters 1 and 2, and as ahown by other studies (e.g., Maxim, 1997), reported in chapter 2, literature can be introduced to the benefits of the students as early as the beginner level. Text selection, pedagogy and course design are crucial to the success of including literature in earlier courses. Clearly, students in advanced levels courses would be able to read more complex texts. This thesis however challenges the notion that literary texts should only be introduced at higher levels, based also on students' positive attitude towards the inclusion of L2 literary texts at all levels across all three samples, 1998, 1999 and 2000.

learning new vocabulary becomes an attainable task (see chapter 6). Comment 'f' underlines the importance of choosing literary texts of appropriate difficulty levels which will provide suitable learning conditions so students will not miss an advanced interpretation of the text. The comment also uncovers an awareness of the fact that L2 texts should not be "translated", by adding "or sorting out the meaning of the text", which explains that L2 text understanding is achieved by accessing its meaning in the L2, not by literal translation of the text. Comment 'f' thus voices three crucial and interdependent aspects in L2 literature learning and teaching: an advanced interpretation of L2 literary texts (their message, purpose, themes, style and structure) depends on an advanced reading of the text which in turn depends on an appropriate syllabus choice that allows such advanced understanding to take place. Texts' selection should address students' language and cultural levels, include the interests and preferences of the class. Two descriptions focused on literature as knowledge of the language or the canon included concerns over the length and difficulty of the text. In these two descriptions, entertainment depends on language and text difficulty, as well as acquiring knowledge about the canon.

I have listed comment 'g' separately because it voices a different aspect of L2 reading: reading pace:

g. Something you can read at your own pace

This comment underlines an important prerequisite for enjoying reading, especially in L2: reading as an individual experience whose pace is controlled by the reader and not by an academic curriculum. Although not always possible given academic time pressures, this comment stresses the importance of applying alternative arrangements for reading L2 literary texts, with different paces appropriate for different students with the same amount of reading required for each student.[106] Ideally, L2 reading should be an autonomous yet collective learning experience with freedom of time and space. As

[106] Students in Italian Studies - Advanced 2 (8th semester if they started as beginners) of the Italian Program, in consultation with the educator, select a text (e.g., literary, historical) at the beginning of the semester which they then read individually during the whole semester. At set times during the semester each student shares the text with the rest of the class with assignments related to the text such as a book review, a written assignment and an oral presentation. All assignments are usually sent to the whole class via email once they have been read and modified (if necessary) by the educator, read and discussed in class.

will be reported in chapter 6 this idea, even in a university context, is not utterly utopian.

4.4.6 Literature as other / all types of writing

The following comments offer a wide interpretation of the term "literature" by describing literature according to the etymological meaning of the word:

a. Writing [which holds your attention]

b. Written works [which are enjoyable to read and give you an insight into another culture]

c. Wise and witty writing [that expands our horizons and makes us reflect on issues]

d. Current issues in magazine or newspaper form [is] are interesting especially

e. I like to read anything and everything

f. I can usually get something out of most forms of literature

This view of literature emerged also during the 1999 interviews. Although most of the descriptions referred to specific literary genres, novel, poetry, theatre or to characteristics usually associated with literary texts, such as character development and plot, some descriptions referred instead to types of texts not usually regarded as literary, and especially in the 1998 replies ('e' and 'f'), were quite vague and at the same time all inclusive since they reflected a poststructuralist view of literature, as simply a type of written discourse and indicated a preference for many or all types of writing. Except for 'd' (magazine, newspaper), all these comments are ambiguous because they do not mention any specific type of text or genre. Initially I had interpreted comments 'b' and 'c' as referring exclusively to literary texts but when I re-examined the data I realized that perhaps I had been biased against other types of texts, and maybe the views describing enjoyable literature for example as "wise and witty writing that expands our horizons and makes us reflect on issues" could also refer to particularly illuminating historical, political or cultural essays. Similarly, 'b' could refer to a particularly deep and well written newspaper article on Italian culture. I have therefore also included all comments that do not refer specifically to literary texts in this category.

4.4.7 Literature as affect

Five descriptions included comments on the emotional and psychological aspects of literature. These comments highlight that enjoyment of the text depends on the reader's ability to connect with the text emotionally. Reading is perceived as a dynamic process, a "transaction" with the text (Rosenblatt, 1995, pp. 26-27) resulting in an affective response. Unlike in the category 'literature as entertainment', where enjoyment is perceived as depending overall on the text, these descriptions show an awareness that reading relies on the transaction with the text. Whether or not the text is attractive to read is therefore a 'subjective' experience since it depends not just on the aesthetics of the texts or its genre or plot, but on what the reader makes of the text and how s/he relates to it.

a. Personal stories are good so you can relate to them

b. Modern plays and short stories that relate to us nowadays

c. If you can relate to characters and experience a reaction eg laugh, cry etc

d. Stimulates a feeling [of personal achievement] and brings out [opinions] and emotions

e. Touches both emotions [and the mind]

The first two comments describe literature almost exclusively in terms of affect, whilst 'c' and 'd' underline the emotional aspect of reading enjoyable literature. Surprisingly, there were only five comments showing a perception of literature linked to the emotional world. Comment 'a' refers to "personal stories" which I have interpreted as either biography or literary texts focused on character development with detailed description of what happens (the storyline) to the character. Comments 'b' and 'c' expand the level of involvement by specifying respectively the type of texts or the type of emotional interaction with the text whilst 'c' and 'd' include emotions as one of the elements of enjoyable literature; additionally, 'd' attaches to emotion a further dimension, "the mind" stressing the link between reason and emotion (Rosenblatt, 1995, pp. 214–262).

4.4.8 Summary of results and discussion

The results of the 1998 (27) and 1999 (12) survey descriptions have been collapsed to provide a larger sample and a wider range of comments within each category of

perception. Descriptions of literature are organized under key themes to capture students' most recurrent perceptions. The table below shows the number of comments expressed for each key theme respectively in 1998, 1999 and 1998 and 1999. The table shows that the key theme detected most frequently in the collapsed 1998 and 1999 results, constituted from comments taken from students' descriptions of enjoyable literature, is "literature as entertainment", followed by "knowledge", "reflection, stimulation and development" and "aesthetics". This result is influenced by the higher percentage of entertainment (36%) in 1998 whilst in 1999 the same key theme yielded only 14% of the total results. Of the seventeen entertainment-oriented descriptions of literature expressed in 1998, six referred to the command of a reader's attention. Some of these descriptions included expressions such as "grab my attention", and "draw me in" which indicate that enjoyment of the text in these views is defined in terms of reader dependency.

Given the theoretical and educational focus on readers' processes over the last thirty years, it is remarkable that in almost all descriptions of literature, even in some of the most complex, readers have little or no agency in the "creation" of good literature and rely on the author and the text to engage and /or entertain them. The "entertainment" perception however, as will be analysed in the next section, is often accompanied by views classified under "reflection, stimulation and personal development" and "knowledge" (of the world and culture). The three least common descriptions of literature in the joined results are "L2 language", "other / all types of writing" and "affect".

Table 4.6 — Perceptions of literature: Results organized under key themes

1998 — Key themes	*No. of comments: 46*	*Percentage*
Entertainment	**17**	**37%**
Knowledge	**9**	**20%**
Reflection/Stimulation/Development	**6**	**13%**
Aesthetic pleasure	**4**	**9%**
Other / all types of writing	**4**	**9%**
Affect	**3**	**6%**
L2 language	**3**	**6%**

1999 — Key Themes	*No. of comments: 44*	*Percentage*
Knowledge	**10**	**23%**
Aesthetic pleasure	**10**	**23%**
Reflection/Stimulation/Development	**10**	**23%**
Entertainment	**6**	**14%**
L2 Language	**4**	**9%**
Affect	**2**	**4%**
Other / all types of writing	**2**	**4%**

1998 and 1999 — Key Themes	*Total no. of comments: 90*	*Percentage*
Entertainment	**23**	**26%**
Knowledge	**19**	**21%**
Reflection/Stimulation/Development	**16**	**17%**
Aesthetic pleasure	**14**	**15%**
L2 Language	**7**	**8%**
Other / all types of writing	**6**	**7%**
Affect	**5**	**6%**

As shown in the above table, in 1999 "reflection", "aesthetic pleasure" and "knowledge" (perceived as acquisition or expansion of ethical, moral, philosophical knowledge about the world, Italian culture and language) yielded equal numbers of comments. This suggests that the 1999 sample had a more inclusive view of literature. Generally, the 1999 descriptions were more complex than the 1998 ones, perhaps because students were in their 5th semester of Italian and had read some literary texts in the previous Italian course and literature in L1. In the 1999 sample there were also fewer students below twenty years of age and more habitual readers of literary texts and included more key themes within the one description.

Overall, the results reveal a preference for literature that combines entertainment with the opportunity to acquire some type of knowledge or for reflection. Although this may not differ from what some educators look for when setting L2 texts, it is also the case that other educators have different text selection criteria (e.g., canon). These results show what kinds of literature students prefer, if they happen to coincide with educators' criteria, it is still useful since it confirms their choices. In terms of types of texts, the most often mentioned in students' descriptions were novels, poetry, plays and short stories ("a shorter piece"), which partly corresponds with the preferred kinds of

literature indicated in the surveys, where in fact short stories were ranked second. There were only two specific references to non literary types of texts: magazines, newspapers; there were however several descriptions that included terms such as "writing" or "anything" which was generally interpreted as an understanding of the term "literature as other / all types of writing".

The prevalence of the key theme "entertainment" in 1998 may be attributable to a higher percentage of students below twenty years of age (44%) against 33% in 1999. An observation of the 1998 individual surveys revealed that the variation in perceptions, was in many cases linked to age. Initially I had interpreted the strong prevalence of "entertainment" in 1998 to the added modifier "enjoyable" to the more general "literature". However, in 1999 the same question ("provide your definition of enjoyable literature") yielded quite different results. As outlined in table 4.6, entertainment was fourth with only 14% of the total number of comments. This was due probably to a lower occurrence of reader dependent comments than in 1998.

Results of the "Literary response questionnaire" administered to 120 first year students of English at the University of Alberta in Canada revealed similar preferences (Miall & Kuiken, 1995). Miall and Kuiken's (1995) results emerging from a factor analysis of the results revealed that the first three factors students listed for reading literary texts were: 1) entertainment, relaxation and imaginative; 2) "all-round" educational and personal development and 3) "imaginal" address of personal problems (Miall, 2003, n. p.). There was also a strong parallel with the capacity of the text to captivate, identified as "the primary vehicle for literary insight" by the Canadian researchers, and also gaining insight into other people - an emphasis on the epistemic value of reading and on language style. Also, half of the readers perceived literary reading as not distinctive from any other types of reading. Similarly, my results show that in 1998 especially, at least a third of the class perceived literature as all types of written text, and in 1999 especially there was a strong emphasis on the epistemic value of reading literature, in the broad sense of gaining knowledge about the world as well as on the importance of style and narrative structure (the art of the text).

Levorato's (2003) study[107] also showed that the first factor identified in students' responses to literary texts was "involvement during reading", which included "curiosity, excitement, interest, memorability, pleasure and suspense (p. 1). The Canadian and Italian studies' results of first year students of L1 literature (see chapter 3) are useful in terms of comparing the results of my studies conducted with small groups of students of different language levels (continuing and intermediate) in Australia, albeit they yield similar answers. Although it is premature to draw any conclusions, it could be surmised from the above results, conducted with university students in Canada, Italy and Australia, between 1995 and 2000, using similar methods of gathering data but different methods for analysing the results, that we are either approaching a global era in which western young people have similar interests world wide or that literature arises, and maybe always has arisen, from responses related to pleasure, affect and epistemic and personal development. These results have considerable implications for syllabus choices, as will be explained in chapter 6.

4.5 Descriptions of enjoyable literature: Variation at the individual level

In addition to the phenomenographic analysis of collective categories of perception of the previous section, here I am considering "individual perceptions" of literature. The phenomenographic focus on collective analysis across students' perceptions of 'enjoyable literature', based on comments drawn mainly from their survey descriptions, provides an overall insight into the most prevalent themes across the two samples investigated in 1998 and 1999. The same descriptions considered individually offer information about why, according to a particular student, certain kinds of literature are 'enjoyable', and which factors would prevent her/him from enjoying literature. Considering the 'whole' description provides a stronger insight into the relationship between different elements of the descriptions, from less to more complex.

[107] The study was conducted at Padua University in Italy with 75 undergraduate students (see chapter 2).

Some individual descriptions focused on one or two key themes (e.g., aesthetics). Other descriptions were more complex and spread the focus quite evenly across two or more key themes. The eight individual descriptions analysed below show variation at the individual level.

From an all embracing description of literature: *"I like to read anything and everything"* numbered as '0' since it is too vague and does not include any comments that can be related to a detailed analysis of students' perceptions of enjoyable literature.

Description '1' is entirely focused on the capacity of the text to retain the reader's attention: *Something that holds my attention beyond the first chapter.* Other examples in this category included comments of literature on the possible lexical difficulties encountered when reading L2 literature which can prevent enjoyment of reading texts: "Literature that can be read and understood without having to refer to a dictionary all the time", in which focus on language is associated with an anxiety about decoding the text or descriptions concentrated on cultural issues.

Description 2: *"That which is attractive to read due to accurate and pleasing use of words and expressions. The work as a whole should be well constructed with [a] plausible plot or well argued thesis".* Although quite long and inclusive of several aspects of why literature is enjoyable, the description focused mostly on the art of the text, its style and structure. Enjoyable literature here is linked exclusively to accuracy and plausibility, to careful planning of structure and form with the addition of "a well argued thesis". Interestingly most literary theorists have argued over whether literature should contain a thesis, and whether it should then be classified as expository text, rather than as literary. The two points of view are representative of opposite interpretations of the world: the first emphasizes the social value of literature whilst the second stresses the aesthetic value of literature.

Description 3: *"That is uplifting i.e. edifying and teaches you something or is simply aesthetically (subjective) pleasing"* includes two key themes: literature as ethical and pedagogic knowledge and aesthetics thus combines naturalist and idealist/romantic views of literature. The two comments seem to be exclusive since they are separated by "or simply". The added "subjective" in parenthesis shows awareness that aesthetic

pleasure is subjective, it is found in the transaction between text and reader, not in the texts alone. This student however expressed a much more elaborate view of literature in the interview which will be discussed in the context of the role of literature in L2 learning.

Description 4: *"It is the literature that keeps you captured as well as it opens the windows and gives insight into other cultures"* lists three key characteristics of 'enjoyable literature': the ability to entertain the reader, but also personal development and consequent experience and better knowledge of another culture. The description is quite sophisticated in its use of language. It makes use of metaphor (opens the windows; keeps you captured) to convey the essential qualities of literature. This reader needs to become hostage of the book (keeps you captured), she therefore places the onus on the text, to hold her attention probably by plot development; s/he also focuses on the other two aspects mentioned above. Entertainment, personal development and knowledge are therefore interdependent in this student's view.

Description 5: *"Novels are enjoyable if they are stimulating without being too difficult to understand; if you can relate to the characters and experience a reaction eg laugh, cry etc. Poetry is enjoyable. When its message comes across clearly but also when you can appreciate the form and beauty of the language"* includes five key themes: literature as: stimulation, difficulty, affect, pedagogic role and aesthetics, as well an indication of preferred types of literature: novels and poems. Like the views in the above section, this description refers to the aesthetics of the texts and the purpose (message). There is an added theme: enjoyment of the text depends upon its style and discourse and also the ability of the reader to understand and therefore appreciate the text. Furthermore the student underlines that, to be enjoyable, novels are stimulating if the reader can become emotionally involved in the text by relating to the characters (a kind of identification, so dreaded by authors such as Calvino, that obviously appeals to readers but that is included in Rosenblatt's "aesthetic" transaction between text and reader). The educator must reconcile these differences by explaining that different ways of approaching the text, affective and / or epistemic, contribute to the appreciation of the text.

Description 6: *"Enjoyable literature for me is a story (fiction or non-fiction), poetry, novel, which is well written, cleverly written, with a strong point to it. It must lead somewhere and cause me to think about its content. An original idea is always great, but the method and style of writing is definitely the most important thing. An excellent author can write about the most mundane things, and yet hold the reader's attention through the style of writing used":* this is the most explanatory of all the descriptions provided. It includes information about the type of text, genre, style, content. It also contains comments regarding the didactic, reflective and expansive roles of literature. But the main focus is on the craft of the text, on the ability of the author to capture the reader through clever use of language. The reader draws enjoyment from the writer's craftsmanship but recognizes that this is a subjective view ("for me"). Enjoyable literature is therefore viewed as something that comes to life through the subjective interpretation of the reader, but also as a creative craft to appreciate. It is representative of the "aesthetic" theme, in which literature is seen as "work of art", nice words put together in a clever structure by a masterful author. This perception is however accompanied by a focus on the theme of "reflection" (it must cause me to think) and an appreciation of original ideas. Reading thus is not seen as simply an aesthetic appreciation of the art of the text, or an acquisition of knowledge about the world, canon or culture, but a complex exploratory transaction between a text and a reader who derives pleasure in discovering meaning in the text. As affirmed by reader response theorists, the text has no single or exclusive meaning, as each reader assigns a particular meaning at particular moments to the texts. The reader's interpretation of the text is influenced by a reader's own background schemata (see chapter 2), by attitudes and reasons for reading, by perception of literature and by environmental factors such as place, setting of reading, as highlighted by Calvino (1979) at the beginning of *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore...[If on a Winter's Night a Traveller...]*.

Description 7: *"Wise and witty writing that expands our horizons and makes us reflect on issues"* although quite brief, contains four key themes: literature as education ("wise"); literature as entertainment (witty) and literature also as knowledge and reflection. The main focus however seems to be on reflection and personal development. The learner described literature in terms of personal expansion ("expand our horizons"). This perception, voiced by several learners in

the interview, especially in regard to the first text, "L'altra famiglia" by Dacia Maraini (Italiano & Marchegiani Jones, 1992) was interpreted as being the most inclusive and extensive since it has the strongest impact on the student, that is enjoyable literature acts as a sort a catalyst for change in perspective and understanding of other cultures. What remains to be seen is whether a deep and holistic view of enjoyable literature, as personal development, impacts on learning.

4.6 Discussion of findings

Most of the descriptions provided in the 1998 and 1999 questionnaire were consistent with comments provided in 1999, with a relatively smaller sample, during the interviews, in class and in their learning journals. In 1999, some views were expanded during the interview, when students had the opportunity to express their thoughts about literature orally in an informal setting (my office). Whereas some perceptions were enlarged during the interviews simply because students had more time available, others were expanded after reading the set literary texts (e.g., "L'altra famiglia" by Dacia Maraini) in the first weeks of the semester.

The analysis of the variation at the individual level has shown that there were only a few descriptions which included only one or two key themes. Unlike "description 1" which uncovers a strong concern with language difficulties, the others were concentrated either on cultural issues, period and genre. Although overall (1998 and 1999) entertainment is the predominant theme, followed by "knowledge" and "reflection, stimulation and personal development", when the descriptions are analysed individually they reveal the pluralistic view students have of literature in terms of types of texts preferred, genre and reasons for finding literature enjoyable.

As a consequence, the main theme is dependent on the other perceptions of literature expressed within the same description. The critical variation between categories (variation between categories) emerges here from the degree to which the student describes the possible effects of reading enjoyable literature including the depth of impact that reading literature can have on her/him (e.g., "it opens the windows and gives insight into other cultures"); whereas in the previous section I showed the critical variation of the total number of perceptions across readers as well as the non critical

variation (variation within categories) within each key theme. There is a noticeable shift between descriptions focused on entertainment or language such as description 1, and more complex descriptions showing more complex perceptions of literature by attaching to entertainment other themes such as expanding one's knowledge of another culture as in description 4; as entertainment linked to aesthetics and knowledge in description 6 or as change by expanding the level of epistemic knowledge in description 7.

In summary, although length is not necessarily an indication of complexity, longer descriptions contained themes regarding why and how literature was enjoyable. The critical variation revealed a shift from a perception of literature focused on the "entertainment" theme to more complex perceptions including several themes: "knowledge"; "personal development"; "aesthetic processes". Several descriptions combined the "entertainment" theme in combination with other dimensions of literature. These findings provide a useful insight for the educator into the reasons behind students' enjoyment, or lack of pleasure when reading literature. The findings also indicate the degree of students' familiarity with literature, how it affects them, as well as the possible impact these factors may have on their learning when they approach reading L2 literature (see study 1, chapter 5).

4.6.1. Discussion of findings in relation to educators' and theorists' views

This section discusses how literature in general, with some reference also to L2 literature, was perceived by students. This discussion is interwoven with perceptions of literature in educational and theoretical contexts. "Literature", and the meanings the term has assumed throughout the centuries, has in a way come full circle. The Latin term *litteratura,* which referred to an "acquaintance with letters or books"[108], assumed the meaning of literary production, mainly intended as *belles lettres*, only in the 19th century.[109] In the last fifty years (from circa 1960 to 2005) perceptions of literature in general and of the role of literature in L1 and L2 educational settings have changed substantially. Awareness on the part of educators and students of the meanings and

[108] According to the *New Fowler's Modern English Usage* (1996) this usage of the word was first recorded in the 14th century.

[109] This modern usage of the word was first recorded in 1812 (Fowler, 1996, p. 464).

perceptions of the term "literature" in Australian and Italian contexts, is an essential prerequisite to avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate curriculum planning. Until very recently, literature retained a privileged position in the education system in Italy. For this reason teachers partly educated in Italy in the 1970s, like me, are likely to have a different view of literature from students born and educated in Australia. Until the 1950s and beyond, literature was still at the centre of native language curricula in Italy. In most Western countries literature was still one of the main reasons for learning a foreign language, since foreign languages were taught mainly to allow students to read the primary works of foreign literature (the canon). This predominance of literature was due to the fact that certainly until 1950, in foreign language studies, literature was still perceived by many as the best example of the cultural production of a country.

As the findings of my research show, there was only one perception of literature that referred to literature as the canon. When selecting L2 literary texts, it may then not be so crucial to expose students to the "masterpieces" of a nation since young students in particular may perceive literature as a combination of factors which provide an epistemic yet entertaining experience. Of course, at more advanced language levels, canonic texts such as Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* can fulfil those functions. More widespread, especially among young students, was the view of literature as one type of written discourse. Perceptions emerging from the 1998 sample in particular revealed an understanding of literature not confined to literary texts, but as all types of writing. Conversely, other students perceived style as a key theme of enjoyable literature.

Educators' and theorists' views of literature tend to focus on formal textual features such as language and literariness; on cultural aspects, or on the transaction between text and reader. Literariness conveys a strong focus on literature *per se*, as a particular type of discourse with its conventions, set in a particular historical period (e.g., Ingarden, 1931). Traditionally in L1 and L2 educational contexts this perspective would have been accompanied by studies of the author, the historical and social economic context as well as the text. This text-based perception of literature has been contested in theoretical contexts since the first half of last century. One of the most significant shift occurred in literary theory is the change of emphasis from author to text to reader advocated first by Rosenblatt at the end of the 1930s and reiterated later by deconstructionist philosophers such as Derrida (1982, 1997) who emphasized concepts

such as liberation and empowerment of the reader, which highlight Rosenblatt's stress on responsibility, justice and respect as fundamental ethical concepts in the pedagogy of literature (Booth, 1995).

The claim that language is inseparable from culture and that literary texts are cultural products that emerge from a culture through the particular voice of the author and influence that same culture and others (Kramsch, 1993) was also particularly significant since it changed the role of literature within the L2 curriculum (see chapter 2). From the second half of the last century the philological tradition has largely evolved into more discourse oriented approaches to texts, focused on the links between language, culture and literary discourse (Kramsch, 1993), on intercultural text reception (Maurer, Carroli & Hillman, 2000); reader response (Ali, 1994) and hermeneutic models of reading and writing literature (Salvatori, 1983). Literariness encompasses a focus on formal aspects of the text, such as the author's use of language and style (Jakobson, 1965;[110] Widdowson, 1982; 1985). As reported earlier in this chapter in 1998 findings from the exercise "What is literature?" highlighted that literary language, for example in advertisements or newspaper articles, is often identified as literature by students. Although poems and Macchiavelli's *La Mandragola* were classified as literature by all or most of the students, particularly lyrical advertisements and newspapers articles were also perceived as literature by a high number of students because of their style. Style was perceived in the survey descriptions as a strong element of enjoyable literature. A focus on literariness and style has been proposed as a useful analytical approach in L1 and L2 theoretical and educational settings (Miall & Kuiken, 1998, 1999; Kramsch, 1996).

Students' comments showed a strong appreciation of the stylistic and structural aspects of literary texts besides extremely broad post modern descriptions, such as literature as all types of writing. Students' comments also revealed century-old perceptions of literature such as the ethical and pedagogic role of literature as well as the aesthetic. As

[110] The most important contribution developed from formalism and the School of Prague, was to be that of Roman Jakobson. Influenced by Saussure, Jakobson established the principle of form and convention of language according to which language is a system of relationships, not the direct and 'natural' product of an individual. Literature, like other types of language is therefore defined by Jakobson according to the function which is attributed to it. Jakobson distinguished between literary language and literature. Literary language, as he pointed out, often occurs in both discourses, written and oral, as already discussed in chapter 2.

emerged from analysis of data in fact, romantic aesthetic notions of literature still persist in students' perceptions of literature. As Miall and Kuiken (1998) have pointed out, current cultural theory often disregards ordinary readers who still appreciate the formal features of texts and read for the pleasure of understanding the world of the text, rather than for developing a deconstructive or historicist perspective. This was certainly the case with the readers examined in my study, who focused hardly at all on theory, favouring the aesthetic, pedagogic and epistemic dimensions of literature.

The belief in the ethical, moral and epistemic values of literature (e.g., Voltaire; Zola; Verga; Brecht; Sartre; Calvino)[111] is still present in Australian students' perceptions, perhaps because it was strongly reiterated, at different stages, throughout the 20th century. The view of literature as didactic discourse seems to be one of the most enduring throughout history and is still upheld in the findings reported earlier in this section. Although some students' perceptions focused entirely on escapist genre such as fantasy and mystery novels which traditionally have been repositories of reactionary values (especially Mills & Boons novels), many descriptions combined entertainment with deeper characteristics of literature, such as reflection and learning. Sartre,[112] as a Marxist, believed that literature had the potential to subvert from within, since it could lead readers to reflect on their situation and consequently to a wish to change society for the better.[113]

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[111] Italo Calvino (1986, 1996), continuing the enlightened literary tradition of 18th century writers such as Voltaire, believed in the didactic value of literature. His strongest statements in favour of literature were expressed in his essays written in the late 1950s, early 1960s and in the short stories entitled *Marcovaldo* (1963) as a reaction against capitalism. Literature provided a "via d'uscita" a temporary solution, to the destructive mass industrialisation of the 1960s. Sartre and Calvino, both starting from a socialist position, viewed literature as a vehicle to shape society, hence not as an escape, but literature leading out from capitalist society. Calvino however always placed more focus on language and structure rather than on psychological or philosophical issues. With Calvino, especially in his later writings, the focus shifted somewhat from the writer and the written text to the reader and writing and reading as a related interactive process. He still however believed that poetry and philosophy transcend destruction, and in some of his latest writings revealed a rather traditional romantic view of the writer as "vate", prophet:

> Were I to choose an auspicious image for the next millennium, I would choose that one: the sudden agile leap of the poet-philosopher who raises himself above the weight of the world, showing that with all his gravity he has the secret of lightness, and that what many consider to be the vitality of the times - noisy, aggressive, revving and roaring - belongs to the realm of death, like a cemetery for rusty old cars ("Lightness", Calvino, 1996, p. 12).

[112] Jean-Paul Sartre believed in the social role of literature. In his essays published in Paris in 1948 entitled *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* Sartre wrote 374 pages to provide his perceptions of literature, to explain his perceptions of writing, of audience and the role of the writer. He addressed the criticism that his literature was engaged as opposed to aesthetic.

[113] Rien ne nous assure que la littérature soit immortelle; sa chance, aujourd'hui, son unique chance, c'est la chance de l'Europe, du socialisme, de la démocratie, de la paix. Il faut la jouer; si nous la perdons, nous autres écrivains, tant pis pour nous. Mais aussi, tant pis pour la société. Par la littérature, je l'ai montré, la collectivité passe à la réflexion et à la médiation, elle acquiert une conscience malheureuse, une image sans

> Par la littérature [...] la collectivité passe à la réflexion et à la médiation, elle acquiert une conscience malheureuse, une image sans équilibre d'elle-même qu'elle cherche sans cesse à modifier et à améliorer (pp. 355–357).

With the above statement, Sartre (1948) concludes his book by endorsing literature as a means for improving oneself and society, but warns against the danger of either using creative writing only for propaganda reasons or for pure entertainment or of ignoring literature. Sartre's perception of literature, as reflection, change and improvement of the self, is reflected in the key theme "reflection, stimulation and personal development". I am not asserting here that learners in my study were directly influenced by the views of a particular writer, rather, which perspectives of literature found in students' comments, are similar or dissimilar to prominent educators' and theorists' perceptions of literature. For example, a view that did not emerge strongly from my findings is the link between literature and affect, a view held by L2 and L1 educators and researchers (Shanahan (1987; Miall, 1995; Miall & Kuiken, 1995, 1998, 2001).

Perceptions of literature, students', educators' and theorists' can vary at different times and in different contexts. This shows that, as phenomenographic theory suggests, perceptions are not fixed and individuals can hold different (and even contrasting) perceptions at the same time. Similarly, the samples investigated expressed different perceptions within the same descriptions of literature, and the 1999 sample expanded or modified their written perceptions during the interviews. The key themes however remained the same, which also backs phenomegraphic claims that variation in perceptions and approaches to phenomena are limited, although qualitatively different.

équilibre d'elle-même qu'elle cherche sans cesse à modifier et à améliorer [...] Mais, après tout, l'art d'écrire n'est pas protégé par les décrets immuables de la Providence; il est ce que les hommes le font, ils le choisissent en se choisissant. S'il devait se tourner en pure propagande ou en pur divertissement, la société retomberait dans la bauge de l'immédiat, c'est-à-dire dans la vie sans mémoire des hyménoptères et des gastéropodes. Bien sûr, tout cela n'est pas si important: le monde peut fort bien se passer de la littérature. Mais il peut se passer de l'homme encore mieux.

[Nothing can assure us that literature is immortal. Its chance, today, its unique chance, is also the same chance Europe has: that of socialism, of democracy, of peace. We must take it; if we writers give it up, so much the worse for us. But also so much the worse for society at large. It is through literature, as I have shown, the community can go on to reflect ion and mediation and acquire a wretched consciousness, an imbalanced image of itself that it seeks to modify and improve [...]. But, after all, the art of writing is not protected by the immovable decrees of Providence; it is what men make of it, they chose it by choosing themselves (to be writers). If by any chance it should turn in pure propaganda or entertainment, society would fall again in the wallow of "immediacy", that is, in a life without memory of hymnopters and gasteropods. Of course, perhaps none of this is important: the world can surely do without literature. But it can do without man even better. [My translation, with the assistance of Mr. Grieves].

Since all societies possess a literary culture, oral or written, perhaps "literature is an evolved disposition of the human species [...] and may rest on innate capacities, such as readers' responses to special literary forms (foregrounded language, narrative structures) and on the power of literature to dehabituate" (Miall, 2001, n. p.). Throughout all the changes, including the advent of the Web, literature has survived and is still perceived by students in Australia, Canada, Germany and Brazil (Miall, Kuiken & Gifford, 2003)[114] as offering new perspectives, providing insight into other cultures and stimulating emotions. As Miall (2001) states, "literature may be adaptive because it enables us to consider issues of identity and our dependence on social conditions that otherwise are disregarded".

In L2 contexts, literature, especially between the 1970s and 1980s, was marginalised because it was considered inaccessible and elitist, therefore not functional. Communicative teaching methods often omitted literature in favour of functional texts, used in everyday situations such as menus, bank slips, train tickets, and often proponents of the communicative approach and acquisition models of teaching languages either dispensed with literature altogether or used it as a tool for language teaching, for example to teach vocabulary (e.g., Kraschen, 1989). There was in fact one perception that emphasized the role of L2 literature (presumably not literature in general) to teach new vocabulary. Linguists such as Widdowson had proposed stylistics as a bridge between literature and linguistics (Widdowson, 1974, 1980), and strongly backed the use of literature in language learning. In my samples and also in Canada, many students identified L1 literary texts, with style and perceived style as a source of pleasure in reading. With appropriately selected L2 literary texts students can develop

[114] I report the relevant section of the abstract of Miall, Kuiken and Gifford's (2003) paper "Why do students choose to study literature? Presented in Padua, Italy in 2003: What incentives do students find in studying literature at university? (http://www.uaalberta.ca/~dmiall/reading/confer.htm): "What incentives do students find in studying literature at university? We have been participating in a cross-cultural examination of this question in collaboration with Achim Barsch (Germany) and Sonia Zyniger and Olivia Fialho (Brazil). For the research in Canada we have employed three questionnaires. Analysis of the data so far show that Canadian students tend to discriminate literary from other texts on grounds of style, their ability to invoke their imagination and challenge to the reader. When asked if literary texts were distinctive, typical comments were that literature "offers new perspectives", "gives insight into character", "provides different viewpoints, including other cultures", "evokes the emotions [...]. A significant proportion of students reported reading literary texts for pleasure, and did not distinguish this strongly from reading from study as German and Brazilian students appear to do. Overall, in comparison with genres such as popular fiction or fantasy, literary texts were judged to promote intellectual understanding and experiential involvement [...] literary reading [...] provides insight into the self or others of the kind not available from other reading (some contrast it with electronic media in this respect) [...]."

an appreciation of style as they become aware of the inextricable connection between words and meaning (see chapter 6).

Other educators view literature as essential in language learning and believe it also contributes to personal development (Spack, 1985; Collie & Slater, 1990; Duff & Maley, 1990), or assign to literary text, in interaction with readers, the ability to produce new schemata (Cook, 1994) or tap into "the emotional brain" (LeDoux, 1996), to activate memory and learning (Shanahan, 1987). The affective dimension of literary texts has been affirmed by educators such as Shanahan (1987), psychologists such as Bruner (1986), L1 literature researchers and educators (Miall & Kuiken, 1995; Miall & Kuiken, 1998; Miall & Kuiken, 2001) and neurologists such as LeDoux (1996), who has explored the emotional dimension of the human brain, whilst Turner (1996) combines literature, linguistics, philosophy and neuroscience in order to assert that the human mind is essentially 'literary'. According to Bruner (1996), literary texts differentiate themselves from other types of written discourse because of their evocative and emotional power, and because of the infinite possibilities they open up to the reader. This perception of literature is defined by Edmondson (1997) as an assumption, but was included in students' descriptions of literature in 1998 and 1999. Edmondson (1997) claimed that educators' beliefs about the different value and uses (e.g., language learning, personal development) were all based on assumptions and not on any empirical evidence. Language arts educators such as Kramsch (1993) drawing from Bakhtin's (1986) dialogic interpretation of narrative — based on the essential oral origins of literature — have emphasized the multi-voiced character of literary text, in particular novels. The multi-layered aspect of discourse and the different perspectives and points of view of many novels highlight cultural negotiation between individual and community cultures. They are thus particularly useful in second language learning because they represent the complexities of cultural discourse and the need to accept different interpretations of reality, in society and in the classroom.

In terms of literary genre and type of literary text, what is commonly considered more accessible literature (e.g., detective stories, romance novels) has often been marginalised because, in traditional views, entertaining genres were not considered worthy of inclusion in the L2 curriculum. Popular genres instead entered the communicative language class. Educators such as Maxim (1997) have shown that texts

such as romance novels, especially if they contain cross-cultural references (e.g., from American television programmes viewed almost globally) are accessible even to beginner L2 learners because of the similarity in narrative techniques such as plot and character development. In his experimental design study Maxim (1997) also showed that the students who red the novel instead of the cultural textbook items, had achieved more advanced levels of language and cultural awareness (see chapter 2). Therefore there may be good reasons for choosing entertaining literature, especially at the lower language levels.

Colombo (1996), an Italian L2 educator living and teaching foreign students in Italy, classifies literature as aesthetics, separate from mores and modes of living, and therefore excludes it from the cultural concerns of L2 learning. His perception of literature is evidently distant from views of literature as culture. However, perceptions of literature are by no means homogeneous in Italy. Luperini (1998), an engaged critic and theorist proposes a very different viewpoint of literature, as language, culture and ideology. On the selection of literary texts for high school syllabuses, he criticises the post modern tendency to include entertaining texts from outside the canon. However, he makes some concessions; for example, he suggests that very popular texts such as Brizzi's (1996) *Jack Frusciante è uscito dal gruppo*, which he describes as "un romanzetto", might be included in the syllabus (as I did) to encourage students to go on to read more difficult texts (1998, pp. 45-53). Eco (1985), on the other hand, stresses the importance of *divertissement* in reading and as one of the quintessential elements of post modern literature.

The value of literary texts, as shown in the analysis of the findings, extends well beyond whether they are worthy of inclusion in the canon and also beyond their aesthetic qualities; students however, put a high premium on the ability of the text to entertain as well as to provide an opportunity for expansion (of knowledge, of other cultures, of the self). I agree with Luperini (1998) that, in a world that overemphasises the present and overlooks past and future, it is necessary to place texts in their historical and cultural context. However, as educators, we need to be aware that the notion of literary canon establishes a hierarchy that distinguishes between high culture or low culture, or high literature and low literature. In the eyes of the students, especially for less experienced

readers of literature, the hierarchy may seem to place an insurmountable distance between them and the text, perceived to be far above what they understand as culture.

In my survey, under possible reasons for studying Italian, "interest in the literature" and "interest in the culture" were listed separately. Most students indicated interest in the culture or in the language as their first reason for studying Italian, while only a few placed "interest in the literature" first (see chapter 5). When asked in class to clarify what Italian culture meant in their views, most students laughed and said "food"!, before proceeding, with some coaxing on my part, to list cinema, sport, architecture, art, literature. Their understanding of Italian culture and literature seems therefore more anthropologic than literature oriented, alternatively, Italian L2 literature is perceived predominantly as language learning (see chapter 5). My latter interpretation of students' perceptions contrasts with my view of literature and with notions in L1 and L2 literature pedagogy affirming that there is no separation between culture and its products or artefacts, rather an interactive relationship.

In fact, the traditional division between culture in the anthropologic sense and culture in the classical sense, based on Cicero's concept of *cultura animi* or culture as a system of values distinct from its cultural or artistic artefacts, is invalid when literature, language and culture are understood as interacting within one system. As Kramsch (1993) states: "literature has shaped the self-and other-perceptions of a people as much as have the events and experiences that gave birth to this literature" (p. 175). From a reader response perspective it is actually readers who shape the text, at least as much as they are shaped by it (Tompkins, 1980). So Kramsch's statement could be expanded, since both writers and readers of literary texts engage in constructing the cultural imagination of a country, which, as Kramsch (1993) states, is "no less real" than the cultural reality of that same country (p. 207). Literature, among other arts, also holds and transmits some of the cultural memory, or cultural memoirs of a country.

Findings reported earlier in this chapter showed entertainment as the strongest perceptions of enjoyable literature. Studies conducted in Canada and Italy had similar results. These results support Maxim's study (1997) and, at times, the selection of popular genres, (the ones mentioned were mystery novels, war novels and romance) with which students are familiar in their L1, since such texts may appeal to students

because they are more accessible if students are familiar with the genre and they perceive it generally as entertaining in their native language. However, I am not stating here that all syllabus choices should be led by students' preferences; I am affirming the importance of hearing students' voices on the matter and then make informed choices on text selection. The next chapter explains how data on perceptions of literature in general, linked to data on the study of L2 literature can illuminate the relational aspect of learners' experiences and inform my choices for the final stage of the research into curriculum and pedagogical choices (study 2, chapter 6).

4.7 Conclusion

The learners who participated in the study describe enjoyable literature as entertainment, expanding knowledge, as aesthetically or stylistically pleasing, didactic and engaged, dialogic and reflective. Students' descriptions included perceptions of literature in the personal growth model proposed by Duff and Maley (1990). Most of the students in 1998 however indicated entertainment as a necessary ingredient, understood especially in terms of grabbing the reader's attention. Interestingly, educators have not focused on the entertaining value of literature and few (e.g., Maxim, 1997) have conducted studies using literary texts generally described as entertaining; students instead valued them quite highly in their general descriptions of enjoyable literature which were not always restricted to L1 literature. In this case, theorists' views of literature, especially Barthes', Calvino's and Eco's emphasis on jouissance, are closer to students' perspectives than educators'. As Eco and Calvino have shown, even a book on medieval philosophy or post modern literary theory can be entertaining for readers all over the world. Few theorists, and even fewer educators have considered this aspect, or they have dismissed it often in favour of cultural or canon-driven models. Students' views however were rarely one-dimensional. They included in fact at least two or three aspects of literature, usually interdependent. Some of the educators' views of literature not just as language and culture but also as personal development (Spack, 1985; Collie & Slater, 1990; Duff & Maley, 1990) coincided with students' perspectives. The "literature as personal growth model" may have been dismissed as an assumption of educators who favour L2 literature (Edmondson, 1997), but in students' descriptions, expansion as personal growth, deriving from reflection on issues or from an increased knowledge of the world, is often mentioned.

The view that literary texts often motivate students to interact and discuss themes and issues proposed by educators such as Duffy and Maley (1990) and Shanahan (1987, 1997), is also supported in students' interviews. For students, as for many educators, "literary texts are non-trivial [...] unlike many other forms of language teaching inputs, which frequently trivialize experience in the service of pedagogy" (Duff & Maley, 1990, p. 6). In the interviews students expressed unfavourable views of textbook readings as will be further discussed in chapter 5. In students' views these readings, included in some textbooks published in the USA, often trivialize experience because they cleanse it in order to promote a positive image of Italian society, a view palatable to American or Australian audiences. On the contrary, literary texts even in an age of computer technology, pulp movies and world-wide-web, can still be representative of the Other, the marginal, the untrodden.

Students expressed a vast range of views, including literature as an opportunity to explore 'the other' (taboo issues) that reflects the role of literature as perceived by theorists and educators across the centuries. These key themes are indicative of a limited, yet critically different, number of perceptions of literature which can coexist simultaneously, but are not fixed. As the analysis of findings has shown, "entertainment" is often accompanied by other perceptions focusing also on the epistemic and the aesthetics of literature. In other words, to be enjoyable, literature does not just have to be entertaining, it should also have a purpose, to increase knowledge and also be aesthetically pleasing and well constructed. All these perceptions, held by L1 and L2 theorists and educators, at different times in history, seem to be included in students' views. Few views were expressed in favour of the canon, period literature or famous authors, and few views included post modern perceptions of literature as empowering the reader. As shown, many descriptions of literature revealed a dependence on the text rather than an active transaction with it. Rosenblatt's (1995) insistence on building free readers before the middle of last century, a view supported also by postmodernism and deconstruction, still seems very relevant. At the same time, the focus on formal textual features should not be deemed unimportant, especially when reading L2 literature and also considering that many readers identify literature with literariness. Educators of L1 or L2 literature can show their respect of students by providing students with an opportunity to voice their perceptions of literature as a first

step towards building free readers by including and negotiating students', educators' and theorists' perceptions of literature and secondly, by implementing pedagogical practices aimed at empowering readers to "own" texts: reading literature thus becomes a hermeneutic cultural as well as an aesthetic process.

The next two stages of the research consist in taking students' perceptions and linking them to students' approaches to the literary texts to try and understand why some students' learning is more complex (chapter 5) and subsequently, implement a pedagogy focused on reading as an active, hermeneutic process, to increase learning opportunities for all learners of L2 literature (chapter 6).

Chapter 5

STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF L2 LITERARY TEXTS (Study 1, 1999):

Analysis of data and findings from the research into students' perceptions of the role of L2 literature and their approaches to the study of L2 literary texts

"I love the fact that it opens your mind to different ideas.
Like I would have never thought of life as a plate of mixed up things
that somebody thinks is so fake. It's just interesting... it make[s] me think"

(Student's description of L2 literature)

Aim
To investigate: 1) the qualitatively different ways in which students experience literary texts, their perceptions of L2 literature and approaches to the study of L2 literary texts; 2) possible links between students' perceptions of literature in general (reported in chapter 4), students' perceptions of the role of L2 literature in language learning and problems associated with reading literary texts and students' qualitative learning outcomes (reported in this chapter).

Process
Analytical qualitative description of survey data on L2 literature; interview, journal and teacher's notes data collected followed by discussion of findings,, implications for pedagogical practice and links with study 2 (2000).

5 Introduction

Chapter 5 analyses the results of the data collected for study 1 on students' experiences of L2 literature during semester 1, 1999 (interviews with students, students' journals and teacher's notes), and also the survey data regarding students' attitudes to L2 literature collected at the beginning of the semester. Through analysis of students' perceptions to L2 literature and students' approaches to the study of L2 literature, the chapter attempts to answer some of the questions arising from the controversial issue of the role of L2 literary texts in the second language curriculum. As in the previous chapter, students are the starting point. Whilst chapter 4 dealt with the issue of descriptions of literature and the more general functions of literature from the point of view of students, educators and theoreticians, this chapter deals more specifically with 1) how students perceive L2 literature; 2) how they approach the study of L2 literature; 3) the implications of perceptions and approaches for learning outcomes.

5.1 Students' key experiences of the study of L2 literature: findings from the survey

Marton & Booth (1997) define learning in terms of different ways of experiencing a particular aspect of the world, at a particular moment, in a certain context. Different perceptions of literature in general, as shown in chapter 4, are limited in number and definable in key themes. Similarly, approaches to learning from texts (Marton & Booth, 1997, pp. 17-27) also vary, but these differences can be analysed according to a deep or surface approach as already described in chapter 3. It is important to investigate perceptions and approaches because, as Marton & Booth (1997) assert, they can be modified through the intervention of the teacher, in order to make the learning

experience more rewarding and successful. If it can be established that a particular set of students who experience literature in a certain way is more successful in terms of learning outcomes, their experiences of the "object of learning" (1997, pp. 161-64) can perhaps be used to inform a pedagogy of awareness (1997, pp. 166-205). Such a pedagogy strongly encourages students to become aware of their learning approach and if necessary to modify it.

Awareness of students' perceptions of literature (and of their language and literature background as well as their attitudes towards literature in L1 and L2), is a fundamental pedagogical issue in literature teaching. Readers' responses to texts are influenced by their background knowledge and their past experiences affect their ability to emotionally engage with the text (Rosenblatt, 1995). Therefore, educators ideally should "know" the students before selecting the texts for the L2 curriculum. It "is not enough merely to think of what the students *ought* to read. Choices must reflect a sense of the possible links between these materials and the student's past experience and present level of emotional maturity" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 42).

The survey I administered at the beginning of the semester provided me with this kind of insight, very useful for text selection and preparing activities suited for the particular background and perceptions of the 1999 group of students (stage 1). Interview and journal data was crucial for delving into students' approaches the study of L2 literature and whether perceptions and approaches had an impact on their learning (Stage 2).

5.1.1 Students' reasons for studying Italian and their attitudes to the inclusion of literature in the language curriculum: findings from the quantitative survey data

As already highlighted in chapter 2, students' perceptions of literature in general and the role of L2 literature, as well as students' background in and attitudes to L2 literature are crucial for the selection of literary texts and pedagogical treatment of the texts. The data gathered from the survey provided a useful insight into students' attitudes and interest in Italian language, culture and literature and into their reading habits. Students' replies to the open-ended questions especially, helped map the pedagogical setting for text and task selection and teaching approaches in 1998, 1999 and 2000.

In this section I present and analyse the following quantitative data gathered in stage 1 of study 1, as described in chapter 3:

a. Students' reasons for studying Italian (Table 5.1)
b. Students' attitudes towards literature (Table 5.2)

Quantitative data concerning students' reasons for studying in Italian is presented below in Table 5.1 and is reported from section A (Background information: "Please give your reasons for studying Italian: if you indicate more than one reason, please rank in order of priority" on a scale from "reason 1" to "reason 7") of the "Survey of Italian students' attitudes towards the study of literature" administered at the beginning of March 1999.

Table 5.1 — Students' reasons for studying Italian (1999)

Students' ranking of "Reasons for studying Italian"	**Reason 1**	**Reason 2**	**Reason 3**	**Reason 4**	**Reason 5**	**Reason 6**	**Reason 7**
a. General interest in the language	7	1	4	-	1	-	-
b. General interest in the culture	5	4	2	-	-	-	-
c. General interest in the literature	2	-	1	-	-	2	1
d. Relevant to other university studies	1	1	-	2	-	-	-
e. Useful for current/future employment	2	1	-	2	2	1	-
f. Intending to travel to Italy	4	2	1	2	1	-	-
g. Family / friends are Italian speakers	1	-	-	1	1	-	1
h. Other (please specify): General interest in languages/culture/literature especially European.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

As shown in Table 5.1, the majority of students indicated that their main reason for studying Italian was their general interest in the language, followed very closely by a general interest in the culture and in travelling to Italy. Since most students were in their fifth semester of Italian at university, and most had never studied Italian at school (= 7), it is not surprising that their main focus was still on learning Italian language and culture. Only half of the sample ranked literature as a reason for studying Italian and only two students ranked it as their main motive. One possible explanation could be that students associated literature with culture. However, as discussed in chapter 4, analysis of

students' perceptions of literature in 1998 and 1999 and class discussion does not always support this assumption. As Table 5.2 below indicates, however, students' attitudes towards literature (section B of the survey) were generally favourable:

As Table 5.2 shows, the majority of students (11 out of 12) read literature in their own language while 9 out of 12 agreed that they read literature in Italian, whilst three did not (two disagreed and one student answered as not applicable). Conversely, seven students strongly agreed that reading literature improved their language skills in Italian, four agreed, whilst only one disagreed.[115]

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[115] The three students who did not agree commented in the interviews that although they had read some literary texts whilst studying Italian, they did not feel they were reading literature, and perceived the study of L2 literature as an arduous way of learning Italian. From the interviews and their journal entries, it emerged that these same students focused on discrete items of the literary texts. This strong anxiety, which, as described in chapter 4, was voiced in descriptions of general literature as L2 language, was associated with an atomistic, surface approach to the study of L2 literature. As will be explained in later sections, this atomistic surface approach seems to prevent both efferent and aesthetic readings (see "Glossary") of the literary texts in terms of learning outcomes and enjoyment and appreciation of L2 literature

Table 5.2 — Students' attitudes towards literature (1999)

Please tick the box that corresponds most closely to your perception of literature:							
	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Slightly agree	4 Slightly disagree	5 Disagree	6 Strongly Disagree	N/A or missing
1. I read literature (eg. Poetry, novels, short stories, plays for enjoyment: a. in my own language	**9**	**2**	-	**1**	-	-	-
b. in Italian	-	**4**	**5**	-	**2**	-	**1**
c. in languages other than my own or Italian	**1**	**3**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**1**
2. I believe reading literature improves my language skills: a. in Italian	**7**	**4**	-	-	**1**	-	-
b. in languages other than my own or Italian	**6**	**2**	-	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**
3. I believe that reading literature enhances my appreciation and understanding of the culture: a. in Italian	**6**	**6**	-	-	-	-	-
b. in languages other than my own or Italian	**4**	**3**	-	**2**	-	-	**3**
4. Literature should be included at all levels of the undergraduate language degree	6	4	1	1	-	-	-
5. Literature should be included only at the higher levels (3rd and 4th year)	1	1	1	2	2	2	5

Two thirds of the students (8 out of 12) agreed also that reading literature improved language skills in other languages, however three students disagreed and another selected "not applicable". Interestingly, all students agreed, six strongly, that reading literature in Italian enhanced their appreciation and understanding of the culture. The link between L2 literature and L2 culture is one of the key themes revealed by analysis of 1999 students' perceptions of literature in general and interview data. The seven students who read literature in other languages also agreed that it enhanced their knowledge of the L2 cultures. Most students (10 out of 12) agreed that literature should be included at all levels of the degree, although one student slightly agreed and one slightly disagreed. These two

students also expressed anxiety and insecurity in regard to reading literature in Italian. Nine students disagreed that literature should be included only at higher levels (3rd and 4th year) of the degree, whilst one strongly agreed, one agreed and one slightly agreed. This result reflects students' replies to question 4 of the survey which indicates that most students had agreed that literature should be included at all language levels. As in 1998 and in 2000 (chapter 6), the majority of students agreed that literature should be included at all language levels. These results support an integrated approach to the teaching of language, culture and literature and also the introduction of literary texts at all language levels (see chapter 2).

5.1.2 Students' perceptions of the role of L2 literature in language and their approach to the study of literature: findings from the qualitative data survey

The quantitative data provides useful information regarding students' reasons for studying Italian and their attitudes to reading literature in their L1, in Italian and in other languages, and their attitudes towards the inclusion of literary texts into the language and culture curriculum. Qualitative data from open-ended questions 8 and 9 of the 1999 survey: 8. "Any comments you may wish to add on the possible role/roles of literature in language learning" and 9. "Any comments you may wish to add about problems you experience when reading literature in a second language and how you deal with these"[116] will be reported verbatim and analysed in its entirety to identify the primary themes. Results of students' comments to questions 8 and 9 in 1998 and 2000 will not be reported here, but will be used to check whether the other two samples perceived the role of L2 literature in qualitatively different ways from the 1999 sample. Analysis of qualitative data clarifies the quantitative results reported in the previous section by providing an insight into the reasons behind students' attitudes towards L2 literature.

<u>Findings from Question 8: "Any comments you may wish to add on the possible role/roles of literature in language learning" - Analysis of individual descriptions</u>

Eight students out of twelve added their comments to questions 8 and 9. In their comments on the role of literature in language learning students concentrated mainly on

[116] Question 9 was added to the survey in 1999 to gain a preliminary insight into students' approaches to reading literary texts as well as any particular reading strategies they may use in dealing with problems associated with reading L2 literature, as perceived by them.

two areas: language, culture, or both together. In their replies to question 7 which sought a broad description of enjoyable literature, a minority of students commented elaborately on several aspects of literature in general (see chapter 4). The disparity with perceptions of L1 and L2 literature, from students in their 5th semester of Italian (Intermediate level) reveals that, it is difficult for many students even at higher language levels to perceive L2 literary texts similarly to literature in their native language that enables them to appreciate the different levels of the texts and indeed approach them as literature. As a previous student of languages and literatures and a present researcher and educator in the field, I am aware of the complexities of reading non native literature. I nevertheless envisage that if L2 students' perceptions of L2 literature could approximate their L1 literature perception in terms of reading as a pleasurable activity, and learn the multiple values of reading L2 literature: accessing another world by learning its language and culture as expressed through the author's style and narrative discourse, literature may be experienced as holistic and enjoyable learning (see chapter 6). In terms of teaching practices, this means a curriculum and syllabus that balances (walking a tight rope!) reading for pleasure and entertainment (aesthetic) so that students do not become stressed, but it also encourages the epistemic and pedagogic values of L2 literature.

From a phenomenographic perspective, students' survey comments on the role of literature and the problems they experienced when reading literature were useful as a data management strategy to help map the sample "territory", since they gave an indication of the variation within the group. This first glance into the sample variation, which was characterized by two primary perceptions towards L2 literary texts, either in terms of difficult language or expansion at all levels (linguistic, cultural and personal), was instrumental in the preparation of the interview guide (appendix C). As with students' descriptions of literature in general, students' individual descriptions of the role of literature in language learning have been denominated either as "less complex" (one or two perceptions) and "more complex" (inclusive of two or more perceptions) (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 197). Individual descriptions are reported verbatim below:

1. Vocabulary-it helps to expand the words we know.
3. I think literature is very effective, but not as a constant form of teaching. I feel that literature should be used about once every month/3 weeks (if the chosen piece is large) rather than

every week. Sometimes too much literature can be less advantageous, as students read more than write and speak.

4. Reading literature exposes one to the grammatical constructions, idiomatic expressions and variety not encountered in textbooks.
5. I think literature is only beneficial if it is appropriate to the stage of learning which the student is at eg. A first year student should not be given Dante etc. Otherwise it is very beneficial in that it shows the student the words in context and how they can be used.
6. In Italian, I think it's important to read travel stories in English and Italian to get a feel of the place.
7. Important as a teaching method, especially where more direct exposure to the culture/language is not possible.
8. Because literature is so interesting it is a very useful learning tool – expanding vocab, reinforcing grammar etc. but it cannot be an end in itself because full appreciation depends on a thorough knowledge of language.
9. I believe that reading a variety of forms of literature whilst learning a language is essential to broaden one's vocabulary and general understanding of the culture. Reading constantly broadens one's mind – reading in a second language broadens one's mind with new ideas and also gives one a better understanding of the people, society and culture of that foreign language / country.

From a sole focus on L2 literature as vocabulary or travel stories, or preoccupation with teaching method, students' descriptions of the possible roles of L2 literature expand to include culture, grammatical structures and aesthetics, idiomatic expressions and difference. In the last description literature is inclusive as the role of L2 literature (expanding knowledge of the vocabulary and culture) is linked to a similarly defined perception of L1 reading (broadens one's mind).Within description 8 L2 reading is perceived as a stronger source of personal development and change than L1 reading since it offers insight into a language and culture other than one's own. Presumably, since these ideas are expressed in a non native language and emerge from a culture other than one's own, the estrangement element is even more accentuated than reading in L1 literature, which is usually a more "automatised" process and contributes to a change in perspective. This perception focuses on all major aspects of the role of literature in language learning and the role of reading in general: language, culture and personal expansion. Perceived in this way, L2 literature provides the all round experience proposed by L2 language arts educators (e.g., Kramsch, 1987, 1993; Shanahan, 1997) as discussed in chapter 2. Description '8' draws a parallel between L1 and L2 reading by specifying that aesthetic reading ("full appreciation") is dependent on language competence but seems to imply also that the text itself should provide the opportunity to develop that competence (efferent reading), and "not be an end in itself",

interpreted as meaning perhaps reading solely for pleasure as you would in your native language.

Overall, these descriptions reveal a strong focus on efferent reading, on what you can learn from reading literary texts, and the text is understood in the communicative approach terminology as a tool, method or form of teaching to improve language skills, especially vocabulary, as advocated by Krashen (1981, 1989, 1993), and not at the expense of other abilities such as speaking and writing. Only two descriptions mentioned culture directly (6 and 8), although in '6' L2 literature is viewed as an indirect exposure to the L2 culture,[117] presumably because the culture is experienced through the style and point of view of another, rather than by personal immersion in the country. Description '5': "to get a feel of the place" instead highlights the sensory dimension of reading and reveals a parallel perception of L1 and L2 literature as well as a preference for the travel genre, since it allows the reader an affective access to the target country. Description '3' distinguishes between readings from textbooks, and reading literature, highlighting that literary texts, unlike textbooks, provide variation (e.g., idiomatic expressions). Even though the focus is still on language, there is awareness of the importance of authentic language input and exposure to texts written within an Italian cultural context, rather than readings in textbooks. This perception of authentic materials presented in an authentic way, rather than as they often are in L2 textbooks, emerged also in the interviews and is expressed through this comment:

> If it's interesting stuff you can re-read it, but if it's low grade propaganda you don't feel like reading it again. Whereas these stories, [...] you read them again and you get something out of it [...] it's much better to have a piece of literature if you have a choice.[...] I am strongly in favour of using literature where you can, as a tool, and that's what's happening in this course, and I think if we are going to be discussing something, it's much better to be discussing a bit of real literature, rather than some sort of potted, cranked up

[117] The perception that visual materials are more direct and close to real life emerged during the interviews., One tends to forget that even in "naturalistic" films and documentaries images and narration are carefully selected by the eye behind the camera and scrutinized, for example by the director, script writer. In my opinion, they provide an even more filtered view of the culture and society even though they give the impression of directness, because the images appear on the screen rather than having to be envisaged in the reader's mind while reading, by relating the words in the text to background knowledge and creating new schemata. As already explained in chapter 2, whereas there is research indicating links between reading and literacy, studies into language learning with visual materials indicate that the many sensory dimensions involved in watching a film or a documentary may limit language learning. Visual materials are often perceived as easier to access because "the actions [are] there in front of you, whatever is relevant to what they're saying is in the picture, you don't have to imagine anything and the way they speak sometimes tells you what they're saying", as one student said in the interview.

> version like "Today we are going to discuss the problem of immigrants; Today we are going to discuss the problems of women in the family". It's much better to read a short story, that sort of focuses the mind on some issues [...], I just find it a lot more interesting.

This perception reveals a strong preference for reading authentic literary texts *per se* and an interest in learning about issues, but a strong opposition to using literature exclusively as a way of discussing topics, as often happens in language textbooks.

Findings from Question 9: "Any comments you may wish to add about problems you experience when reading literature in a second language and how you deal with these" – Analysis of collective categories of perception

In the above section I have briefly analysed students' survey comments by highlighting the differences and similarities in the role played in L2 literature for students, and adding also interview comments to expand and / or explain the variation in students' perceptions. I will now expand our understanding of students' perceptions of L2 literature by integrating students' comments in response to Question 9 with their comments in Question 8. The nine comments elicited by Question 9 clarify students' perceptions of the role of L2 literature and will be used in the discussion of findings to highlight the relation between perceptions and approaches.

For the purposes of analysis within and across categories, I have collapsed students' replies to questions 8 and 9 since the first comments especially on the first section of question 9 often reiterate or expand perceptions voiced in students' replies to question 8. Comments in reply to the second half of question 9 ("and how you deal with these") have been analysed with interview data regarding students' approaches to reading literature. Since problems encountered in reading L2 texts often relate to particular reading approaches, obviously there is overlap in students' comments and in my report and interpretation of the data on perceptions and approaches. This reflects the interwoven textured canvas formed by students' perceptions of and approaches to the object of learning and my data analysis and interpretation. The primary themes identified in students' comments in reply to questions 8 and 9 of the survey are:

1 Exposure to vocabulary and grammar

2 Exposure to language, culture and society

The main sub-themes emerging from analysis of survey and interview data in regard especially to the role of L2 literature and possible problems experienced when reading L2 literary texts are:

a. anxiety about the vocabulary

b. anxiety about the curriculum, syllabus and teaching approach

c. vocabulary and language problems and how to overcome them

d. less focus on words and grammar leads to more relaxed or strategic approaches

After identifying the primary themes emerging from the replies, I have organized students' replies in categories identified with illustrative quotations; then I have structured the categories according to the role assigned to literature in language learning. My analytical discussion of the results will emphasize the critical variation between categories and the non-critical variation within categories. Analysis and discussion of the survey data on the role of literature and on the problems students experience when reading literature also integrates students' comments expressed during the interviews on the same issues, since in the interviews students had the opportunity to explain and expand their experiences of literature. Students' perceptions of the possible role/s of literature are shown in Table 5.3 below:

Table 5.3 — Collective categories of perceptions of the possible role/s of L2 literature

Depth of impact	**Breadth: less → more complex perceptions**	**Category**
SURFACE ↓ ↓	a. vocabulary b. method c. vocabulary + structures	*1. Literature as language learning*
DEEPER ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓	e. words in context f. entertainment + language g. entertainment + affective and sensory access to the target country (a feeling of the place) h. exposure to language and culture	*2. Literature as language /or interest/ culture and affective introduction to the country*
	i. language, cultural, personal expansion and change	3. *Literature as overall experience*

Category 1 reveals a view of L2 literature solely as language paradigm: literature is seen completely as a method for developing skills such as reading or learning vocabulary.

Variation within this category is subtle yet indicative of an important shift in perspective from a complete focus on literature as language parts (words; grammatical constructions; preoccupation with teaching method) to literature as "words in context". In their survey comments, five out of eight students mentioned vocabulary learning as one of the roles of literature in language learning, but also as a cause of anxiety. Concern about vocabulary is reiterated in the following comment:

> The worst problem is receiving literature which is full of foreign vocabulary and requires hours of translation before it can be appreciated. Generally I leave these, as I simply don't have the time, and return to these when I can. This can be most frustrating.

Here literature is perceived as problematic and frustrating. This perception seems to arise from a bottom up, atomistic, translation approach to reading L2 literature and there seems to be an inability to see the meaningful relations between the various parts of the texts and consider it as discourse, not just words to be translated. This perception leads nowhere as the student eventually gives up reading it and understanding it. Although a certain percentage of the words need to be comprehensible for the discourse to communicate meaning, the perception of L2 literature quoted above, indicates an inability to use a variety of techniques and strategies to comprehend the text, for example, by linking Italian words to English cognates to the context. Perceptions in category 1 have been interpreted as surface learning since they reveal an atomistic perception of the role of L2 literature focused only on specific parts and associated with concerns about teaching approach and difficulties faced when reading, as expressed by the same student in reply to survey question (9).

The main problem associated with learning literature associated with perception 'a' (Table 5.3) is to: "understand phrases", and the strategy used is the dictionary. The interrogative sentence voices uncertainty and a call for help on the part of the student: "dictionary? Are there any other, if so can you tell me?" However, perception 'c' in category 1, is indicative of a significant shift from a surface to a deeper perception of literature, as "words in context", an awareness of the discourse level of the text in which each word is embedded and in turn gives meaning to it, as well as an awareness that exposure to lexicon in context provides a model for learning how to use new words when writing in Italian. The categories of descriptions are therefore not watertight and the critical variation between categories is not rigid, but built on an expanding awareness of

the depth and / or breadth of the object of learning and ways of approaching it. For example, the big shift between category 1 and 2 lies in perceiving literature more holistically, affectively, as a place or as language and culture in context, and approaching reading L2 literature without the expectation of understanding each word. Category 3 involves extra dimensions of variation in terms of understanding the multiple values of reading L2 literature and more strategic approaches to reading it, as will be explained below in the analysis of individual students, representative of key experiences of L2 literature. If the role of literature is defined less in terms of words and structures and more in reference to the general qualities of literature, this is also mirrored in the same students' comments in reply to question 9, where vocabulary is perceived as a challenge, and appropriate textual strategies are adopted to overcome L2 reading problems.

Although there was only one comment reflecting L2 literature as an overall experience in the survey, reading L2 literature was often linked in the interviews to perceptions that fall within category 3. The quotation in the title page of this chapter highlights the strong impact of an Italian proverb understood by the student as a metaphor encapsulating life as a scrambled, fake, mixture of things (minestra) which one can escape only by jumping out of a window. This exemplifies the "heteroglossic" nature of literature (Baktin, 1986): the individual author uses this proverb for a particular effect. However, through the proverb he is seeking to represent metaphorically a universal truth expressed in marked local language. Therefore the proverb, reiterated by millions of voices in Italy, acquires particular significance for the L2 reader only when it is explained and understood that it emerges from a cultural tradition where one eats "minestra" (translatable as pasta in broth) nearly every day. A reassessment of life in general is brought caused by the estrangement experienced at first when reading the Italian proverb and subsequently by the realization that the strangeness and unpredictability of life inescapable. In this sense, as Cook (1994) asserts, literary discourse at times has the power to tap into people's background schemata and, more importantly, to refresh them and lead to a different schema (see chapter 2).

More inclusive perceptions of L2 literary texts are linked to deeper, more holistic, problem solving approaches to the study of L2 literature, as illustrated below:

- "Not really, as long as you don't expect to understand every word or nuance, reading should not be stressful". (f)

- If literature is linked to a good, tightly structured language course, and if students take the trouble to read, the problems should eventually dissolve and literature becomes a joy (I expect that to take a couple of years, based on my French experience). (e)
- When I don't understand a piece of literature as a whole, I look up the words that I don't understand and go through it again sentence by sentence or I read ahead and try to learn the basic story so I can read it in context. (c)

In 1998 (27 students) and 2000 (16 students) the categories that emerged from students' survey replies were very similar to 1999. In 1998 there was an even stronger concern with L2 literature, voiced with terms such as "difficult", "frustrating", "impossible" and "depressing". The resulting categories would have been: 1) literature (of an appropriate level and length) as language learning; 2) literature as language and / or culture. In 2000, category 1, "literature as language learning" was the dominant perception but with more constructive comments on teaching and learning approaches, with suggestions of weekly discussions of reading and explaining idiomatic expressions. In comparison with the 1998 sample, the key element of critical variation is that overall in the 2000 sample problems were expressed in terms of proposed possible solutions and strategies to overcome language difficulties, as also happened, to a lesser extent in 1999. In 2000 there were no comments pointing to a perception of the role of L2 literature as culture, but there was one reference to the importance of the author's style, opinions and themes. These perceptions were addressed by the approach adopted for study 2 (see chapter 6). I have referred briefly to the 1998 and 2000 results in this chapter in order to confirm that the variation within the relatively small 1999 sample is nevertheless representative of the qualitatively different ways in which students perceive the role of L2 literature and problems associated with reading L2 literary texts.

In summary, by analysing students' perceptions of the role of L2 literature, problems associated with reading it and how students solve them, I found that an atomistic perception of the role of L2 literature, as words or structures, and a strong concern with method was linked to surface approaches to reading L2 literature and a perspective of literature as problematic and frustrating. Instead, when L2 literature was perceived more holistically, it was associated with relaxed and / or strategic approaches to the study of literature, and deeper and more enjoyable reading experiences, similarly to L1 literature.

Although relaxation and enjoyment are perceived by students and also educators and psychologists as important elements conducive to learning, I reiterate that the study of L2 literature requires also a strong awareness of the parts in relation to the whole ("words in context") as well as the ability to perceive the universal yet local cultural levels of literature ("a world in a text"). With poetry especially students need focus on form, by checking key words in good bilingual and monolingual dictionaries to ensure that the meaning intended by the author within the context of the poem is understood.

An example taken from my notebook (1/4/1999) illustrates this point. I had asked students to read at home Cesare Pavese's poem "Verrà la morte e avrà tuoi occhi" [Death will come and will have your eyes]. When we started talking about the poem it became clear that students had mistranslated "vizio" as "vice" and not "habit" since they had not looked it up in the dictionary assuming the author, who committed suicide, was using it to mean that death was a vice. As a result they had misunderstood the underlying meaning of the poem, that life in fact was a series of repeated actions, a habit from which to escape.

Surface approaches, concentrated only on parts of the text, are rarely associated with deep learning; conversely, deep approaches consider all parts of the text in relation to the whole (Marton & Booth, 1997). In an L2 context words out of context are actually harder to memorize and often not acquired (Krashen, 1989). Therefore, levels of relaxation and bottom up reading approaches aimed at understanding the deeper meaning of the text, its cultural level and themes of the texts must be accompanied by awareness of the importance of style, which can only be achieved through noticing the language that forms and conveys the discourse of the text, as will be highlighted in the following section.

5.2 Students' key experiences of L2 literary texts: findings from the interviews, journals and researcher's notes

In the previous chapter I have tried to answer the question of how students perceive literature in general and in the previous section how instead they perceive the role of L2 literature in language learning and what are their perceived problems associated with reading L2 literary texts. From their brief comments, it became apparent that there were quite different views of the possible roles of L2 literature and that these views affected how students approached the study of literature, with anxiety or in a more relaxed,

holistic and / or strategic way. Students' background in reading in literature in L1 and / or in other languages was also found to be significant since it usually was associated with more strategic approaches to reading that combined L1 and L2 reading techniques.

To a certain extent, students' problem-solving approaches seem to be associated with their general language and literary background, their attitudes to the inclusion of literature in the L2 curriculum as well as the role of L2 literature as perceived by them. Although students in study 1 were all enrolled in the Intermediate level of Italian language and culture, the differences in language, culture and literary experience were quite pronounced, as I had already noticed during the preliminary investigation in 1998 of a different sample. The research into students' approaches was therefore undertaken to try and understand to what extent background, perceptions and attitudes affected approaches and vice versa, to see whether the actual approach had a negative or positive influence on the whole L2 literature experience.

As Marton & Booth (1997) pointed out, there are striking differences in the way students learn from texts, even though these students should have the same level of competence. The answer they provided was that "people learn dramatically different things from their studies" because of "their learning things in dramatically different ways" (p. 20). I would add, on the basis of the results reported in chapter 4 and in the previous section of this chapter, that this variation is also related to how students perceive the object of study in general and also in relation to the study of an L2. If students perceive literature as drama, they will be disappointed if no plays are included in the course, if students perceive the role of L2 literature as mainly that of learning vocabulary, that is what they will expect to study in a literature component inserted within language studies courses, and therefore will be disappointed by a more integrated cultural and stylistic teaching approach to literature. More inclusive or less atomistic perceptions of L2 literary texts however seem to be associated with less preoccupation with method or genre, and more characterized by a broad curiosity and search for meaning rather than an inability to move beyond the text's surface.

If approaches are associated with perceptions and learning outcomes, then it is crucial to try and understand how they are linked as a further step towards enhancing the role of L2 literature in language learning. To achieve this objective associated with the major

aim of the thesis, I will therefore describe firstly the qualitatively different ways in which students approach the study of L2 literary texts and how they deal with the problems and challenges associated with it, secondly, I will identify the critical features of this variation between approaches, and which approach leads to more satisfactory learning outcomes, in terms of students' reported perceptions of literature as gaining a better knowledge especially of the language but also of the culture, society, and, in some cases, as overall learning experience that can lead to a change in perspective on life in general. If most students perceive and approach L2 literature mainly as an opportunity to further their language learning, it is the role of the educator to ensure that that role is not obscured and, contemporaneously, that the intrinsic cultural texture of language as well as the multiple value of studying L2 literature, are illuminated.

Analysis of the interviews, learning journals and my notes, following the procedures described in chapter 3, found that there were four main ways in which students perceived and approached the study of L2 literary texts which were closely related and often overlapped with how they perceived L2 literature:

1. Surface approach: Literature studied with a focus on isolated elements of language with a focus on one or more discrete aspects of the text, such as vocabulary and/or grammar, without relating them to the whole text (words and forms in a text): Reading easy authentic texts not beyond one's ability.

2. Surface approach: Literature studied with a focus on isolated topic, storyline as elements separate from language structures, vocabulary or learning processes: reading accessible, entertaining short texts to grasp themes and learn vocabulary.

3. Deep approach: Literature studied inclusively, as affective context for learning language and culture, in relation with each other: read texts that portray (another) world in a text.

4. Deep approach: Literature studied inclusively and intertextually, as both language and cultural content, in constant relation to each other and in relation with other L2 literatures and cultures. Intention of learning and study plans. Read texts with taboo issues to expand one's views. Independent extra reading of same novel

across three languages to expand one's thought and change perspective of the world and / or themselves as a strategy to maximise learning.

As reported earlier, students' approaches overlapped with their perceptions of the role of L2 literature and at times, also of literature in general. The qualitative differences amongst the following four key ways of experiencing L2 literary texts are linked to the following perceptions and approaches: 1. surface (atomistic/bottom up); 2. surface (atomistic/top down); 3. deep (holistic/top down + bottom up); 4. deep (strategic/ holistic/bottom up+ top down and more):

Key experiences of literature

1. L2 literature as isolated elements of language (surface).

2. L2 literature as storyline / topics you identify with (surface).

3. L2 literature as affective context for learning language and culture/s. Reflection/comparison with own culture can lead to seeing things under a different light (deep).

4. L2 literature as language and cultural content in context, constantly relating the two, relating them to other texts and expanding their thinking through intertextual and intercultural analysis (deep).

These experiences are representative of the salient ways in which students perceive and approach L2 literary texts, as either (1) language parts, (2) narrative and/ or discourse parts, (3) language in relation to culture, or (4) as an overall experience. The sharpest critical variation originates from either an atomistic focus on parts of the text, sometimes denoting a bottom up approach to L2 reading (words, grammar) or a top down approach (storyline, topics), solely focused on extracting the gist of the story and /or the main topics. This latter variation within experience (2) borders with experience (3): L2 literature as a combination of language and culture, which in turn is closer to experience (4), in which literary texts are approached as a combinations of several elements, all integral to the interpretation of the texts, which can lead to insights and

change in perspective in regard to the L2 culture and life in general. To illustrate aspects of the critical variation between categories 1, 2, 3 and 4 I have used students' comments in reply to my questions on their experiences of L2 literature as described in the interviews:

Experience (1)

You know the actual words and the sentences and stuff.

Seeing the language to help improve Italian [...] reading it to have the practice, that's why I read it the third time to sort of cement it in my mind, learn new words.

I'm reading to improve my Italian. Literature in Italian as a learning aid is so that you're exposed to the language and you can see [...] how the tenses are used.

That's how you find out how it's in Italian, like how the language is spoken and the words you wouldn't think about when you were listening to the radio or something, you see them written down there and you just think okay well I know what it means now.

The vocabulary that helps, just seeing new words like that and I don't think consciously I learnt anything new but I think subconsciously you learn, it helps put the words in context [...] Later on I think that, if I needed to use that word I'd think okay I've heard that used I this way that must be right, so I'll use it like that again.

Reading in other languages is much harder because they use words that they've known for so long that we haven't quite grasped. [...] It's helpful to learn how things flow together [...] it's putting together how verbs link in with nouns [...] Watching movies is completely different [...] it's the actions there in front of you, you don't have to imagine anything.

Experience (2)

The storyline [...] makes it clear in your mind what's happening.

I relate literature to my life or to people's lives around me and see how it fits in there [...] I'm more into the topics [...]. It's funny when you start studying a certain topic in class everything seems to relate to it [...] I really enjoyed the topic for some reason [...] we even talked it outside class.

They [the stories] lead you to think about issues and themes.

The first one [story] made me think of it after [...] I was telling people what I read [...] I like things like that that make you think [...] that was just very topical.

Experience (3)

It helps you acquire the language [...] If you're in a book, in a novel, in some piece of literature it's like you've travelled, it's like you're over there and you're surrounded by an Italian world, you're in a little Italian world, and everything that happens is in Italian so you're like living in that world, you can't interact but you can experience [it]. [...] When I was at school I discovered books and I read a lot, novels and stories like Tolkien [...] Literature is just captivating for me, it's like you can experience it, it's like you're in a little world which is so much better than television because it's your world, it's not a world that someone is showing you and you can't imagine it's different, it's a world which you've imagined.

I think actually they [the stories] are good [...] because [...] they have language we haven't come across before, but not only that, because there's so many ways they can be interpreted [...] I'm at a stage now that I'm able to make a criticism of it, which is really good so [...] they're not just sort of simple stories that you sort of just do to improve your reading skills but [...] they've got themes in them that you can think about, so I'm really enjoying that [...] now we're reading with all the grammar that we've learnt in the text.

Experience (4)

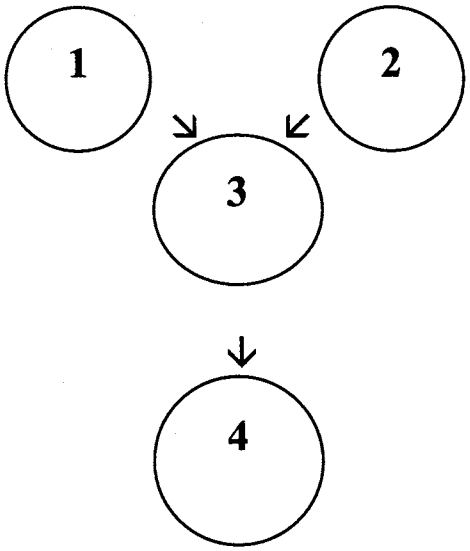
Part of being able to read successfully is orienting and knowing what it's going to be about [...] especially in a foreign language you have the vocabulary barrier to deal with [...] having the clues helps with comprehension and also it starts you thinking already about the issues that are going to be coming up.

Well, I think it gives you a lot of confidence to read bigger slabs of Italian [...] you do get a sense of achievement out of having read that much and then discussed and thought about and analysed it [...] it's also really nice to see a different part of the language [...] using more parts of the language not just you know grammar on you know specific vocabulary on going to school [...] you're sort of taking it into a wider context and yeah so it's also is expanding our understanding of Italian thought and the movements [...] doing literature is good for increasing your vocab and for insights into culture and history [...] when you read literature in other languages, it's a whole different, they feel a whole different way about different things, they might be more passionate about things that your own native language isn't passionate about [...] it's a very good insight into the real psyche of the people, or particular groups of people at a particular time.

> I'm trying to think of the difference between reading it for the story and reading for the social background but in both those stories the social background was an essential part of the story. I don't think they're stories that you benefit by just flicking through without being aware of the social background. [...] I'm not inclined just to read through quickly to get the gist of it [...] I'm just trying to think both. The first time takes longer, looking up words [...] I like to eliminate the problems, and then the second reading is more for pleasure.

There is a clear structural relationship where (1) and (2) are not inclusive of all the key elements in relation to each other, whilst in experience (3) awareness of literature includes 1 and 2, and experience (4) awareness of literature, the idea of expansion of thinking and strategies aimed at maximising learning (e.g., intertextuality).

Figure 1: Inclusive relationship between the four key ways of experiencing literature



In experience (4) the text is seen as a combination of several elements, all integral to the interpretation of the text. For students who experience L2 literature in this way (as for many educators advocating the inclusion of literature in language learning), literature encompasses the culture, the language, "the psyche" of a people. In the words of another student, "literature can transport you into another world". Literature is understood also as a process leading to changes in perspective. Being confronted with radically different cultural thought patterns leads to changes in attitudes towards both

one's own culture and the second culture with which one is coming into contact by reading the texts. Generally these experiences of reading literature, reveal an awareness of how reading is a subjective transaction affected by personal experience: "it is interesting how life experience will change how you see a particular piece of literature", and conversely, how literary texts can become possible agent of change, like in the case of "o mangiar questa minestra, o saltar quella finestra". Even L2 literature and the approach to its study is perceived not just as "efferent reading" ie what the students can take away from the text, new vocabulary or information about the country or the topics, but the reading experience shifts between an efferent, epistemic to an "aesthetic reading", an appreciation and enjoyment of the literary text *per se*.

Approaches associated with key experience (4) were defined "strategic" also because they included many of Stern's (1975)[118] list of strategies. He claimed they marked good language learning, in particular, a personal learning style which incorporates a constant search for meaning, with a planned and strategic approach to studying literature and also a willingness to practice and use the language with the intention of using the language as a separate reference system. In experience (4) in reader response terms:

> The reader approaches the text with a certain purpose, certain expectations or hypothesis that guide his choices from the residue of past experiences. Meaning emerges as the reader carries on a give-and-take with the signs on the page [...] the two-way, reciprocal relation explains why meaning is not "in" the text or "in" the reader. Both reader and text are essential to the transactional process of making meaning (Rosenblatt, 1995, pp. 26-27).

Table 5.4 summarises the main dimensions of variation found in terms of how students perceived L2 literature, the main textual aspects they focused on and the strategies and techniques they used when reading. As shown in the table, these dimensions, already discussed in this section, display a variety of reading approaches which are linked to particular textual features and are influenced by factors such as linguistic accessibility and students' valued elements of literary texts.

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[118] The full list of Stern's (1975, p. 31) strategies, quoted in McDonough (1999, p. 1) is reported below: "1) A personal learning style or positive learning strategies; 2) An active approach to the task; 3) A tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language and empathy with its speakers; 4) Technical know-how about how to tackle a language; 5) Strategies of experimentation and planning with the object of developing the new language into an ordered system and of revising this system progressively; 6) Constantly searching for meaning; 7) Willingness to practice; 8) Willingness to use the language in real communication; 9) self-monitoring and critical sensitivity to language use; 10) Developing the target language more and more as a separate reference system, and learning to think in it".

Table 5.4 — Main dimensions of variation in collective experiences of L2 literature

Textual features	Reading strategies and techniques	Influences on approaches	Key elements for valuing L2 literary texts
Language	Follow instructions in the textbook	Linguistic accessibility	Interest/pleasure
Storyline	Personalized strategies:	Cultural accessibility	Language: Vocabulary (idiomatic usage); learn grammatical structures
Topics	Examples: visualizing	The role of discourse in and outside the classroom	Learn about famous authors
Cultural issues	Immersion in an "Italian environment"	Motivation for studying Italian and experience of literature	Author's underlying meaning + go beyond
Taboo/cultural issues	Reading in three different languages simultaneously	L1 literature reading experience	Personal relevance
Irony	L1 discussion with peers and friends: from story to issues	Reading for pleasure	Culture / Sociology
Humour	Combining bottom-up + top down reading techniques	Reading for assessment	Makes you think about life/change

Having provided illustrative examples of students' key experiences of literature, from literary text as words or storyline (what happens, contrast with own life), to literary text as words and culture in context (what, where, why, how, comparison with own culture), to the study of literature as a meaningful, intertextual intercultural process (what, where, why, how, links with own culture and other cultures), and a summary table of the main dimensions of variation, I will show in the next section how these key experiences are associated with particular approaches and result in particular text understanding.

5.3 Individuals' experiences of literature: Linking perceptions, approaches and learning

In addition to the phenomenographic focus on collective analysis, in this section the analysis focuses on individual experiences of L2 literature.[119] My aim is to show how the key experiences of L2 literature identified in the 1999 sample were constituted by

[119] Marton & Booth (1997) describe "the pool of meaning" formed by the material collected by the researcher as containing "two sorts of of material: that pertaining to individuals and that pertaining to the collective. It is the same stuff, of course, but it can be viewed from two different perspectives to provide different contexts for isolated statements and expressions relevant to the objects of research." (p. 43).

particular approaches towards the study of L2 literature. As emerged from analysis of data, these approaches were associated with qualitative differences in learning outcomes, understood here as depth and breadth of text understanding and general language and culture learning progress, not in quantitative learning of parts of language or culture. Experiences (1) and (2) above, often characterized by anxiety about studying L2 literature and perceptions and approaches focused on parts of the texts without necessarily relating to the whole text, were linked to quite different ways of understanding the text or interest in engaging with the text. In phenomenographic studies on approaches to L1 texts (as reported in Marton & Booth, 1997), relating what the text says to its themes and meaning is defined as a deep approach to reading. The key difference when reading in a non native language is that the learning outcome must include learning the language. Although it could be argued that even in one's own native language, reading approaches that skim through the text to get the storyline and / or extract the themes do not constitute a deep appreciation of the processes involved in writing and reading, what we feel when we read is due to the discourse but the discourse, is made up of words and sentences carefully chosen for a particular effect. So, the trick is to be able to notice this relational aspect between style and meaning, and in an L2, to relate them constantly, as in experience (3).

The dynamics of students' experiences of literature are illustrated with a discussion of four experiences representative of the critical variation between different ways of perceiving and approaching texts as well as students' ways of understanding the texts. The key experiences of the individual students discussed in this section are also representative of the variation in age, gender, language and literary background usually found in my experience in Italian language and culture courses in Australian universities. There appears to be a mutual relationship between perceptions of the role of literature and approach to reading literature. This relational link is influenced by a strong intention of learning (Säljö, 1997) holistically, about the language and culture by reading literature rather than vocabulary through literature. All these elements are necessary for a learning outcome that can be perceived by students and educator as enhancing the role of L2 literature in language learning since it reinforces, develops and changes students' language competence at all levels as well as their knowledge of the culture and society and their general ability to read and interpret literature.

Choice of texts took into account students' perceptions of literature in general and the role of L2 literature. In selecting the literary texts I ensured that a variety of themes and genres was covered, but I also selected taboo topics that I envisaged would challenge students' view about Italian culture. Cultural distance is relative (Hasan, 1996) and culture is not static or uniform across time, space or societies, or within societies. There are nevertheless cultural patterns that belong to particular societies and make it difficult for 'outsiders' to interpret texts, such as Maraini's "L'altra famiglia", that signify and subvert those cultural practices. These patterns are not however unchangeable, on the contrary they shift with economic and social changes in life style. I am referring in particular to a situation commonly accepted in Italy in the 50s and 60s: men with two families, which Maraini ironises in her short story "L'altra famiglia", the first read by the students. Forty years after the story was published, students in Australia, especially young ones, were shocked by Maraini's representation of a woman who led a double life. They could not understand the metaphorical meaning of the story until they became aware of the background information on Italian culture and the conditions that favoured such a culture. The Church and its influence on the State prevented divorce becoming legal. If students have never lived in Italy, it is unlikely that they would have the necessary background schemata to process Maraini's irony of this aspect of Italian society. It is however preferable not to give this information to students immediately, but to "tease it out of them". As we will see in students' responses in the interviews, to pursue the different meanings of the texts, the element of curiosity and shock is a powerful incentive.

For privacy reasons, I will refer only to the information necessary to associate individual students' experiences with the collective key experiences of literature identified in this thesis.

5.3.1 Experience of literature as isolated elements of language: Student 1

Student 1 below is a young female studying two foreign languages. She had read a lot of English literature as a child, but as an adult had a strong preference for visual materials over written ones. She is a listener rather than a speaker, prefers comedy, and focuses especially on translating words so she can use them later. She shows little interest in the

culture or in literature *per se*, or in understanding the links between language and culture.

Table 5.5 — Experience of literature as isolated elements of language: Student 1

Perception →→L1 literature
L2 literature as words
↓↓↓↓

Intention →→Extend L2 vocabulary, learning flowing natural language

↓↓↓↓

Approach→→Reading easy authentic texts not beyond your ability

↓↓↓↓

Learning outcome →→→

→ Surface text understanding →

→ Limited language competence and cultural awareness

Table 5.5 outlines the way in which this student experienced literature mainly as as isolated elements of language (e.g., vocabulary items). The arrows in Table 5.5 (as in Tables 5.6, 5.7 and 5.8 below) illustrate the association between perception of literature, intention and approach to literary texts and student's learning outcome. Her approach to studying literature is atomistic and her way of understanding the text remains at the surface level.[120] She perceives the role of L2 literature as reading easy texts to learn flowing natural language and believes that reading is less helpful than watching films and is anxious about reading difficult texts in Italian. Although she read extensively as a child, when I asked her to talk first about her experience of reading literature in any language, she skipped to L2:

> Interviewer (PC): I would like you to talk first generally about your personal experience of reading literature in any language and then narrow

[120] This chapter describes perceptions, approaches and learning outcomes of the 1999 sample. It was precisely learning outcomes such as student 1 that spurred me on to a further study to attempt to expand students' understanding of literature beyond a word by word reading of the text and a literal comprehension of the text, to reach an understanding of what the text was about.

> it down to your experience of reading L2 Italian literature in the first four weeks of the semester.
>
> Interviewee: Well reading in other languages is so much harder [...] but it's very helpful to learn how things flow together.

Her reaction may have been due to her anxiety about reading L2 literature and her preference for visual performance over written literature:

> I find that watching movies is completely different, like I could babble away in Italian after watching *Mediterraneo* [...]. It's like Shakespeare for a lot of people they don't understand it until it's performed, like just reading it doesn't help, but when it's performed you see it in context, so I find that watching movies helps me a lot more than reading literature [...] in a text you have to put everything together [...] if you don't know a lot, you don't see a lot.

Perception, approach and outcome seem to form a vicious circle in which the learner is caught: she perceives reading literature as difficult, solely associated with learning parts of the language. Because she focuses so strongly on individual language items, especially words, and looking up their meaning in the dictionary, she cannot enjoy or learn from the text. As a consequence, the whole experience is perceived negatively:

> Sometimes I don't really get a lot out of it because I'm too busy looking up a word in a dictionary and trying to work out how it all links together and what the sentence means.

Her text understanding expressed below in terms of the bare storyline, because, as the following detailed description reveals, she is a bottom up reader who focuses on parts of the text without relating them to the whole. In reference to reading L1 literature, Rosenblatt (1978) affirms that "the actual lived-through reading process is [...] not a word-by-word summation of meaning, but rather the process of tentative organization of meaning, the creation of a framework into which the reader incorporates ensuing words and phrases" (pp. 21-22). This student however is approaching the text as a list of words from which to extract meaning. Furthermore, for this reader, literary texts such as Moravia's "Regina d'Egitto" (Italiano & Marchegiani Jones, 1992) that begin *in medias res* by jumping straight into the story without providing a detailed description of the setting, the characters and their background, represent a further impediment to understanding the text:

> That story we've done about the woman who has got the rich husband and I've never got into it, I couldn't visualize it so much [...] like at the beginning of the story they set the scene and they say where she is, if I don't know some of the words, I have to stop, look it up, and by the time I get back I've got that word in my head but then it doesn't all flow together as well, so then I've got to concentrate on thinking where she is and then I forget all about that when I go onto the next bit and she starts talking about what's happening and you sort of jump from one bit to another, you have to really think about it [...] I try to keep going and hope that it will drop, click in at some later date [...] I just get more confused because I have no idea what's happening, so as I read through, I just slowly lose it. The words on the side help a lot when you're just stuck for one thing. [...] I think the best way is to just go through it and write the meaning of each word that I don't understand and then go through it all again. It just means I have to read a text two or three times and it takes so long.

Another impediment is perhaps the expectation that one quick reading should be sufficient to gain an understanding of what is happening in the literary texts. The student however stated that a combination of searching for words in the dictionary and looking at how they are included in the text helped her remember their meanings:

> Yes, actually you do, it rings a bell later on and you go, oh, that word in that story and you can trace it back and read it again in context [...] the dictionary definition isn't always the one you want, but when you can go back and look at what's written in the actual Italian story it helps so much more. [...] If I read it again in Italian I'd remember the English definition. I'd remember translating it and what it meant.

As with student 2 below, classroom discussion plays an important role in understanding the literary texts. Student 1, instead of participating in classroom dialogue, prefers to stand back and use others' comments to make sense of the stories:

> I love just listening to people speak the language [...] I join in when I know what I'm going to say makes sense, but it's much preferable to be able to listen and know that I understand [...]. I'm happy to have an issue that gets a few people inflated and gets everyone talking [...] things like the dependence and independence of women in marriages, there's so many ways [...] and so many meanings, that we all gave a completely different view on it this morning, so it was good. I didn't like it at first I thought oh; it's stupid, no one wants to think about it [...] once I got going I thought oh well there's lots of ways that it could be looked at.

In this sense, the variation in students' perspectives, as expressed in class discussion, helped this student overcome her initial reaction to the text, "L'altra famiglia" as "stupid" because she had read it "literally" as a story about a woman with two families, and not aesthetically, as a parody of Italian society. It seems that the student's inability to go beyond a literal reading of the text is due to her surface approach to the text which is linked to her inability to perceive it, approach and appreciate it as aesthetic reading:

> Interviewer: Did you prefer one story over the other and why, from a language or cultural point of view?
>
> Interviewee: I can't define what catches my interest, the first one about the woman that leads two different lives, that was interesting [...] it had more dialogue, it seemed to me to be simpler, more easy to understand. I didn't have to race to the dictionary quite as much [...] the second one was just too intense, too literary [...] there wasn't a lot of dialogue to explain what was happening [...] I just found it a bit over my head [...] I guess it goes back to listening to people talk [...] I got quite fed up about half way through and just went blah I don't like it, I don't want to do it [...] It just went completely over my head, I didn't understand it, it didn't interest me [...] I had a rough idea of what was going to happen and I don't really care whether she does or doesn't sleep with another man, or takes his money [...] I got to the point where I just thought, oh, I have no opinion on this [...] I didn't understand it so I didn't like it. [...] It's a lot more helpful and absorbing in small doses, like the little plays I did at the end of last year, they were really good, cause I learned a few extra little words in a funny interesting way [...] you don't have to emphasize [with the characters], you can just be interested, or amused, or involved, it makes a big difference.

As she revealed at the end of the interview, as far as reading in Italian was concerned, her preference was for comedy (as in her native English) and provided the example of comedy / cabaret sketches by Paolo Rossi, a notorious Italian comedian. Initially many students did not capture the strong underlying irony running through "L'altra famiglia" because they took the storyline literally. Her understanding of "L'altra famiglia", as expressed in her journal, showed a deeper appreciation of the text structure than conveyed in the interview in her section written in English, even though her reading did not see the deeper meaning behind the paradoxical storyline, focusing on the storyline and character as if they were real people facing a real situation:

> It was clever the way the story followed the main character, not chopping from one family to the other and back again. The story itself wasn't my kind of story but the way that it was told was an interesting way to do it. She

> cannot raise two loving families when she can only spend half of her time with each one, which is why her children are brats. But will she ever give one (or both) of the families up?

The underlying focus on storyline and concerns with difficulties were similar in her Italian entry in the journal: [121]

> Mi piace gli racconti delle donne forte, ma in questo caso, penso che questa donna non è né forte né potente, lei è spietato. Forse lei non è abbastanza amata. Né l'uno né l'altro dei mariti interessano di lei ma lei non loro da l'occasione, è sempre in viaggio fra Milano e Roma. Ho trovato che non godo la letteratura se non capirlo in italiano e in inglese. Quando devo smettere sempre in mezzo della linea che leggo per verificare il significato di una parola – perdo il flusso del racconto.[122]

As discussed, the surface text understanding of this student is not due entirely to language difficulties but also to perception and approach to the study of literature, not necessarily only L2 literature. Although the student's text shows inappropriate choices especially in terms of morphology and lexicon, she successfully uses the double negative Italian construction used in the literary text read. So, in fact, it could be said that even a student with fairly negative perceptions of L2 literature managed to learn and reproduce quite a difficult structure, used in "Regina d'Egitto", into her own Italian text, in response to reading another literary text, "L'altra famiglia".

5.3.2 Experience of literature as storyline or topic: Student 2

Student 2 was is a young female student who has studied English literature at school, has a strong interest in topics that relate to her own life and less interest in the language. Even though phenomenographically she is very similar to student 1, I have chosen to discuss them both because her experience is representative of a top down L2 reader, rather than a bottom up L2 reader. Like student 1, the approach to the text is almost

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[121] I will report students' journal entries in Italian in their original writing, without my corrections. Similarly to Kramsch and Nolden (1994), I do not believe that inaccurate language use means necessarily that the student is not ready for reading or writing about literary texts in another language. I will report my translations of students' text in note form.

[122] [I like tales about strong women, but, in this case, I think that this woman is neither strong nor powerful, she is merciless. Perhaps she is not loved enough. Neither of her two husbands is interested in her but she doesn't give them a chance, she is always traveling between Milan and Rome. I found that I

exclusively focused on topics rather than language, yet the learning outcomes are similar, because they both look at the texts as an opportunity to extract certain information that is relevant to them, as an "interaction" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 26) instead of engaging in a "transaction" (p. 26) with it.

Table 5.6 — Experience of literature as storyline / topic: Student 2

Perception →→L1 literature: accessible, entertaining short texts, with topics that lead to reflection; L2 literature as interesting topics/stories with which you identify

↓↓↓↓

Intention →→Grasp the storyline; work out the topics; learn new words

↓↓↓↓

Approach→→ Read story several times; discuss topics with friends

↓↓↓↓

Learning outcome →→ reflection on topic →

→ Topic-driven, personal text interpretation →

→ Limited language competence; medium cultural awareness

Table 5.6 outlines the experience of literature as topic and / or storyline. As the arrows indicate, a strong identification with topics is associated with a personal interpretation of the text and limited language competence. Unlike the previous student, this student had a fairly relaxed attitude to reading L2 literature, she had no particular place in which she read the set text, in fact she read them wherever she was and happened to have some spare time:

> Interviewer: do you think the short stories were challenging enough [...]. How long did it take you to read them?

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do not enjoy literature if I do not understand it, in Italian or English. When I always have to stop in the middle of a line I am reading to check the meaning of a word – I lose the flow of the tale].

> Interviewee: it didn't take me that long [...] I remember sitting in the car, without a dictionary [...] someone else was driving so I had a read through and they were really good cause I was going wow I can actually understand the gist of the story without a dictionary and then, I went back and underlined the words that I really didn't understand and then the ones I got completely stuck on and used a dictionary.

This student is enthusiastic about reading literature, reads it in the car with friends and is able to enjoy the texts because she understands the gist of the story without knowing every word of the text. During the second reading she underlined the unknown words and only looked up the ones that she "got completely stuck on" which I interpreted as meaning that she could not understand from the context. Student 2 was strongly interested in the topics of the short stories, especially "L'altra famiglia", because they related to her life experience:

> "The Queen of Egypt", that one was good [...] and what was the one before that, the marriage, the two lives [...] it just shocked me [...] "L'altra famiglia" that was so not what I want in life, like for me personally [...] With "Regina d'Egitto" the first time I didn't understand what had actually happened, I knew she got in a car and she smoked a cigarette and she went blah blah blah but I didn't quite understand the two guy thing [...] the third time I got it [...] first of all what she did, her actions and then what the author was trying to say. [...] It's hard because in another language the meaning can get lost, or, if they're just joking or poking fun it's really hard to grasp, I mean it's hard enough in your own language [...] so it's really good when you do pick it up. [...] The words at the side help [...] it all helps, knowing what a verb is [...] I was lucky because I did that at school in Latin.
>
> It's funny when you start studying a certain topic in class, everything seems to relate to it [...] I think it just opens your eyes [...] it made me think, well my sister's friends are getting married [...] I really enjoyed that topic for some reason [...] I'd just broken up with my boyfriend cause I was too independent [...] so it was very topical.

Most students found "Regina d'Egitto" by Moravia quite difficult after reading "L'altra famiglia" because, unlike Maraini's story, Moravia's did not include a lot of dialogue and the social subtext was hard to grasp for younger students with little knowledge of Italian political struggles. Instead, for student 4 (Table 5.8), a mature and experienced reader, it was too obvious. Maraini's text elicited more comments than any of the other texts in the interviews, in class and in the journals.

On first impact, student 2, like most of the class, was shocked because she focused on the surface level of the tale and interpreted it literally. Most students focused on the literal level of the story and ask questions such as: "What about when she was pregnant? How could she hide that?" The tragic irony shown by turning this cultural practice upside down by having a woman with two families is shown by the fact that the protagonist becomes in fact a halved woman, always tired and unhappy since she has to take responsibility for two families and four children besides being a career woman. Ultimately then the answer for women was certainly not to pattern their behaviour on that of males since that would quadruple their work load! The metaphorical level of the story emerged in class, through comparison of students' different views and my mediation and contribution of cultural and historical information, clarification of narrative techniques and especially leading students to become aware of how cultural meaning is inscribed in the language, narrative and structural choices of the author.

As student 2 says below, Maraini's story did open up the class for her but it also opened up the texts for most students, often through heated dialogue in English and Italian. Within the class, views of women's roles within the family were very heterogeneous, with extreme Catholics and radical feminists at the antipodes. Maraini's tale of a woman with two families overturned students' expectations and stereotypical views of Italian family, society and culture. This process spurred students to reflect on their own views and personal situations and compare them with those of other societies. In this sense, the class became the site of oppositional practice (de Certeau, 1984) and dialogue with the discourse of the text took place for most students in class, with contrast and comparison with other students' readings. Although this student often reverted to English in the heat of the discussion, this is precisely the role that literature ideally should have: elicit discussion, make the classroom the site of dialogue (Kramsch, 1983, 1987):

> Interviewer: So did that help reading and developing interest in the story, the fact that it was topical?
>
> Interviewee: [...] it seemed like the class was interested, like everyone else was interested in it as well. [...] Literature sort of opens the doors to discussion [...] it raises a lot of issues, whereas you can do all the grammar and all the syntax and everything in the world but until you have something to base it on you can't really discuss it [...] it's opened up Italian for me in class [...].

Her understanding of "L'altra famiglia" as shown in the following journal entry remained focused on the storyline and on her personal values about the role women should have within the family:

> Una parola per questo racconto è 'TRISTE'. Non è possibile per una donna avere per vivere due vite. È abbasta per una donna avere UNA famiglia con i figli urlandi ma due famiglie è sfitate! Nello questo racconto vediamo le differenze tra una famiglia fra un'altra famiglia. La donna non aveva il tempo per due famiglie e Lei non puo dedicare tempo basta a tutti e due delle famiglie. La mamma nello questo racconto è molto attacato al suo lavoro e questo non è giusto per i mariti o per i figli. In quest'esercizio ho trovato tante parole che non ho conocuito – per esempio 'premiare', 'finto', e 'spettinato'. Ho trovato questo racconto piu lungo e perciò ho perduto l'interesse perché lo era piu lungo – forse in futuro i racconti saranno piu corti??... Gli esercizi prima del racconto erano buoni perché ho imparato le parole prima di facendo il testo.[123]

The student's text is understandable even though it contains several grammatical, orthographic and lexical inaccuracies, including one word that does not exist: "sfitate", (probably trying to construct the past participle of sfinire, sfinito (to exhaust, exhausted), and is also quite repetitive. It is probably not unreasonable to assume that she wrote it very quickly in the car, and maybe did not reread it to check it. She did however list some of the words that she had looked up in the dictionary but does not use them in her commentary on the story. Student 1 instead, because of her strong focus on forms, had written her text more carefully, including the double negative used in one of the short stories. Student 2's personal evaluation of the protagonist, probably written before classroom discussion, seems to contradict some of her statements in the interview, for example wanting to be independent, but it is indicative of her contrastive ideas and feelings at the time. Her complaint about the text being too long did not emerge during the interview, nor that she lost interest, in fact in the interview she expressed her enthusiasm about understanding the gist of the story while reading it in the car. Perhaps when she wrote the end of her journal entry she was already thinking of the next story, "Regina d'Egitto" with which, as she explained, she had difficulty. When asked how she perceived

[123] [One word for this short story is 'SAD'. It is not possible for a woman to have two lives. It is enough for a woman to have ONE family with screaming children but two families is (?) exhausting! In this short story we see the differences between one family and another family. The woman did not have time for two families and could not dedicate enough time to both families. The mother in this story is very attached to her job and this is not right for the husbands or for the children. In this exercise I found many words I did not know – for example 'to praise', 'fake', and 'with uncombed hair'. I found this short story longer and

her learning experience, she indicated that her confidence had increased and that she wished to enjoy Italian:

> Interviewer: What do you think you've learnt?
>
> Interviewee: I've learnt to think a bit more in Italian [...] it feels like we're digging a bit deeper and actually getting meaning out of it, analyzing more [...] it makes me think it after class. It's oh, whoa! [...] I feel I've learnt a lot more [...] language is so much about confidence [...] I have gained confidence, I don't know how much it's going to show in my assessment mark [...] I just want to enjoy it.

The fact that she mentioned marks and assessment revealed however some insecurity about how her confidence and enthusiasm would translate into marks. This student's approach displayed an oppositional stance towards the L2 culture and one's own perspective on certain issues, but did not seem to result in change in social perspectives. It also did not lead to a development of L2 abilities, perhaps because there was little appreciation of how the writer, with a particular use of language and narrative structure, managed to provoke in readers a feeling of estrangement and uneasiness. I have interpreted this still as a surface approach because if these parts are not related to the L2 language it is highly unlikely that the links between language and culture will be noticed, for example the way style encloses meaning, and also that the language it self will be learnt and therefore students lose what they themselves perceived as the main role of L2 literature.

I have represented this experience separately even though in phenomenographic terms it is very similar to student 1 since it focuses on some parts of the text without relating them to the whole text. It is however significant in an L2 reading context since it shows how topic driven approaches, considered usually as top-down approaches and advisable to obtain the gist of the story without becoming "lost in translation" and frustrated, can emerge in limited learning outcomes, as in the experience of student 1. A crucial difference between students 1 and 2 which I feel compelled to mention since it affects an ever larger number of university students in Australia is linked to external economic factors that force students into working up to nearly a full time load to support themselves. Whereas student 1 had no such problems and her limited achievement is probably linked to her negative attitude towards reading L2 literature, an experience in

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therefore I lost interest because it was longer – perhaps in future the short stories will be shorter???... The

which she is not interested and which only causes her anxiety, student 2 showed an enthusiastic attitude towards the study of L2 literature and probably would have attained a deeper text understanding and higher language achievements had she been able to concentrate more on her studies rather than having to work several hours per week.

Even though the intention and approach of experiences (1) and (2) are quite different due to different internal (perception and approach) and external factors (economic situation), the learning outcomes are very similar, probably because in both experiences only the surface of the text is seen as relevant, whether for learning words or identifying topics to which one can relate. This does not constitute a "transaction" in Rosenblatt's (1995) terms, nor does it lead to deep approaches with the intention of crossing into another language and culture. A significant shift occurs between experience (1) and (2) and experience (3), and the critical variation lies precisely in extending the perception and approach to literature to linking language and other parts of the texts as well as how those affect the reader emotionally.

5.3.3 Experience of literature as language and culture in context: Student 3

I have chosen student 3 because she is a young Australian Italian and therefore representative of children of "tri-lingual" (Bettoni, 1985) Italian immigrants who learn Italian at school and / or university whilst at home they usually speak a mixture of family dialect/s, English and also some form of Italian. Student 3 though could use all her languages distinctively; she had a background in reading English literature and L2 literature at school, and also for pleasure and personal development:

> I love reading. In College I did a double major in English so I read a lot, I studied a lot and tried to read as widely as possible and at home I'm actually reading for an hour or so each night *I promessi sposi* in bed so literature to me is very important [...] I'm sort of reading it to be reading in Italian and sort of reading for pleasure.

She is an avid reader in both English and Italian who distinguishes between reading for pleasure and reading for assessment because:

> There's pressure to really understand it, whereas, it's sort of on my bed side table and when I have a few minutes I read a page to just sort of get some

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exercises were good because I learn the words before doing the text].

> practice, to just sort of enjoy it. It's really weird like I always make the distinction between the books that I read because I enjoy reading them and the books that I have to read for assessment. Even in English. [...] It's a subconscious thing because I was doing English and even History and the books I had to read for study purposes I didn't seem to enjoy as much but when the holidays came I would still read the same exact same history book just to find out more information. [...] because I don't mind doing extra but so long as my mind knows I'm doing extra because I want to do it, not because I have to.

Like student 4 below, she also reads difficult classic Italian literary texts independently, but she draws a clear distinction between reading books of her own choice and not for assessment, and reading for assessment. It seems that voluntary reading (Krashen, 1995) could and perhaps should play a stronger role in L2 literature pedagogy. It is difficult however to encourage students to do extra reading because they perceive it as an extra imposed load, unless they themselves are choosing to do it.[124] At the time of the interview this student was reading what is usually defined as one of the masterpieces of the Italian canon, Alessandro Manzoni's *I promessi sposi*, the first long novel written in the language that would become Standard Italian, considered as the most important text of the canon of unified Italy and the "best seller" of the Italian Risorgimento (Carroli & Speziali, 2004). Her attitude towards reading Italian, unlike student 1, but similarly to student 2, is relaxed. She reads such long novels in bed and has the intention of continuing reading texts in Italian with the purpose of becoming able to read them solely for pleasure:

> Interviewer: Do you enjoy Italian literature or do you read it for other reasons?
>
> Interviewee: At the moment I'm reading it to improve my Italian but hopefully I want to start buying Italian books, books in Italian, so I can read them like I read English books, for the pleasure of reading the Italian book, but at the moment it's to improve my Italian.

However, unlike student 2, student 3 has a clear, holistic purpose, to pursue reading, also independently to gain a very near to native L2 reading competence. She also has more specific intentions and for each of them she uses different approaches to reading:

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[124] Taking into account this perception of reading during the university breaks as different from reading during the semester, in 2000 (study 2) I handed out the first literary reading just before the September break so students could read it at their own pace during the holidays.

Interviewee: I'm reading *I promessi sposi* to help with my pronunciation, to help with reading nicely and clearly.

Interviewer: So you read aloud?

Interviewee: I try but it doesn't last (laughter). The shorter texts I read out loud and I usually if I see a word I try to repeat it a few times before I get it, but the long ones I usually read to myself to try and understand the meaning, so that's for Italian. For English I read literature just because I enjoy it.

As can be seen in the table below, student 3's learning outcomes, unlike 1 and 2, were advanced. The main dimensions of variation seem to be linked to the way L2 reading is approached, in a relaxed but purposeful way, both with the intention of learning and also eventually being able to read Italian literature for pleasure. Individual extra readings also show dedication to the study of Italian literature which is approached both for meaning and form. There is also selectiveness in how the student approaches short or long literary texts for focusing on different aspects of the language or text meaning.

Table 5.7 - Experience of literature as affective L2 context: Student 3

Perception →→L1 literature as entertainment, stimulation and affect
(personal stories and current issues)
L2 literature as affective context to experience the L2 language and culture

↓↓↓↓

Intention →→ To improve knowledge L2 language and culture
(pronunciation, spoken language, vocabulary, themes)

↓↓↓↓

Approach→→Relaxed approach to reading; independent extra reading

↓↓↓↓

Learning outcome →→ insight: change in outlook on life←
← Advanced critical text interpretation →
→ Medium to advanced language competence and cross-cultural awareness

As outlined in Table 5.7, student 3 experienced literature affectively as a way of experiencing the L2 language and culture in context. As shown by the arrows in the table, the affective dimension, the student's relaxed approached to reading together with the intention of learning both and culture was associated with personal development as well as intermediate to advanced learning outcomes. When asked more specifically why she thought reading literature would improve her Italian and how she approached reading the set Italian short stories, the student replied:

> It's exposure to the language [...] it improves your spoken language because you can actually see it, you can follow it [...] the books are from Italy and you learn new phrases and you remember them if you come across something new in a book [...] I learn very visually, I have to see things, I read things, and I remember better that way and if there are things you don't understand you go to a dictionary and they stick in your mind much better than if you hear them, because it's easy to forget things if you just hear it.

Similarly to student 1, this student also learns visually, but she perceives visual learning very differently, actually as "the power of reading" (Krashen, 1993), seeing, noticing and remembering the words written on the page. Whilst student 1 needs to hear the words and see the action on the screen, for student 3 the effort of reading and looking up unknown words actually develops vocabulary retention. She also read the set literary texts in bed, but in the morning:

> Interviewee: In bed. Usually in the morning, I don't know why, but I wake up in the morning and I read them and I usually read them all at once.
>
> Interviewer: How many times do you usually read them?
>
> Interviewee: Well, with "L'altra famiglia" I went home and I read it out loud twice and then the next morning I read it again.
>
> Interviewer: Is it different every time you read it? Do you notice different things?
>
> Interviewee: By the third or fourth time I was sort of skimming through it because I understood the flow and I knew difficult words so I sort of skimmed through it just to remember the themes [...] The first time I read it out loud [...] very carefully and I interpret the things I don't understand and then the second time I read it understanding the text and the third time going through it quickly.
>
> Interviewer: What do you mean by interpret?

> Interviewee: Translate it. So just to get it into context [...]. Usually, I look on the side where they have a definition. I don't look at the dictionary much anymore. I try to just work out by going though and looking at the Italian definition, but if I still don't understand it then I go to the dictionary.
>
> Interviewer: So do you mainly succeed by looking at the context?
>
> Interviewee: Because of reading more it's improving, so I don't have to go to the dictionary as much and before I'd see a big word I'd panic straight away. Now I sort of say it a few times and I think does it sound familiar and already before I look in the dictionary I guess what it means.

The student highlighted the change in her reading which had occurred in her approach to reading Italian texts since the Intermediate level. She was no longer scared and panicky about meeting words she did not immediately recognize. Instead, her approach had developed throughout the course from atomistic to holistic and she uses a combination of techniques, first top down, understanding from the context and then bottom up if that fails. Besides looking up words in the dictionary or in the text side notes, she also uses other strategies and techniques associated with activities from the textbook:

> Most of the questions I think about and I don't usually write an answer, like some things I just write little notes, but most of the questions I [...] answer in my head and have an answer ready when we come to class, rather than writing everything down because sometimes it becomes a little repetitive [...] I look at the questions first [...] so I know what to look for when I'm reading the text so I have an idea what it's looking for and what it's asking [the text].

This student uses textbook glosses and other exercises included in the readings to her own advantage, as a sort of schemata activation for what she would encounter in the text in order to have an active transaction with it. Whilst student 2 admits that she often does not do the activities at home because she does not have time, student 1 finds the whole experience of reading L2 literature and home activities associated with it daunting and unenjoyable and is unable to read the texts as literature because of the complexity of narrative layers and the lack of precise description of setting and characters. Instead, student 3 finds the short stories interesting, precisely because they contain new forms of expression and are open to different readings:

> I think they are actually good because they have language we haven't come across before [...] because there's so many ways they can be interpreted, I've just realized I can sit down, yeah, I'm at a stage now that I'm able to make a criticism of it [...] they've got themes in them that you can think about, so I'm really enjoying that. [...] In college we read little snippets, they were like role

> plays, very simple, they sort of pointed out past tense and things, whereas now we're reading with all the grammar that we've learnt in the text [...] they lead you to think about issues and themes as well.

In describing her experience with Italian literary texts at university, this student points out that whilst at college she only read excerpts aimed entirely at learning grammatical structures. Instead, as part of the ANU Intermediate level the literary text is perceived as integrating meaning within language. The underlying theme, unlike in the two previous students, is that the student finds enjoyable the experience of reading literary texts with new language form that makes her think about issues. She also shows excitement about her acquired ability to critically appreciate L2 literature besides also showing an interest for stories one can relate to emotionally, like student 2, who is totally focused on topics that affect her own life but not on critical and linguistic appreciation of the text:

> The first one [...] "L'altra famiglia" I enjoyed the most [...] it really made me think [...] because I'm approaching womanhood and because this family had a job and two lives, it's easy to be on that level to understand or to possibly think about if she were a real woman [...] it was easy to relate to her or to put my self in her position [...] it was almost written as an autobiography [...] it was easier to read , it was just very thought provoking because it didn't really go into depth, it let you make your own mind up [...] the thing that surprised me the most was that the woman had two families, that was on the surface, when I thought about it, there were much deeper meanings, but on the surface I would not have expected a woman to be like that [...] you could say she suffered from infidelity, whether you call it an affair or not, and you don't expect it from a woman.

Maraini's text certainly challenges students' stereotypical views of women in marriage. In this case, however, the student understands that behind the surface of the storyline of a woman with two families there is a deeper meaning.[125]

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[125]Since the student's text is quite extensive, I have placed it with my translation in this footnote: Fin adesso abbiamo letto "L'altra famiglia" da Dacia Maraini. Era un gran sorpressa quando ho scoperto che questo racconto era scritto nel 1968. Io penso che questo autrice fosse stata una donna molto avanzata per la sua tempo. Lei ha preveduto i problemi diversi che le donne emancipate possono affrontare. Anze, era questo periodo che il Movimento per la Liberazione della Donna è accaduto, allora è stato molto interessante di leggere letteratura sulla una questione politica così importante e comune che ancora è una problema le donne moderne devono combattere. Credo che questo racconto volesse mostrare qualche idee diversi. Un'idea che voleva parlare su era l'idea che se una donna avesse due vite come la protagonista lei non la faceva. La donna moderna ha troppo responsabilità per dividere sua tempo e energia fra due famiglie, specialmente in due città separati. Io penso però che iùl commento più forte che Maraini stia dire delle due vite sia che la donna è tirata fra mantenere i propri impegni della famiglia e di lavorare. Tutti e due sono vocazioni necessari ma tutti e due sono a tempo pieno. Lo scopo dal marito è di mostrare e a mettere a confronto con quanti lavori la donna deve fare senza aiuto. La donna moderna come la protagonista può trovare trovare un lavoro meglio del suo marito e può guadagnare più soldi. Purtroppo questi tempi una paga nella famiglia non basta. Però, sua responsabilità come mamma, fors'è culturale

Student 3 provides the longest entry in her journal on "L'altra famiglia". Although her text contains several inaccuracies especially in morphological terms, as is often the case for Italian Australian students with a southern dialect background (Rubino, 1987; Carroli, 1991), she always writes extensive entries in Italian in which she is able to express her thoughts in a coherent manner. Her text understanding omits a structural and stylistic analysis, focusing instead on linking the storyline to the deeper meaning behind it and also relating it to the women's movement in Italy and some of its thorniest dilemmas: is the responsibility mothers feel biological or cultural? Whether it is one or the other, this student writes, with an illustrative example showing that the father devolves all upbringing responsibility to his wife, a woman's work never ends. This is indeed the tragedy, as the student points out, behind the two husbands' storyline. By reading Maraini's text, the student has also become culturally aware of the fact that there were feminist writers in Italy at the end of the 1960s and there were also feminist groups working for women's liberation. Instead, student 1 and 2 read it only on the surface level and respectively 1) found it interesting only once she heard the classroom discussion and

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oppure biologica non diminuisce mai. Per esempio dal testo: Appena arrivata a Roma, compro un gettone, mi dirigo verso il telefono più vicino e chiamo casa. "Sei tu mamma?" "Sono arrivata adesso." "Sai che Pietro ha dato fuoco allo studio di papà?" "E lui che gli ha fatto?" "Niente. Aspetta che tu torni per punirlo. Ha detto che vuole che tu lo frusti con la cintura del tuo vestito." Questo racconto vuo dire che le donne moderne debbono rispondere alle attese della società che dice che la donna dev'essere sovrumana. La vita dopo la Liberazione della Donna allora non è più facile o emancipata per le donne, ma è più dura e c'è più pressione a compiere tutti e due ruoli di mamma e di lavoratrice. "L'altra famiglia" è una tragedia. La protagonista è sempre stanca e scontenta. Sta dire un commento della posizione della donna moderna

["Until now we have read "The other family" by Dacia Maraini. It was a great surprise to discover that this short story was written in 1968. I think that this author was a very advanced woman for her time. She foresaw the different problems that emancipated women could face. In fact, it was during this time that the Women's Liberation Movement happened, so it was really interesting to read literature about such an important political issue which is so common that it is still a problem that modern women have to fight against. I believe that this short story wanted to show different ideas. One idea that it wanted to discuss was that if a woman had two lives as the protagonist, she would not make it. Modern woman has too many responsibilities to divide her time and energy between two families; especially in two separate towns. I think however that the strongest comment that Maraini wishes to make with the two lives is that woman is torn between keeping to her family engagements and working. Both are necessary vocations but both are full time [occupations]. The aim of [behind] the husband['s character] is to show how many jobs the woman had to do without any help in contrast [with the husband]. Modern women, such as the protagonist, can find a better job than their husbands and earn more. Unfortunately, these days one salary is not enough in one family. Nevertheless her responsibility as a mother, whether it is cultural or biologic, it never ends. For example from the text: "As soon as I arrive in Rome, I buy a counter for the telephone, I head for the closest phone and call home. "Is it you mamma?" "I have just arrived." "Do you know that Pietro has set fire to daddy's study?" "And what did he do to him?" "Nothing. He is waiting for you to return so you can punish him. He said he wants you to whip him with the belt of your dress." The meaning of this story is that modern women must meet society's expectations which state that women must be superhuman. Life after Women's Liberation therefore is not more emancipated or easier for women, instead it is harder and there is more pressure to do fulfill both roles, that of mother and that of worker. "L'altra famiglia" is a tragedy. The protagonist is always tired and unhappy. This expresses a strong comment on the position of modern woman.]

2) because the storyline and general topic related to was happening to her self and other people around her. When prodded about what she thinks she has learnt from reading the short stories, student 3 is also able to do a general cross-cultural comparison:

> Interviewer: So, do you think you've learnt something more about Italian culture by reading these stories as well as language?
>
> Interviewee: It's shown that they're a Western country. Because they're so far away and I don't see the news and I don't know much about Italian everyday culture it's hard sometimes to imagine what people are like in Italy and stories like that sort of say, well they're the same, they've got the same ideas [...] the same perspectives [...] maybe a better way of describing it, like, an Asian culture is so much different to an Australian culture, they are so diverse [...] "L'altra famiglia" shows that it's pretty much the same ideas [...] I've been brought up in Italian culture from maybe twenty, thirty years ago, like it's nice and it's refreshing to see that they've [...] progressed [...] My family situation, they don't like, they don't know whether things have changed, whether they still have the same traditions, the same moral values because when my mum was a girl she married young, she didn't go to school, she didn't work [...] It's different in the North and South, for me that was interesting [...] I have cousins there's specific roles for girls even in Australia, they've brought their ideas with them and I'm not saying they're right or wrong [...] one person can't change a whole generation of thinkers. [...] I have cousins who weren't allowed to go to university because they were girls and in my family my mum, I'd never considered not going to university [...] my Calabrese parents have their rules, but you know for a Calabrese girl I think I'm very lucky [...] I've had to argue against my parents [...] I'm in a different culture than they are and it's difficult for them as well to relinquish their culture as well, so that's why it really interests me, like the position of women in Italy [...] it made me think of all those things [...] how women make their choices. I mean it's so easy for me to say [...] I'll stay home and I'll cook biscuits for my kids coming home from school but at the same time I think there's no way that I'm going to be dependent on a man. There's no way that I'll rely on somebody else, so I might have to work because that's reality.

If initially the intention of student 3 seems focused mainly on developing language competence, as the interview progressed, she reveals a much deeper approach and ability to critically link the text to her own cultural situation and use the text as a springboard for understanding the bind of many Italian Australians, young and old, as being in-between worlds, wanting to move forward, yet wishing to respect the parents' wishes or being caught in a time warp, old and young alike: "a lot of my friends that are Italian still have this vision in their mind that they'll marry a nice Italian girl and she'll stay at home and cook for him and have his children, that's the image they have, that there are Italian girls prepared to do that". Studying Italian literary texts, student 3 is able to do much more than

develop her communicative skills, in Hunfeld's words (1990, p. 15), for her language learning also meant "being able to compare one's own world of language with that of others, to broaden one's experience with language and language use" resulting in "border crossing, blockade, disturbance."[126] Studying L2 literature then affects this student's critical awareness of the variation between Italian culture in Italy and in Australia and her vision of life in general through reading an Italian proverb in the context of an Italian short story: "I love the fact that it opens your mind to different ideas. Like I would never have thought of life as a plate of mixed up things that somebody thinks is so fake. It's just interesting like, it makes me think".

What is particularly interesting, especially from a linguistic point of view, is how this Australian Italian student is able to use Italian very fluently in writing with a medium to high degree of linguistic accuracy for the Intermediate level, including appropriate use of the different tenses of the subjunctive mood – a structure which even students at "Honours level" still use inappropriately at times. In my experience of teaching at four universities in Australia, and also researching (Carroli, 1991), and as documented by other linguists (Rubino, 1987), it is not uncommon for children and students of Italian with an Italian background and family dialect language background, to produce trilingual texts, influenced by the dialect morphology and syntax. I can only hypothesize that this particular student may have been able to use all three languages distinctly, without a high degree of inter-language production because of her educational background in English literature and Italian but also due to her strong interest in reading, her will to learn holistically from reading and her use of different strategies and techniques which included voluntary reading of extensive literary texts, and finally her positive attitude towards reading in general and towards L2 literature reading, perceived as a challenge as well as a pleasure. Of course, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to make any further comment on this issue and it is also not possible to draw any conclusions from one student. I hope however that research into the inter languages of Italian Australian students of Italian will broaden to include analysis of personal variables, such as voluntary reading and L1 literary background, and the impact they have on learning.

[126] Translated and quoted in Kramsch (1993, p. 183).

5.3.4 Experience of literature holistically to maximise learning: Student 4

Student 4 below is a mature age, retired male.[127] It is fairly typical to have in Italian courses at ANU a few very dedicated students who, after retiring, decide to undertake language studies. Not atypically, student 4, did not have a strong literary background in his native English, but had taken an interest in reading literature once he undertook to study languages ("I came to literature very late in life [...] for the past fifteen years I've tried to read novels in foreign languages") with a firm underlying intention to learn more culture and life in general by immersing himself in well written texts with the expectation that they would challenge him and extend his thinking. He prefers well written novels, especially from the 1800s or mid 1900s, which he reads on his own in his unique approach described below:

Table 5.8-Experience of literature as an all inclusive context to maximise learning: Student 4

Perception →→L1 literature as cultural and "taboo" issues
L2 literature as a resource to be used later

↓↓↓↓

Intention →→L2 language learning and exploration of society, culture, taboo issues, history, politics

↓↓↓↓

Approach→→Deep: constantly relating story-form-meaning;
Independent voluntary extra reading across 3 languages as strategy to maximise learning

↓↓↓↓

Learning outcome →→ extension of thinking and knowledge →

→ Deep, critical text interpretation →

→ Very advanced language competence and cultural awareness

[127] In my experience, mature-age students, especially women, have usually had a traditional education, unlike most young students. As a consequence mature-aged students also have a good knowledge of grammar rules in their native language, as well as a stronger knowledge of literary conventions. Men seem to have had non humanistic educational and occupational backgrounds such as engineering and law.

> I liked *Il gattopardo* for a number of reasons, history, and society, very wise book [...] in English, French and Italian. I read about one or two pages in English and French, and the same in Italian, so by the time I got to the Italian I knew what was happening and I could concentrate on how the sentences were worked out [...] it has to be an interesting book for the method to work [...] it's also a way of just keeping French [...] The other book I've been reading, *La pelle* by Curzio Malaparte [...] is about the occupation of Italy by the Allied forces, it's a nasty story [...] quite wise and witty, a much grimmer story than *Il gattopardo*, but with some nice language, things like the hypothetical subjunctive [periodo ipotetico].

Student 4's experience of reading literature can be described as a strategic accumulation of factors, seen in relation to each other, and building on each other. There is an appreciation for period literature, such as Tomasi di Lampedusa's *Il gattopardo*, as well as more contemporary narrative representing more realistically, cynically and graphically the effects of historical events such as World War II, as in *La pelle.* Grammatical constructions are perceived as part of the aesthetics of the text and are therefore appreciated as "nice language" besides being also a way to reinforce structures learnt in class. Literature therefore is approached as imbuing different values, aesthetic and efferent, sociological and pleasurable. As highlighted by Rosenblatt (1995), "the aesthetic and the social aspects of art can have more than one value: it can yield the kind of fulfilment that we call *aesthetic* – it can be enjoyed in itself – and at the same time have a social origin and social effects (p. 23). Reading in this case is perceived as a "transaction", "a process in which the elements are aspects or phrases of a total situation" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 27):

> My idea with vocabulary is that I don't try to learn specific things; I just hope that after some years of reading like this the vocab will just build up. I'll look up everything in a novel like *The Leopard* but if there's a word that I'll never see again, maybe like a silver soup terrine [...] I probably just you know... [Skip it]. I tend not to memorise things.

The text is seen holistically and, unlike for students 1 and 2, the expectation is that it will take some years for the vocabulary to expand, and not to rush to the dictionary for every single word, especially if they are not terms used in contemporary language. There is awareness that language learning is cumulative and takes time. As a consequence, reading in this case is "a constructive, selective process over time in a particular context" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 27), over which the student likes to have control. For this reason perhaps, it is not unusual for experienced and dedicated readers to become annoyed at,

rather than appreciate, the glosses, activities and cultural notes that usually frame literary pieces in L2 text books (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994):

> I prefer just to read the stories and not have the sociological interpretation by people writing fifty years after the event and putting their own modern twists on [...] commentaries need to be by people who are very wise and capable of seeing the story in its historical setting [...]. I find American text books in particular always want to give some little homely, they want to be moralizing [...] if it's a good short story we should be able to come to it ourselves [...]. I'm not learning Italian to have some American text book writer tell me how to think [...] they should probably restrict themselves a bit more to neutral exposition of language difficulties.

The student's sharp criticism is directed at the arrangement of literature in American textbooks,[128] especially the brief introductory notes in which the authors try to provide the general cultural background to the text and information about the author. Because of his general knowledge and experience of fifteen years of reading literature as well as his deep approach to reading L2 literature, those brief introductions annoy him instead of facilitating his L2 reading. Ideally, as discussed in chapter 2, even when reading literature in a non native language, the first reading would be unencumbered by notes and exercises to encourage students to perceive the experience as aesthetic and feel that they are indeed reading a piece of literature. In chapter 4 I have described how many students perceived Calvino's short story as not being literature because it was taken from a textbook. Context is strongly affected perceptions of and approaches to literature in most students involved in the thesis' research. Texts within textbooks were perceived, approached and remembered almost invariably as language learning input rather than "literature". Student 4 for example perceives the whole experience as inauthentic because of the way the text was framed, which he perceives as trying to prevent him from having his own views on the text. He also prefers looking up words in the dictionary rather than using the glossary provided in the textbook:

> I look up the words if I don't know them [...] even if we're told to read it quickly [...] if there's an idiomatic expression for example, it's critical and you just miss the point [...] I like to know what's going on [...] I read quickly, straight afterwards [...] I like to eliminate the problems, and then the second reading is more for pleasure.

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[128] In both years he studied Italian at ANU we used, *Oggi in Italia* (Celli Merlonghi et al, 1998) and *Crescendo* (Italiano & Marchegiani Jones, 1995) and *Incontri attuali* (Italiano & Marchegiani Jones, 1992).

Like some L2 educators, he thinks that literature should be introduced at the advanced levels of language learning so that students can read it *per se*, without it being linked to language and vocabulary exercises:

> I myself would prefer just to have a course [...] on grammar [...] use literature where necessary as a teaching aid, and later on get to the literature [...] I regards the novels more as pleasure because it's not associated with exercises [...] I think it's a bit artificial to tie the exercises to the literature but I can see why it's done, it makes it a bit more interesting [...] I don't think that the prospect of exercise takes the enjoyment out of reading the stories [...] it's just that in the same book I have exercises, so I tend to see those as library books, working books.

There is still a lot of disagreement amongst L2 educators on the "right" timing for introducing literature. These disagreements often depend on the educators' expectations, for example if the educator expects a perfectly accurate L2 summary or commentary of the L2 literary texts and / or an advance literary analysis then s/he will insist that literature be introduced only at the advanced and higher levels. As discussed in chapter 2, I agree with educators who affirm that the crucial aspect is to choose the right literary text for the right language level, keeping in mind that classes are heterogeneous and there are always personal variables involved. For example, student 4, perhaps linked to his age and experience, quickly captures the meaning behind the extreme storyline of "L'altra famiglia":

> In both cases the storyline was actually quite fanciful, far-fetched. So, the storyline perhaps wasn't as important as the social commentary [...]. I was quite interested that a couple of young girls, it wasn't just an old man's comment, said well why would she expect to be anything but tired, if she's running two husbands, it's her fault [...] I don't think it was a well chosen story to illustrate the problems of a woman in marriage [...] that's what the commentator seems to think it was about [...] it was probably a bit more than that [...] there was a bit more humor in the story than the commentary picked up.

This student also identifies the underlying theme of Moravia's "Regina d'Egitto":

> To me neither story appealed greatly [...] they raised some issues, I think that's probably all you can hope for in a short story [...] I certainly don't agree with the authors or commentators, I think Moravia is a bit of a hypocrite actually, he says that he doesn't want to preach, he wants to just show society as it is, but the very fact of showing this woman going off and prostituting her self for the revolution seems that he's in favour of the revolution over the

> bourgeois culture, and he's actually very much into propaganda [...]. The stories are challenging, the very fact that they make me think and talk.

The student is able to understand the texts as literary texts, and go behind the storyline to find the meaning intrinsic in the texts, a meaning conveyed by the author's particular style, the choice of lexicon and structures, in the case of Maraini's story, the juxtaposition of words and culturally loaded terms such as North and South. The effect is a black and white contrast to highlight the striking absurdity of values that support such institutions as the family and perpetuate women's fatigue, no matter what they do, in this case turn the world upside down. As explained below, Maraini's use of opposites was not entirely appreciated by student 4, who is nevertheless able to provide a critique of it in Italian:

> Ho trovato questo racconto un po' pesante. Certamente Maraini solleva delle questioni importanti: il matrimonio, la parte dei sessi, l'educazione dei bambini e l'ipocrisia nella famiglia. Provocare una riflessione su queste cose sarebbe sempre utile ma il uso di stereotipi mi ha turbato un po'. Ad esempio, il bambino espansivo, energico, cattivo, felice e amabile è contrapposto al bambino serio, studioso, noioso, triste e ipocrita.[129]

Student 4 always wrote his journal entries entirely in Italian. His Italian is very accurate except for a few minor errors; his use of vocabulary and ability to structure sentences is much more advanced than all three examples already discussed, yet, like students 1 and 2 he had started studying Italian at ANU as a beginner. Unlike 1 and 2, he spent several hours a week on his Italian studies assignments and also voluntarily reading extra literary texts. Although he has no strong literary academic background and has read French literature mainly out of personal interest, with his deep approach to literature he is also able to make an important contribution to classroom dialogue and help other students understand the relation between words, storyline and meaning that cross-cultural borders. Leaving the village for the female protagonist was a way out. As he explained, Sciascia's story "L'esame" set in Sicily, reminded him of small country towns in Australia which can be suffocating if you do not conform, play football or go to the pub. Once this point of view had been expressed, students could understand the story better because they could

[129] [I found this tale a bit heavy. Certainly Maraini raises some important issues: marriage, the role of the two sexes, children's education and the hypocrisy within the family. To provoke a reflection on these things is always useful but the use of stereotypes worried me a bit. For example, the exuberant, energetic, naughty, happy and lovable child is juxtaposed with the serious, studious, boring, sad and hypocritical child].

relate it to their culture and see how certain aspects and feelings can be similar, and then be able to be critical of both cultures.[130]

In summary, the variation between his approach and the approaches of students 1, 2 and 3 to the study of L2 literature is that he looks at the text as a whole when reading, and also at the parts, but always within the textual context, with the intention of understanding the meaning as well as language through which that meaning is conveyed, and also of making comparisons between different cultures. What differentiates the experiences of student 3 and 4 is a stronger critical ability to interpret literature and a more structured study plan with the intention of expanding his thinking and knowledge. This is certainly due partly to his more extensive life experience and his dedication to Italian studies. However, what played a major role in his high learning outcomes was his deep approach to reading L2 literature with the intention of learning (Säljö, 1997; Marton & Säljö, 1976) holistically, about the particular text, and generally about the language and culture whilst enjoying the whole reading experience.

5.4 Discussion of results

Analysis of data revealed that there was a relationship between complex perceptions, deep approaches and broader and richer learning outcomes. Conversely, less complex perceptions and approaches focused only on parts of literature were linked to limited learning outcomes. Learning outcomes encapsulate students' academic achievement (text understanding as expressed in their journal entries in Italian) and personal development and enjoyment of the phenomenon studied. Although these findings may seem self evident to some researchers and educators, the point is that only a third of the student sample in study 1 approached the texts as related parts (e.g., language + culture + affect + themes + style + narrative techniques), whilst the majority concentrated on parts of it. Addressing this "deficit" is the role of the educator and also my role as a researcher seeking to enhance the role of L2 literature for all students.

Despite these results, I still believe that appropriate literary texts can be included, to the benefit of students, at all language levels. Literary texts, as also highlighted by some students in the interviews, usually do not force issues onto the reader (like newspapers for

[130] Recorded in my notebook after class discussion of Sciascia's short story "L'esame" (Italiano & Marchegiani Jones, 1992).

example). They are representational and capture cultural aspects in a more subtle manner than referential texts by particular uses of the language (style), choice of storyline and structure (narrative form) to convey a particular meaning (discourse). Issues should be less confrontational for students than in referential texts, as they are approached by reading and understanding the meaning of the literary text.[131] The level of written accuracy is certainly not an indication of whether the study of L2 literature should be introduced in the language curriculum. If a continuing or intermediate level student is able to critically evaluate a literary text in a non native language, even though s/he makes mistakes or perhaps does not process all the literary nuances that is still a measure of success (see chapter 6). If L2 educators withhold literature for these reasons, then, in my opinion, they are also preventing students from experiencing important aspects of the L2 language and culture.

Learning outcomes indicated that students who focus almost exclusively on storyline, topics and cultural issues often failed to notice, process and appropriately reproduce language structures and vocabulary as in students' 2 experience. Conversely, students with a strong focus on specific isolated language items, such as single words rather than looking at the whole text, became very frustrated if they could not understand single words or unknown structures (as shown in students' 1 experience). Whether the formal aspects of literature were the only focus of attention or were overlooked, the outcome was unsatisfactory. This highlights the need for language arts educators to implement pedagogical practices aimed at developing a stronger awareness of the relational nature of form, style and cultural meaning in literature (as in the experiences of students 3 and 4). In short, the data analyzed point not so much at students' reading strategies and techniques, or how they ordered their reading, but more to their whole approach to the study of literature and their perceptions of literature and learning as significant factors in ensuing learning outcomes. This confirms studies by Marton & Säljö (1984) which also found an association between students' perceptions of learning and their learning outcomes. What is crucial in the findings from study 1 is that students' perception of literary texts seems to affect their approach to the study of literature and their learning outcomes.

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[131] As has been shown, they can actually help students develop language learning and cultural awareness more than the textbook's cultural notes (Maxim, 1997) and can help develop oppositional practices that may lead to social change (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994).

The most satisfactory outcomes, understood as development in reading process (as evident in their learning journals), complex interpretations of texts, language learning and grades, emerged from students with an integrated and relational perception of literature as language and culture. This approach was related to reflection and expansion through acquisition of better knowledge of the language and culture, and also to personal change in perspective. This deep approach also revealed awareness of reading processes and a holistic view of studying literature with a strong intention to learn. This also included reading the texts in special places. For example, reading in Italian cafes while drinking an espresso to become immersed into an "Italian space", albeit in Australia, was conducive to reading in Italian. Having a special place and drinking coffee also increased enjoyment of the short story, since reading L2 literature became associated with a special time out from family chores and other tasks such as grammar exercises, also perceived as chores. This personalized approach to the study of L2 literary texts is all encompassing: relaxing and enjoyable, yet epistemic and aesthetic.[132]

Conversely, the least satisfactory outcomes understood as limited development in reading processes, less complex interpretations of texts, language learning and grades, emerged from atomistic and surface approaches. In their reading approach and classroom discussion these students focused almost exclusively on storyline and resorted to English to express their ideas, particularly on themes raised in the text that affected them personally. In their written work they seemed to pay less attention to language structures and vocabulary when reading the text and in writing their assignments. Once it was understood "what the text was about" through peer discussion, the strong focus on issues raised in the text, seen separately from the language in which they were expressed, became somehow detached from the Italian literary text. In a sense, this is part of understanding the universality of literature: family, love and women's condition are certainly universal themes of literature. In a second language environment, however, the stakes are higher than discussion of universal themes. Language has to be noticed to be understood and to be used in students' own texts. As Vygostsky (1986) asserted in *Thought and Language*:

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[132] "I usually read English novels in bed at night, before I go to sleep [...] I'm trying to read Italian in nice environments, like restaurants or coffee shops [...] I'll take a couple of quiet hours, or [...] a little bit of time just to be able to sit and enjoy a cup of coffee in the sun and relax over reading it, and sort of read it as a pleasure thing and then, [...] another time worry about doing all the written exercises."

> The sense of a word [...] is the sum of all the psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word. It is a dynamic, fluid, complex whole, which has several zones of unequal stability. Meaning is only one of the zones of sense, the most stable and precise zone. A word acquires its sense from the context in which it appears; in different contexts, it changes its sense (p. 244-245).

Words, and their all encompassing meaning, can be grasped across languages and cultures if students notice the uniqueness of the author's style and the linguistic and narrative choices imbued with the cultural values of a particular community, on which in turn the authors leave their mark by writing literature. This is my perception of an optimal L2 literature learning experience.

Like Perfetti (1983),[133] I also found that a number of students skim read the texts, without focusing enough on the language. As some of them explained, they had been told by their teachers that reading quickly to understand the gist of the story was the best way of approaching L2 texts. Some students and educators seem to have absorbed too much the lesson often promulgated in L2 reading pedagogy throughout the 1980s and 1990s of reading for meaning to extract the gist of the story, instead of focusing on individual parts of the language. If concentrating on vocabulary (bottom-up strategy) can be time consuming and frustrating for students, a strong concentration on top-down strategies can often result in minimal interaction with the text. Carrell (1988) stressed that effective reading was the result of the interaction of top-down and bottom-up skills and that both sets of skills were necessary for effective reading. The focus on gist rather than on language and narrative form, especially noticeable in my sample in younger students, could also be linked to L2 textbooks' pre-reading instructions (activating schemata with drawings, pictures, oral activities), strategies that focus on storyline and gist in the first instance, and only secondly, if at all, on form in context, rather than the usual exercises aimed at revising specific forms (e.g., the future tense).

Students had mixed reactions to pre-reading and post-reading activities to literary texts. For example, before reading Maraini's *L'altra famiglia* the anthology suggests a series of activities aimed at awakening their background knowledge as well as foregrounding the themes of the story. Although most students appreciated this framing of the literary

[133] Quoted in Zarker Morgan (1994, p. 507)

texts, advanced students found them annoying, since often they also presented a particular perception of the culture studied as well as the problems faced by characters in the literary text, preferring to experience firstly the text on its own, by themselves. Pre-reading activities and glossaries can remove the opportunity for students to discover the text, to respond to it, first and foremost focusing on how they react to it. Glossaries, pictures, grammar exercises may assist less advanced students in "decoding" the text, but, as the preliminary investigation (1998) showed (see chapter 4), it can also prevent them from identifying the texts as 'literature' because of the blatant didactic frame, and as happened in 1999 with advanced readers, from experiencing the texts as enjoyable literature.

Authenticity is thus not found only in the text itself, but in the transaction between language and reader/hearer (Widdowson, 1979). If a literary text is presented in a text-book in an 'inauthentic' way, then students will focus more strongly on the exercises than on the text. My pedagogic responsibility as L2 language art educator then is to focus on the semantic and cultural meaning of authenticity, but also on the different ways in which individual students perceive authentic texts and authentic experiences of reading literature. If expert readers have a desire to be actively engaged in discovering meaning and are aware of this process, other students become frustrated by the multi-layered nature of literary texts and also give up. Insecure students are less worried about experiencing literary texts as authentic literature, and in a sense they cannot do so, because they perceive them as words that they have to struggle to learn, so, as emerged from the data, every bit of information and exercise found in the textbook is welcome.

Particularly interesting was the role assigned by students to discussion of the text, in and outside class, and negotiation of its meaning through comparison of similar or different interpretations. From students' comments in their learning journals and in class, it became evident that oral exchanges, especially, seemed to help students to fully experience the text by getting at its deeper levels. In this sense, students' replies support the phenomenographic idea of experienced variation and expanding awareness leading to learning by focusing on how a particular phenomenon is experienced differently by different people in different contexts. In addition, hermeneutic principles and reader

response theory assert that:[134] "the construction of meaning needs in fact to be negotiated and shared within interpretative communities, discourse communities". In this case, the L2 literature class in which "argumentative thought" becomes "the new teaching and learning paradigm."[135]

Findings from study 1 have shown that the range, in which individuals experience a particular phenomenon in a particular context, at a particular moment, is not infinite (Marton & Booth, 1997). The results also have revealed how particular perceptions of literature and attitudes towards L2 literature affected students' learning outcomes and that there was a considerable gap in the learning outcomes of students. In-classroom discussion and teacher's intervention were not sufficient to bridge this gap. Neither were out-of-class students' interchanges, conducted mainly in English, which may have advanced their understanding of the storyline and interpretation of the text as well as increasing their enthusiasm for reading more Italian literature, but not their language levels or indeed their capacity to think and express themselves critically in Italian. In a sense, the intercultural dimension was lost with topic-driven students since once the storyline was comprehended they passionately discussed it in English with their peers without referring to the Italian text. As a result, this experience of L2 literature, or experiencing literature as unrelated words or structures, did lead to satisfactory language and literary learning outcomes, as students were unable to relate the macro level, the text as a carrier of cultural meaning to its words (the micro level).

The analysis in particular of students 1–4 provides an absorbing insight into individual differences in which students perceive and approach literature and how qualitative variation is linked with different learning outcomes. The spectrum of collective students' variation in turn constitutes the main challenge in meeting the thesis' central aim: enhancing the role of literature for all students, addressed in study 2 (2000). Having found that particular combinations of perceptions, approaches and intentions led to deeper ways of studying L2 literary texts and produced more advanced learning

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[134] "La costruzione dei significati va infatti negoziata e condivisa all'interno di 'comunità di interpreti', 'comunità di discorso' nelle quali il *pensiero argomentativo* diventa il nuovo paradigma didattico" (Calvani, 1996, p. 13). Calvani combines Fish's (1980) idea of interpretative communities, already discussed by Resnik, Levine and Teasley (1991), with the idea of discourse communities (Pontecorvo et al, 1991; Santi, 1995), in order to explain the classroom context necessary for the didactic paradigm: argumentative thought."

[135] My translation.

outcomes in language and culture learning as well as text interpretations, the challenge was to minimize this gap amongst students' learning outcomes by maximizing successful students' input in classroom discourse so that more advanced L2 literature experiences could be shared and hopefully lead to improved learning outcomes for all students. Such a pedagogical approach is possible in hermeneutic teaching approaches, allowing for discussion of different interpretations of the text; this was extended to reflection and discussion of different reading and learning approaches.

5.5 Conclusions

The investigation into students' reading approaches illustrated the processes and choices made by students when studying L2 literary texts, and the reasoning behind those choices. Analysis of data has shown that perceptions and attitudes towards subject matter seemed to affect approaches and learning outcomes. Negative perceptions of L2 literature were usually motivated by fear of reading texts that would be too long and too difficult at the language as well as cultural level. Another major concern of students was that literary texts were too boring. All these issues were linked to very uneven learning outcomes. Students who achieved rewarding outcomes used a range of strategies, some very traditional, some very innovative, or innovate within traditional techniques. Most importantly, improvement both at the language as well as at the literary levels was linked to a firm intention of learning language and culture, a strong awareness of language structures and vocabulary which never loses sight of the inherent as well as the contextual meaning of the words and forms and a deep approach to the text.

Analyses of data gathered in 1998 and 1999 showed that students generally favoured the inclusion of literature in the L2 language curriculum, although there were concerns about language difficulties and types of texts. For these reasons students appreciated text, topic and activities negotiation. Study 1, as the preliminary investigation, revealed that many students had what may be considered "outdated" views of reading literature in general, its epistemic and pedagogical role, and its ability to please the reader with its style and structure, often dependent on the ability of texts to entertain the reader. Students showed an appreciation of stylistic features mainly in their descriptions of literature in general (see chapter 4). Style is a crucial issue in L2 literature education because it is an important marker of the author's culture, and the culture the writer

wishes to represent through the language of the text. As such, it should be included in pedagogical practices aimed at enhancing students' awareness of and appreciation of style in L2 literature. A focus on style implies a focus on form which can help develop an awareness of the often invisible culture contained in language, and should also promote language learning by 'noticing' vocabulary and form. This emphasis can be used in L2 pedagogy to stress the importance of "words in context" as well as "world in a text". The over emphasis in postmodern times on textual discourse, rather than formal aspects of literature, has obscured the uniqueness of literature: the author's style, foregrounding and estrangement (Miall & Kuiken, 1998).

The epistemic role of L2 literary texts as well as their aesthetic features, should also be encouraged so that all students may come to value, perhaps expand, their perceptions of the role of L2 literature from an arduous and frustrating search for words to a holistic experience that values them, to form their language competence as well as their cultural, historical knowledge of the society. The overall text dependency shown in students' perceptions of literature in general, seems to emphasize that the author is definitely not dead (Barthes, 1977), as many students still see textual meaning as residing in the text, and not in the reader (Fish, 1980). This perception of L1 literature, as reading for entertainment, to a certain extent, carries through when reading L2 literature with two different outcomes, either a less stressful, yet strategic, attitude towards L2 reading or an anxious outlook, so that if the literary texts are not funny and easy to read, the student gives up reading it, perceiving the experience as meaningless and useless. L2 students might become less worried about reading L2 literature and actually engage and read it as literature, if pedagogical practices address these aspects of students' experiences of literature.

A number of important questions remain. In particular, whether it is possible for students who experience the study of L2 literature as separate parts, to learn to approach it more holistically and improve their learning outcomes. As a researcher and language arts educator, this is what I aim for in enhancing the role of L2 literature in language learning. As a consequence, another study was undertaken in 2000 (study 2, chapter 6) to attempt to bring about change in students' approaches to the study of literature and their level of understanding of literary texts.

CHAPTER 6

STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF LITERARY TEXTS - TOWARDS AWARENESS AND CHANGE:

Analysis of Data and Findings of Study 2 (2000)

"Teaching literature is impossible; that is why it is difficult. Yet it must be tried, tried constantly and indefatigably, and placed at the centre of the whole educational process, for at every level the understanding of words is as urgent and crucial a necessity as it is on its lowest level of learning to read and write." (Northrop Frye, 1970, p. 84, quoted in Miall, 1996)

"Ogni parola sembra un viaggio della scoperta." (Student's response to Benni's tales) [Every word seems like a voyage of discovery]

"My change in approaching the texts was triggered by the different readings. [...] My appreciation of the text would have been different if I had only read it once after the teacher's presentation. I needed time to read and re-read the story as with each reading I gained more insight into the text."

"I used to believe that stories were purely for entertainment purposes and that's it. However, upon completing the exercise [1] I was quite proud of my achievements of depicting themes and messages and scrutinizing over every last detail of the story. This turned out to be a valuable exercise because I got more out of just translating a story, I learnt to recognize themes and issues, something I had never done before."

(Students' reflections on pedagogical process, ANU: 2000)

Aim
To elicit complex levels of understanding of L2 literature by encouraging deep approaches to reading and responding to L2 literary texts with a pedagogy based on cycles of repeated reading, writing and collective reflection on response variation.

Process
Analysis and discussion of qualitative data, constituted by: 1) students' written responses to three literary texts; 2) students' own evaluations of change in their learning processes; 3) researcher/educator (Carroli) and colleague's evaluations of change.

This chapter proposes the class as a micro hermeneutic community where students compare their interpretations and reading approaches, learn to negotiate and, if necessary, readjust their understanding of the literary text and their approach to reading. Students thus become aware that reading is an active dialogic process and that each reader experiences a different "transaction" (Rosenblatt, 1995) with the literary text, the literary text itself being a microcosm of dialectic transactions between narrator / protagonist / character/s, with the 'implied' author as the puppeteer. The chapter reports the findings of study 2 conducted in 2000 with 16 students in their third semester of Italian, enrolled in Italian Studies — Continuing 2. Study 2 was the last stage of the doctoral research programme into students' experiences of literary texts, undertaken with the aim of enhancing the role of L2 literature for all students.

6. Is it possible to teach L2 literature?

If "teaching [L1] literature is impossible",[136] teaching literature in a non native language should be even more impossible. Frye (1970) meant that literature could not be taught since literary response is an individual experience, but what could instead be taught was criticism of literature. I endorse the idea that literature cannot be taught, in fact, should not be "taught". However, I do not mean that it should be excluded from the L2 curriculum but that it should be integrated into the curriculum in such a way that students actually experience it as "literature" and that they have ample opportunity to form and develop their abilities. Even in an L2, despite all the language and cultural difficulties, readers therefore should be allowed to focus on their individual affective experience of the text and explore it creatively, for example by envisaging different

[136] Miall (1996) quotes Frye (1975) in his chapter "Empowering the reader: Literary Response and Classroom Learning" (pp. 463-478).

possible outcomes. Furthermore, in a second language context, to promote awareness of literary and language processes and also negotiate between languages and native and L2 culture,[137] students should be coaxed into discovering the dialogic process between language form and meaning in literary texts. Another salient issue in both L1 and L2 is the negotiation of the possible meanings of the literary text.

Findings from the investigations into students' perceptions and approaches indicated that overall students did not experience reading as a transaction (see chapters 4 and 5). I therefore decided to implement a pedagogical approach aimed at empowering all students to own the literary text, enjoy the literary experience[138] and also learn a lot more than vocabulary, language structures, or storylines. The research design and the pedagogy - centred on learners - strove for a new L2 literacy, bridging the gulf between language, culture and literature, integrating critical reflection on language, literature and culture and also cross-cultural reflection.[139] The L2 literature pedagogy was intended to lead to: 1) noticing how cultural and universal meaning is inscribed in the author's stylistic and narrative choices by repeatedly reading three literary texts by the same author, first individually and then collectively; 2) eliciting awareness of one's own learning approach by individual and collective reflection on reading processes; 3) gaining a more complex understanding of texts through the process of collective reflection on response variation. Evidence of change was drawn from students' written responses to texts, their perceptions of change towards literature, my perceptions of change as researcher and educator, and evaluations of change provided by my colleague who had been the students' educator for the language and culture section of the course since the beginning of semester 1, 2000.

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[137] Sometimes this negotiation involves a third language and culture as it is not unusual in Australia to have students from a non English-speaking background.

[138] L2 literary texts are often used as "tools" for teaching grammar items or vocabulary in the communicative language teaching approach, whilst in the cultural studies paradigm they become pre/texts for discussing social issues, in English. Referring to the USA and Germany, Kramsch and Nolden (1994) state: "Literary texts are hardly ever approached as stylistic processes of negotiated meaning between a foreign cultural text and its reader; they are still presented primarily as paradigms of grammatical use, as exercises in information retrieval, or as (pre)texts for oral communication [...] teaching practice still does not give foreign readers the cognitive and linguistic ability to authenticate the text they read" (p. 29).

[139] Kramsch and Nolden (1994) call for a "new type of literacy, centred more on the learner, based more on cross-cultural awareness and critical reflection" (p. 28).

6.1 Pre-process (week 4): Survey of Continuing Italian students' language background, reasons for studying Italian and attitudes towards the study of literature: summary of findings

Most students indicated in the questionnaire that they had enrolled in Italian mainly because of: 1) a general interest in the language and culture; 2) for family reasons; 3) with the intention to travel to Italy. The majority of students indicated that they read literature in their L1, and a few also in other languages, conversely, a few students never or rarely read literature. All agreed (to various degrees: from "strongly agree" to "slightly agree") that literary texts should be included in the L2 curriculum and that these texts enhanced their appreciation of the culture as well as their language skills. The students' answers to the questions about the level at which literature should be introduced varied from "all levels" to "only higher levels". Most students agreed that it should be included at all levels. Novels and short stories were the preferred types of texts. The main concerns that emerged from students' responses to open questions about the role of L2 literature in language learning focused especially on linguistic difficulties and length of L2 texts, background, context and level of engagement with the text. Engagement with the text was associated with "well written", "interesting", and enjoyable literature. As in the previous study, conducted in 1999, students' replies revealed a reliance on the ability of the author to keep them absorbed. As a consequence, instruction focused also on developing more active reading strategies. This data were helpful in the selection of the texts and preparation of the instructions for the tasks since it provided a map of students' background variables, their perceptions of literature in general and also L2 literature.

6.2 Reading, writing, reflection cycles process: analysis and discussion of findings

The main data used for describing students' levels of understanding of the text and their approach to the text are constituted by students' individual written responses before class reflection on variation while the data used for monitoring change is constituted by students' written responses after classroom reflection and discussion. Changes in students' understanding of the text are based on the outcomes of their written responses after each cycle of repeated readings / reflection / writings. Results about changes in students' approach to reading literature and how these were linked to perspective and qualitative variation, are based on data collected during the last classroom assignment

on the three tales. A preliminary analysis of the data was undertaken at each stage of the study so that the instructions for the following cycle could be modified if necessary (for example to encourage students to search for connections that they had not noticed in the texts). Firstly the aim was to establish qualitative differences in the way students made inferences about the outcome of the story and linked them to their personal variables and their approach to reading. Then these differences and similarities in students' responses were used by selecting and pasting students' answers and asking them to read them in class and underline how the answers were similar or different. Students thus participated in a hermeneutic process of reflecting on others' perspectives and approaches and also of negotiating their own views with different text interpretations.

6.2.1 Cycle 1 (weeks 8-10): Repeated readings of the beginning of "La casa bella" and inferring the story's ending — Differences in inferring 1 and 2

The first cycle of class reflection, discussion and re-writing was conducted within three heterogeneous groups (age and experience with reading literature). At first students seemed to focus much more strongly on the similarity in their responses, especially in terms of themes, rather than on different predictions of the story ending. Initially, attempts to steer them towards a more comparative approach with instructions leading them to notice differences and similarities as well as justification for their hypothesis partly failed. However, when they were asked to provide specific examples of how students had substantiated their predictions, a more detailed account of students' responses emerged. The three groups avoided the only reply that contained a very different hypotheses (the banquet, see A1 below) [140] even though it had been placed at the top of the list of responses. One student alone commented that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, a good comment because behind the exaggerated beauty of the beginning of the story there is the irony about naïve narrators remembering how good the good old days were. As I had foreseen, for the first "hermeneutic" class session,

[140] In phenomenographic research it is usually not common practice to include examples from all individual responses but to quote instead examples representative of the collective variation within the group investigated. However, since my study attempts to capture variation in terms of change during the course of the cycles, to identify the change occurred at the individual level, I have assigned each student with a label which I will continue to use throughout the chapter. The students who were not quoted for the first cycle from category A include A3.1 who gave a similar, but simpler, response to A3: "Penso che questo racconto di Benni sia molto strano [...] Penso qualcosa male accadere perché questa storia sarebbe molto noiosa senza alcuno azione!" [I think that this tale by Benni is very strange [...] I think that something bad will happen because this story would be very boring without any action], and A3.2 who did not hand in her first assignment.

students, unused to this approach, felt threatened and were therefore cautious and appeared to be standing firmly by their first response. This was a predictable outcome since the students had not been given any context to the story and were not used to this kind of approach to the study of literature or had never studied literature.

Most students produced appropriate inferences about the ending of the text. The task consisted of inferring the text's ending after repeated readings of the first two paragraphs of the story. Some students backed up their claims by linking their literary competence to clues in the text for their hypotheses. Only a few students did not satisfactorily explain how they had formulated their predictions and only one student did not 'capture' the 'dark' side of the text from the two metaphors ("spacca i sogni", "i coltelli degli assassini") and the hyperbole rendered through the excessive use of superlative adjectives and adverbs (A1; A2 below). Although "La casa bella" is a brief short story, the narrative point of view shifts significantly even within the first two paragraphs, from a naive child perspective to a disillusioned young man to a cynical adult point of view. These different outlooks are interwoven in the description of life in the countryside with the added ironic tone of the adult narrator. Readers familiar with narrative form recognized the basic, fable-like, universal storyline: a child growing up in a heavenly countryside where all is wonderful but cannot last (B1 below). A more attentive reading, within the text, linking narrative and linguistic form to meaning (B5 below), combined with reader background experience, was necessary to detect the clues that the author has inserted in the text to warn the reader that only a child can perceive the world that way and the ironic voice of the adult narrator behind the exaggerated perfection of the child-like descriptions of the beautiful home and valley which is no more.

Analysis of students' responses, before and after the cycle of comparison of variation, shows the differences in ways of inferring and how these are depend on students' perception, attitude and approach to reading the text and openness to shifting their own perspectives and approaches. I found two main qualitatively different ways in which students inferred the story outcome. I categorized students' responses especially on the basis of the processes and approaches used by students to formulate their predictions and envisage the story outcome in their first responses:

A. Inferring (Literal/Affective) ---------- B. Inferring (Affective/Literary)

Category A contained outcomes influenced by literal, affective and personalized readings and category B is characterised by predictions based on knowledge of literary conventions and narrative form. The categories are linked by dotted lines because students' ways of predicting seem to move along a continuum axis, from literal and affective to literary, towards a more complex interpretation. At the same time, students' texts, although predominantly driven by a literal, affective or literary reading, contain elements from all three categories in different combinations. Category B includes category A, since to achieve a complex understanding of a literary text, it requires the reader to go beyond its literal level and become emotionally involved with the text, besides having the ability to see its other levels of meaning (e.g., metaphorical). In their transaction with literary texts, readers ideally would shift back and forward from efferent to aesthetic readings to understand its meaning. Efferent reading alone is insufficient to understand literature, because it requires the reader to become engaged with the text at an emotional level and link it with her or his background (Rosenblatt, 1995).

My instructions, as explained in chapter 3, were aimed at encouraging students to read attentively and search for connections between formal textual choices and discourse features in the text. Similarly to Halász (1983), my students were encouraged "to adopt an 'aesthetic or literary' attitude" (p. 243) when reading the texts and processing the tasks. In this regard, Halász (1983) similarly to Culler (1975) remarks that this kind of approach to reading is impossible if readers do not have "an inclination to process texts in this kind of way, an inclination fostered by traditions of the narrative form in our culture" (p. 243). Although it may be difficult to understand all the complexities of literary texts without an awareness of the conventions of literary form, the different outcomes emerging from different experiences (literary or non literary) offer the opportunity to work on forming competence or expanding and enriching existing abilities within the learning community class.

Furthermore, narrative form may assume different shapes and themes in different cultures but in terms of storyline or "fabula" it is universal (Propp, 1966). The basic structure of narrative form stems from oral tales and fables and is probably the most ancient and one of the few "global" forms that transcend national and geographic

borders. This basic structure has made its ways in all sorts of texts, written and visual so if students can identify similarities with other types of literary narrative or other narrative genres (written or visual), they may also be able to produce a satisfactory inference of literary texts even though they are not expert readers of literature (e.g., A5).

Students' ways of predicting their envisaged outcomes revealed the influence of other genres and / or familiarity with reading literary texts which seems to affect their inferences. For example, literal inferences were associated with little experience with reading literary texts, affective inferences with personal experience and stories read in newspapers or familiarity with genres such as fairy tales or thrillers, whilst literary inferences were associated with extensive experience with reading literature. Literal/ affective responses were based on students' personal experience and focused on the explicit details of the text. Affective/Literary responses instead drew to different degrees, from the text as a whole (narrative patterns and structures, style, themes) as well as their literary and life experience to justify their conclusions. I will provide below representative examples of each type of inference to illustrate the differences in students' predictions, and subsequently show how students changed their predictions.

Inferring text outcome (1) - Category A: Literal / Affective-----Literary

This way of inferring includes six[141] responses, all from the younger age groups (from below twenty to 20-25 years of age). Five responses were characterised by a focus on the literal and affective levels of the text, with personalized interpretation of the descriptive paragraphs which leads to imaginative outcomes. In most cases these capture the foreshadowed negative change: a fire; depression; war; the valley under an evil spell, whilst in one case the predicted outcome is a return home after a long trip, and in another, the opposite hypothesis is suggested: the text continuing with a banquet:

> **A1**: Non ho avuto nessun aspettativa grande del testo narrativo dopo aver letto i primi due paragrafi. Forse dopo i primi due paragrafi Stefano Benni descriverà che cosa il protagonista ha fatto mentre viveva nella valle. Per esempio cose interessanti, diverse, belle. È possibile che il protagonista abbia fatto un banchetto. La mia ipotesi che ci sia stato un banchetto si è bassata sulle descrizioni espansive e bellissime degli animali e della verdura che sono coltivato alla fattoria. Voglio anche dire che il racconto potrebbe essere di qualunque cosa. Non ho immaginato come lo finirà perché non c'erano abbastanza informazione date. Penso così perché i paragrafi sono

[141] One student did not hand in Task 1 before class reflection.

> solo descrizioni della valle, della casa, del bosco e della piccola fattoria. Niente è succeso. I paragrafi non raccontano una sequenza dei casi, invece descrivono un luogo dove qualcosa potrebbe succedere. Quindi ci sono tante possibiltà.[142]

The "banquet" outcome was not due to miscues in comprehension but rather to "naïve schema" (Carrell, 1984, p. 340). The student does not link her understanding of cultural schema to syntactic and lexical cues in the text and seems to lack the necessary technical knowledge of literary devices such as metaphors and hyperbole. She then lets her schema take over to project an ideal outcome: fresh and beautiful food in beautiful Italian countryside will lead to a banquet. This is defined as "schema intrusion" (Carrell, 1984, p. 340). The reader interacts with the text only at the referential level and bases her idealistic prediction on idyllic images of Italian culture often portrayed in films set in Tuscany. The lack of a narrative sequence seems to prevent the reader from making further projections. There is no transaction to negotiate between her assumptions and the deeper textual meaning as the reader seems unable or unwilling to search for other possible meanings by looking more closely at the formal level of the text. In this case, background knowledge of Italian culture seems to lead the reader to draw the opposite conclusions to those intended by the author.

As Culler (1975) points out, "to read a text as literature is not to make one's mind a *tabula rasa* and approach it without preconceptions; one must bring to it an implicit understanding of literary discourse which tells one what to look for. Anyone lacking this knowledge [...] would be unable to read it *as* literature" (pp. 113–114). This inference seems to fits this description of reading literature with 'innocent' eyes, at the referential level. In any other text perhaps the association between food and countryside would equate to a beautiful banquet at the end - not this literary text. The student in this case missed what Culler calls "the primary convention" of literature, which is "the rule of significance", allowing the reader to make the connections between the words in the text and what they represent within the text, symbolically. Another two conventions

[142] [**A1:** I did not have any expectations of the narrative text after reading the first two paragraphs. Perhaps after the first two paragraphs Stefano Benni will describe what the protagonist did while he lived in the valley, for example, interesting, different and beautiful things. It is possible that the protagonist had a banquet. My hypothesis that there might be a banquet is based on the plentiful and extremely beautiful descriptions of the animals and vegetables that are cultivated at the farm. I did not imagine how it will end because there was not enough information given. I think this way because the paragraphs are only descriptions of the valley, the home, the wood and the little farm. Nothing happened. The paragraphs do not recount a sequence of events instead they describe a place where something could happen].

necessary to read the beginning of "La casa bella" as literature were the conventions of "metaphorical coherence" and "thematic unity" (p. 115) with which the student was not familiar.

Whereas in A1 the inference was based on more familiarity with non-literary genres, in the following example, the student's imagined outcomes, a wonderful travelling experience and a return to a home which is different from the narrator's memories, seem to be influenced by narrative patterns and topics of both fables and adventure stories:

> **A2:** I primi due paragrafi del testo narrativo di Stefano Benni intitolato "La Casa Bella" si tratta di un viaggiatore che racconta sua bellissima esperienza in 'mezzo al bosco'. Il viaggiatore esprime un sentimento di malinconia e nostalgia. Cio' è il viaggiatore sente la mancanza del modo di vivere nella valle e discrive tutto come un sognio perfetto, per esempio 'più bella casa... castagni più bello del mondo.... migliori... uova... mucche [della zona]. Nel percorso trovando nuove avventure, che al fine conclude suo viaggio eccezionalemente e molto memorabile. Predicto che il viggiatore viene di città, perché parla degli assissini e i grandi delitti. È per fugire dell'ambiente spiacevole della vita urbana, il viaggiatore pensa delle sue bellissime esperienze della vita in mezzo al bosco per dimenticarsi della vita caeotica, del rumore, e della polluzione della città.[143] *When the traveler finally returns to the 'bosco' after seven years, he finds that his excitement and anticipation are shattered.*[144]

This prediction consists of a narrative sequence of events – which is lacking in the original text — as was picked up in A1. Although the prediction restates facts and descriptions from Benni's tale, it also includes comments about the traveler's sense of nostalgia and melancholy, which are not however linked to textual formal features such as the use of the past tense. The break in "metaphorical coherence" (Culler, 1975) is explained as belonging to the traveler's experience in the city, as if it were not possible for assassins to inhabit the countryside. In order to construct her prediction, the student, draws from a mixture of two genres, fable and adventure stories, focusing her

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[143] [**A2:** The first two paragraphs of the narrative text by Stefano Benni entitled "The beautiful home" is about a traveler who narrates his extremely beautiful experience in 'the midst of a wood'. The traveler expresses a feeling of melancholy and nostalgia, that is the traveler misses the way of life in the valley and describes everything as a perfect dream, for example, 'the most beautiful home... most beautiful chestnut trees in the world... best eggs....cows [in the area]. On his way he finds new adventures that at the end he concludes his trips exceptionally and in a memorable manner. I predict that the traveler comes to the city, because he talks about assassins and great murders. It is to flee the unpleasant urban environment that the traveller thinks of his extraordinarily beautiful experiences of life in the midst of the wood to forget the chaos, noise and pollution of the city].

[144] Students' response written in English will be reported in Italics to distinguish them from their written responses in Italian and my translations of students' texts into English.

perspective outside the text, rather than searching for meaning within the text. She therefore adopts the typical ending of adventure stories in which the hero return home after a series of wonderful and dangerous adventures. Benni's tale however is neither fable nor adventure story, although it uses elements found in both genres. It also implies that there might be assassins in the valley, as in fables, assassins are often outsiders; this however was not detected or envisaged within category A.

In A2, as in A3 and A5 especially, the students reconstructed the story quite creatively to make it fit with their envisaged outcome, which broadly coincides with the story's ending of the traveler leaving the valley. If in A1 the inference was based on a familiarity with non-literary genres and in A2 with experience with adventure stories, in the following example, the student's imagined outcomes, a fire or business travel, strongly influenced by a personalized vision of home and family life:

> **A3**: Dopo aver letto i primi due paragrafi del testo narrativo di Stefano Benni intitolato "La casa bella" pensavo c'era piu che lui poteva dire sulla casa, per espandere un immagina piu bella. Penso che lui continuerà di parlare della casa e sua famiglia, come le cose che facevano dentro questa "casa bella". Per esempio guardavano la televisione e leggevano il gournale. Penso che poi lui aveva spostato e sua nuova casa non era così bella. Il titolo del libro è "La casa bella (primo racconto del viaggiatore)". È possibile che qualcosa succedeva dentro la casa come un fuoco e non potevano più restare la. Oppure, viaggiava tanto per andare al lavoro e nessun'altra casa si presentava come una casa proprio. Mi sembra che lui sta raccontando una storia che diventerà triste. Che poi non abitavano più in questa casa e non c'è mai stata in sua vita una casa più bella di questa.[145]

Whilst all other readers noticed the exaggerated beautifulness of the house and valley described in the tale, A3 in her opening statement criticizes the author for not providing an even more beautiful image of his "beautiful home". Her reaction seems to point to an external perspective to reading, of how one's beautiful home should be described according to the reader's background, rather than a negotiation between perspectives within the text and reader's perspective. In my comments on her prediction, I tried to

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145 [**A3:** After reading the first two paragraphs of the narrative text by Stefano Benni entitled "The beautiful home" I thought that there was more he could have said about the house, to convey a more beautiful image. I think that he will continue to talk about the house and his family, as the things they did inside this "beautiful home". For example, they watched television and read the newspaper. I think that afterwards he moved and his new house was not so beautiful. The title of the book is "The beautiful home (first tale of the traveler)". It is possible that something happened in the house, like a fire, and they could not stay there any longer; or, that he traveled a lot to go to work and no other house presented it self as a real home. It seems to me that he is narrating a story that will become sad, that they afterwards did not live in that house and that in his whole life he never had a house more beautiful than this one].

inform her perspective by suggesting a search for reasons for events and descriptions within the text. Her view was also expanded through classroom reflection. Projections that the stories will continue with descriptions of family life, a move, and that no other house will be as beautiful as "la casa bella" — generally appropriate — are explained by quoting the title of the tale, in particular the second half: "First tale of the traveller" which makes it obvious that there will be a move of some sort in the story. In fact there will no more mention of homes, rest, or heaven for Benni's traveller. There is no explanation provided instead for the feeling that the story will become sad.

Despite the unlikely envisaged family scene: watching television and reading the newspaper, probably drawn from contemporary life, personal experience or the drawing on the cover of Benni's collection of short stories, the student is able to express her feelings, the sense of loss expressed in text and appropriate predictions about the text in fairly accurate Italian. The scene envisaged by the student is an unlikely outcome given the natural, rural setting described in the opening of "La casa bella", untouched by technology. The cover drawing, showing a family grotesquely glued to a television set, was pasted to the beginning of the story to emphasize the destructive influence television can have on family life and relationships. It could however have misled this particular student, less experienced with reading literature. Paradoxically, the drawing could therefore have partly hindered her understanding, instead of aiding it. This underlines the problems associated with using visual materials to assist students' comprehension of literary texts: if the images are too obvious they reveal the meaning of the story and prevent students from having to discover it from the text; if the picture is ambiguous or suggestive of hidden textual meanings, then it can perhaps mislead less experienced readers.

Similarly to A5, the following reader (A4) was able to capture the almost evil spell television can cast on people, which the drawing was trying to convey. The L2 reader puts herself in (op) position (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994) to the text because of its difference from anything she has experienced before by defining it "strano". She then creates a bridge to accommodate it in her own schemata according to her background knowledge to make sense of it and predict its outcome. Perhaps because of the reading instructions focused on a very short part of the text, spurring students to search for meaning and construct an outcome (see chapter 3), unlike in 1998 and 1999, most

students became involved in a dialogic process with the incipit of "La casa bella", as shown in their responses.

She uses her sense of estrangement, expressed with the exclamation marks, the adjectives "perfect" repeated three times and "unnatural" to explain her prediction that the story will not end well:

> **A4**: Mio primo pensiero dopo ho letto il testo narrativo di Stefano Benni è stato — che valle bizzarra! Tutto sembra perfetto, troppo perfetto! Sembra quasi come la valle è sotto un incantesimo. La gente nella immagine sembra ipnotica, quasi malvagia. Non lo so che succeda in seguito ma penso che non sia bene. Penso che la valle sia veramente sotto una maledizione. Tutto è perfetto ma innaturale.[146]

Although this student is able to predict that something bad will probably happen in the tale since the description of the valley is so 'unnatural', there is no explanation for the reasons the author may have chosen to portray it that way. The above example is representative of another two responses (A4.1 and A4.2), also influenced by genres such as fables, in which the students adopted an external perspective combined with a focus on the more literal meaning expressed on the text surface. In the following example the student also uses her knowledge of other genres, fables and television series, to formulate possible outcomes, but her external focus is more closely linked to crucial textual elements such as the smell of bread, which encapsulate the deeper meaning of the tale:

> **A5**: Penso che il testo narrarativo di Stefano Benni sia molto strano. Il narratore discrive un posto dove tutti sembra perfetto. Secondo il narratore "il gallo era il piu' bello della zona, le galline facevano le uova migliore della zona, anche il pane spargeva un odore che metteva di buon umore tutta la valle". Nel narrativo, questo posto sembra tanto perfetto che stavo aspettando per qualcosa male a succedere. Creo che il narratore stia sottolineando la importanza di questa valle meravigliosa affinché quando qualcosa male succedere li, c'è un contrasto ovviamente tra buono e cattivo. Sono sicuro che questa valle soffrirà sfortuna, perche sarebbe una storia noioso se tutti continua a essere perfetto. Forse la valle è sotto un incantesimo, forse è l'odore del pane che influenza la perfezione della valle. Se è, forse più tardi nella storia qualcuna si fermerà a cucinare il pane e tutti

[146] [**A4:** My first thought after reading the narrative text by Stefano Benni was – what a bizarre valley! Everything seems perfect, too perfect! It seems almost as if the valley is under a spell. The people in the image seem hypnotized, almost evil. I do not know what will happen next but I think that it will not be good. I think that the valley is really under a curse. Everything is perfect but unnatural].

> nella valle vanno pazzi perché non c'è più l'odore. Questa storia me lo ricordo di (*this story reminds of???*) una programma che ho visto alla televisione, dove la gente in un sobborgo deva mantenere le sue case e i suoi giardini, altrimenti un mostro viene dalla terra e le mangia. In questa programma tutte la gente ha case e giardini perfetti, come il narrativo di Stefano Benni. (*I seem to be letting my imagination run wild; I better get back on track*). Forse qualcosa più semplice e realistica succedere nella valle, come una depressione o una guerra e più tardi nella storia il narratore descrive le lotte della gente.[147]

Although she does not explicitly state it, A5 is able to link the exaggerated perfection of the valley with the use of comparative adjectives to predict that something bad will happen and also the stark contrast between good and evil. Unlike A4, she understood that the valley was under a "good" spell, that of the natural smell of freshly cooked bread. Benni's tale in fact reverses the traditional fable topes of the "evil" spell: it is the spell placed on the valley by the homely scent that keeps away evil. A5 also reveals her awareness of narrative structure by pointing out that the story would be boring if nothing happened. A5 also links Benni's tale to a television series which seems to be similar to mystery television programmes although she immediately retracts her suggestions by adding in brackets in English that she has gone too far. In fact, the television programme she mentions seems to be broadly based on a primitive fable narrative with its enforcement of order and uniformity under the threat of a monster. Of course the opposite happens in Benni's tale, where the good spell is held in place by natural and simple elements and people are as happy as it is humanly possible to be, given that paradise on earth can really only exist in the eyes of a child. What is crucial is that Benni's narrative has triggered other narratives as comparator. This process has helped the student identify Benni's *fabula* and formulate her predictions. For L2

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[147] [**A5:** I think that the narrative text by Stefano Benni is very strange. The narrator describes a place where everything seems perfect. According to the narrator "the rooster is the most beautiful in the area, the chicken laid the best eggs in the area, the bread too spread a smell that put the whole valley in a good mood". In the narrative this place seemed so perfect that I was waiting for something bad to happen. I think the author is underlining the importance of this marvelous valley so that when something bad happens there, there is obviously a contrast between good and evil. I am sure that this valley will suffer misfortune, because it would be a boring story if everything continues to be perfect. Perhaps the valley is under a spell; perhaps it is the smell of bread that influences the perfection of the valley. If it is so, perhaps later in the story someone will stop cooking bread and everyone in the valley will go crazy because the smell is no longer there. *This story reminds me of* a program I saw on television where people in a suburb had to look after their houses and gardens, otherwise a monster comes from the earth and eats them. In this program everyone has perfect homes and gardens, as in the narrative by Stefano Benni. (*I seem to be letting my imagination run wild, I better get back on track*). Perhaps something simpler and more realistic will happen in the valley, like a depression or a war and later the narrator describes peoples' struggles]

literature educators it is thus useful to know which genres the students habitually read and / or watch and encourage cross genre comparison.

Inferring text outcome (1) – Category B: Affective / Literary

Nine students, spread across three age groups (four under twenty years of age; two between 20-25 and three above 35 years of age) processed the text at the meta-level. Experienced literature readers, well acquainted with narrative form, focused for example on contradicting images within the text to formulate their hypothesis. I will choose five representative examples to illustrate the non critical variation within this category in order to highlight the differences in students' outcomes. Whereas in some cases students entered into a dialogic transaction with the text by making connections between several textual levels to construct their inferences and also provided many examples from the story to justify their hypothesis (B3, B4 and B5), others focused mainly on their knowledge of narrative and literary tradition as well as their personal experience to formulate their predictions with minimal illustrations from the text (B1 and B2). This shift, from a predominant external to a more holistic reading is shown below as a continuum in the responses selected for discussion: B1, B2 and B5.

> **B1**: Dopo aver letto i primi due paragrafi di "La casa bella", penso che, in questa storia, sia probabile che alcun tipo di catastrofe (come la guerra) rovinerà il "paradiso infantile" del protagonista – oppure il protagonista sufrirà una vita piena di difficoltà. Nelle storie (come nella vita) è molto comune che il protagonista ricorda, dopo una vita difficile, una infanzia ideale. Nella letteratura, c'è un impatto più grande si, dopo un'infanzia perfetto, il protagonista soffra una tragedia. Secondo me, questa storia finirà molto tristemente. Per esempio, il protagonista potrebbe tornare molti anni più tardi alla valle e scopre quasi tutto in rovina, con pochi richiami del sua infanzia felice. Una conclusione come questa è molto comune nella letteratura.[148]

This student, because of her extensive reading experience, based her predictions about the text on her knowledge of narrative storylines rather than linking it more closely to the perspective expressed through the stylistic choices in the text. The student, because

[148] [**B1:** After having read the first two paragraphs of "The beautiful home", I think that, in this story, it is probable that some type of catastrophe (like the war) will ruin the "infantile paradise" of the protagonist – otherwise the protagonist will suffer a life full of difficulties. In stories (as in life) it is very common for the protagonist to remember, after a difficult life, an ideal childhood. In literature, there is a greater impact if, after a perfect childhood, the protagonist suffers a tragedy. According to me, this story will end very sadly. For example, the protagonist could return to the valley many years later and discover that all is in ruins, with few signs of his happy childhood. A conclusion like this is very common in literature].

of her familiarity with rhetoric and literary schemata, and, at the same time, with a limited to average L2 proficiency, perhaps relied too heavily on top-down strategies which also lead her to overlook the elements in the texts which justified her predictions. Three students (B1; B3[149] and B4[150]) linked the use of past tense to the temporal frame of the opening and linked the choice of tenses to the feelings expressed by the images and metaphors and were thus able to distinguish between adult narrative voice and child protagonist's point of view and understand that the narrator is nostalgic in comparing a 'beautiful' past seen through a protagonist child's eyes and a not so wonderful present seen through an adult's eyes. B1 does not explicitly explain the link between past tense and point of view, but describes the valley as the "paradiso infantile", viewed through the innocent childlike and naïve eyes of the protagonist as a child. Her inferences shift from life experience to knowledge of literary conventions, and affective and efferent reading as she draws parallels between levels of reality and narrative form to feel affinity with the tale while extracting only essential information from the text and matching it with her literary competence to guess possible outcomes. Extensive experience in reading literature allows this student to grasp the underlying storyline almost automatically. Her minimal focus on the formal features of the text may help

[149] B3 combined her personal schemata with textual features in her response which is at once an evaluation, a full story reconstruction and a projected outcome infused with her personal life values but also based on specific textual elements. For example, she imagines the temporal sequence of events ("there was a change and now it is different) and explicitly describes it by marking it with temporal adverbs ("all'inizio" [at the beginning];"improvvisamente" [suddenly]; "alla fine" [at the end]). B3, in her inference, actually rewrites her own "literary" tale, which includes the use of similes and metaphors, to mirror her wished outcome based on her philosophical and moral outlook on life: life is better when it is not perfect: "[...] Quindi il morale del narratore è che la vita è più ricca quando non è perfetta. Gli esperienze (bene e male) si insegnano ad apprezzare le cose che si da per scontato." [Therefore the moral of the narrator is that life is richer when it is not perfect. Experiences (good and bad) teach us to appreciate the things that we take for granted].

[150] B4's inferences are closely drawn from formal and rhetorical textual characteristics. Her linguistic as well as literary ability allow her to detect and describe the links between grammatical structures (the use of the imperfect tense; adjectives) with narrative structure and emotions expressed in the text incipit. Although her Italian expression is less accurate than B3, her use of metalanguage (tone; metaphor) allows her to articulate in more critical detail than shown in previous responses how she reached her prediction. For example she explicitly states the author's aim in inserting the metaphor of the assassins: to signal danger and then further elaborates on her hypothesis by explaining that the happiness portrayed in the initial "quadro" (picture) is "apparente" [apparent; unreal]. After this perceptive analysis, she gives an account of Benni's intentions behind his narrative and rhetorical choices: to produce a strong effect in the reader with a great change and ends her response her self with a strong statement juxtaposing past and present; memory and reality; beauty and disaster: "Penso che Benni ha scritto il narrativo come questo, con una apertura tranquilla e poi un indizio piccolo e che confonde, avere un grande effetto quando il narrativo cambia (forse per il peggiore). "La casa bella" è una memoria per il narratore è non una realtà – forse un disastro ha distrugguto questa casa e vita bella." [I think that Benni has written a narrative like this, with a tranquil opening and then a small clue which confuses, to have a greater effect when the narrative changes (perhaps for the worst). "The beautiful home" is a memory for the narrator, not a reality – perhaps a disaster has destroyed this beautiful home and life].

explain the lack of improvement of this student at the language level, especially at the morphological and orthographical level – where the influence of Spanish is noticeable ("si" instead of "se"). Like most of the students who participated in the study, she was able to use the present subjunctive appropriately and express her response in short, clear sentences.

B2 comes closer than B1 to predicting the story outcome by envisaging that the animals and the farms will be spoilt:

> **B2**: Penso che il racconto, "La casa bella" di Stefano Benni sia di una tragedia che viene dal paradiso, che è la valle, possibilmente la casa del narratore. Perché la descrizione nei primi due paragrafi è di un posto che è ideale eccetto una menzione nel racconto degli assassini dei quali abbiamo nessuna informazione. È ovvio che c'è una minaccia al paradiso dagli assassini.Vengo a questa conclusione perché lo scrittore parla di assassini che è totalmente fuori contesto con gli altri paragrafi. È difficile immaginare come questo racconto finirà. Avevo detto che pensavo che il racconto sia di una tragedia. Forse gli assassini distruggeranno il gallo, gli altri animali e la proprietà dell narratore.[151]

Her first sentence captures the crux of the story and expresses its drama by using the oxymoron "tragedy / paradise" and the use of the colon to introduce the interdependent clause that explains outcome, cause and effects outlined in the opening statement. This reader successfully locates one of the metaphors that disrupt the thematic unity of the first two paragraphs and elaborates on why mention of the assassins means that the life described in the beginning is in danger: "because it is out of context". In this case it is the students' focus on the formal rhetorical features of the text and her ability to link them to her knowledge of rhetorical and narrative form that lead her to draw appropriate predictions about the text outcome.

B3, in her inference rewrites her own literary tale to mirror her wished outcome based on her moral outlook on life: "la famiglia si rende conto che quando tutto era perfetto, la

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[151] [**B2:** I think that the tale, "The beautiful home" by Stefano Benni deals with a tragedy that comes from a paradise: the valley, possibly the narrator's home. Since the description in the first two paragraphs is of a place that is ideal except for a mention in the tale of the assassins, about whom we have no information. It is obvious that there is a menace to the paradise on the part of the assassins. I come to this conclusion because the writer talks about assassins and this is totally out of context with the other paragraphs. It is difficult to imagine how this tale will end. I said that I thought that the tale deals with a tragedy. Perhaps the assassins will destroy the rooster, the other animals and the property of the narrator].

loro vita era vuota e superficiale" [152] Her strong feelings about the story after reading only the first two paragraphs are expressed in her response which is at once an evaluation, a full story reconstruction and a projected outcome infused with her personal life values but also based on specific textual elements. For example, she imagines the temporal sequence of events: "C'era un cambiamento e adesso è differente" [there was a change and now it is different] and describes it by marking it with temporal adverbs: "all'inizio", "improvvisamente", "alla fine" [at the beginning, suddenly, at the end]. The student's positive outlook on life led her to envisage a positive outcome. Like most students she missed the underlying ironic tone of the adult narrator. Benni is drawing attention to the fact that life can be perfect only through the naïve eyes of a child, since even in beautiful rural settings the threat of intruders is always hovering, and later on horrible accidents can happen, such as the death of the mother suffocated by red apples. This is however presented and accepted as a "natural" death. B4's linguistic and literary abilities allow her to understand the meaning behind the writer's use of form and rhetoric: "quando il narratore parla degli assassini e i loro coltelli c'è un cambiamento immediato nel tono [...]. Benni ha uno scopo [...]. Forse è una metafora per un pericolo imminente [...]. Il quadro sostene queste ipotesi con una scena della gioia apparente".[153] Her use of metalanguage allows her to articulate in more critical detail than shown in previous responses how she reached her predictions.[154]

B5 was the only outcome that included specific comments about the use of the ironic tone of the cynical adult narrator who can now see the exaggeration in the eyes of the child protagonist conveyed through the overuse of comparatives:

> **B5**: Mi sembra che la narrazione sia ricca, intensa, lissureggiante. Facendo largo uso di superlativi nel scrivere, il scrittore descrive la vita perfetta, la vita da sognare. Si serve della similitudine e della metafora per creare l'aria di forza, di energia e perfino dello shock (per esempio il gallo come leone, le parole 'martello e sogni' giustaposte), all stesso tempo creando l'aria di seduzione e mistero ('le mucche dagli occhi dolci come odalische'). Però, la descrizione della valle viene esagerata, eccesiva. L'intensità del linguaggio

[152] [**B3:** The family realized that when everything was perfect their life was empty and superficial].
[153] [**B4:** When the narrator talks about the assansins and their knives there is an immediate change in the tone [...]. Benni has a particular aim [...]. Perhaps it is a metaphor for an imminent danger [...]. The portrayal upholds this hypotheses with the scenery of appearent joy].
[154] This underlines the importance of focusing on terminology (in Italian and English) in literature education. In the following cycles students included in their response terms (in Italian and English) that I had included in the tasks' descriptions.

> suggerisce il cinismo da parte del scrittore: sembra di tenersi a distanza dalla valle perfetta. Per me, non so come finirà la storia, però immagino la peggiore, la vita nella valle è tanto perfetta, il peggio deve ancora venire.[155]

B5 perhaps because of her extensive experience with reading literature, was able to detect the tension between the child and adult point of view in the narrative and, unlike most of the other students, and like B4, to perceive that the beauty is exaggerated so that that the reader can see that is not "real". Like B4, this student also uses the metalanguage of criticism in her response. She is better able to explain the effects produced by the extensive descriptions of the valley by linking them to the author's style. For example, she was the only student who noticed the other metaphor, the rooster who shatters dreams with a hammer, and the strong contrast created by using words such as "dreams" and "hammer". B5 also sees behind the literal description of the beautiful valley and understands the author's underlying intention of creating in the reader's mind an image that bursts with the energy of country life: the powerful rooster's call; an energy portrayed in all its strength and also sensuality: cows' eyes are like odalisques' eyes. This intensive, expressive language, B5 specifies, reveals a cynical narrative point of view, which in turn indicates that something bad will occur. In her synthetic, at times linguistically inaccurate response, focused on a close analysis of textual features and the effects these produce, B5 provided the most advanced response. She is able to capture, understand and articulate the meaning of the more subtle formal nuances. As will be explained below though, in this case, an almost exclusive internal focus was linked to a strong belief that literature should be read according to author's intention and impatience with alternative, intercultural interpretation based on personal experience.

Outcome of reflection on variation in students' responses to the story's ending

As already stated in chapters 2 and 3, I do not support traditional literary theories advocating the supremacy of the author's intent or that there can only be one

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[155] [**B5:** It seems to me that the narration is rich, intense, and luxurious. By making abundant use of superlatives when writing, the writer describes the perfect life, a dream life. He uses similes and metaphors to create an air of force, energy and even shock (for example the rooster as a lion, the juxtaposed words 'hammer and dreams'), at the same time creating an air of seduction and mystery ('the cows with sweet odalisques' eyes'). However, the description of the valley is exaggerated, excessive. The intensity of the language suggests the cynicism on the part of the writers: he seems to be keeping at a distance from the perfect valley. As far as I am concerned, I do not know how the story will end but I imagine the worst, the life in the valley is so perfect, the worst has still to come].

appropriate or correct reading of a text. The question of whether there is a best understanding of literary texts is hard to accept — it does not mean that there is an "absolute" best way of reading a particular text (Marton et al, 1994), but that within a particular group of people, at a particular time and in a particular context, readers can express more complex and inclusive ways of understanding texts. All different readings and interpretations were treated as equal from a research point of view and pedagogically. All contributed to enrich the class discussion on variation. In this 'hermeneutic' class students had the opportunity to reflect on, practice and compare ways of reading literature and interpreting texts. This process helped students place literature in a particular cultural and literary tradition and recognize that universal themes and narrative patterns are often cross-cultural (e.g., traditional narrative storylines). Within this approach, structuralist principles are framed within a hermeneutic and phenomenographic classroom approach to the study of literature aimed at forming competences by sharing responses and expertise to encourage more advanced interpretations of literature.

Students' initial reactions in my study were not dissimilar to the reaction of students' in the experimental study by Marton et al (1994) in which they attempted to expand students' reflective variation by affecting their awareness, not in class but with explicit instruction, of alternative ways of understanding Kafka's text "Before the Law'. Their procedure had the opposite effect as it reduced the variation in readers' understanding of Kafka's story. In my view, this result underlines that classroom discourse is needed to expand reflective variation and bring about change in the way one learns and learning outcomes. I therefore modified the original procedure (Marton et al, 1994, p. 291) by using students' different text interpretations but collectively, in class, after allowing them to explore the tale's beginning and come up with their individual predictions. This allowed me to intervene, as an educator, with pedagogic methods aimed at eliciting reflective variation. For example, I grouped students in suitable units and constantly interacted with them to reassure them and make them feel that they, as readers, with their background knowledge, had the power and the right to construct the text. I was extremely clear in affirming that all interpretations contributed to the class pool of possible interpretative elaborations and variations of a literary text. At the same time however, I underlined the power of reflecting on the multiple and varied interpretations that a literary text such as Benni's can elicit and to focus on why this was possible by

looking at the text as well as individual explanations of predictions. In short, my message was that it is worth pursuing many lines of interpretation, discard some and adopt others in the process, towards a complex interpretation of the text.

Inferring text outcome (2) – Category A

As exemplified by the quotation below, after the initial "barricade" behind the most frequent or similar prediction, for most students the first hermeneutic class resulted in an expanded understanding of the text, especially of the different temporal narrative levels:

> **A3**: Quando ho letto i due paragrafi questa volta mia opinione è cambiato un po'. Per me, questa storia non sembra come una favola. Penso che il narratore sta raccontando suo esperienze e sua vita quando era già adulto e in tanto ricordiamo le storie belle della nostra infanzia. Penso con speranza che non succederà un gran disastro dentro la casa che rovinerà la sua vita e quella della sua famiglia. Penso che sposteranno via dalla casa per lavoro e che poi arriverano un'altra famiglia e che possono avere tanti momenti del felicità dentro questa casa. Però non penso che la storia succederà così alla fine. Questo e come voglio io la fine della storia, non voglio che la storia avrà una brutta fine.[156]

The most significant change exemplified by the above response is that after classroom reflection, students became aware that the narration is at first seen through the eyes of the narrator as a child. Another student (A4) also incorporated a quotation from another student envisaged outcome to explain that often narrative includes a tragic event to have an impact on the reader: "Una tragedia è un uso della letteratura tradizionale per avere impatto. La vita perfetta – la valle perfetta sarà cambiata."[157] As in her first prediction, A3 in her opening statement expressed her wishes that the story might be different, her desire for a different outcome seems to prevent her from negotiating the internal textual meaning and her wish for a happy ending. She seems to confuse author and protagonist / narrator. A2 below instead expresses a positive remark on her first hypothesis about the traveler experiencing wonderful adventures. She is aware that it may not happen in

[156] [**A3:** When I read the two paragraphs this time my opinion has changed a bit. To me, this story does not seem like a fable. I think that the narrator is recounting his experiences and his life when he was already an adult and in the meantime we remember the beautiful stories of our own childhood. I hope that there will not be a great disaster inside the house that will ruin his life and that of his family. I think that they will move away from the house for work reasons and that then another family will arrive and will have many happy moments in this house. However, I don't think that the story will have this ending. This is how I want the story to finish, I do not want the story to have a bad ending].

[157] [**A4:** A tragedy is a convention used in traditional literature to have an impact].

the story but in her view it was a beautiful outcome. Her understanding of the description of the valley has changed as she is now aware that the beauty of the valley was exaggerated. However she links the exaggeration to a dream and not explicitly to the point of view of a child:

> **A2**: L'effetto mi fa adesso della situazione nel racconto è praticamente uguale delle mie prime ipotesi — cioè che il viaggiatore abbia visuto per un tempo, e dopo abbia dovuto tornare a sua casa in città. Forse le uniche cambiamenti che farò, sarebbero che forse, tutta la esagerazione della bellezza della valle è stata tutta un sogno. Però, so che il mio primo ipotesi non succederà ma è un bel congettura![158]

Although not explicitly stated by the student, in a sense, that is what the adult narrator is trying to convey: that kind of beauty can only exist through the eyes of a naïve child, so, in fact, it is a dream which, like childhood, can not last and, like readers' expectations, can not always be met.

The above examples illustrate differences in text understanding and how these occurred because of the collective reflection on variation activity, for example, awareness of the child-like point of view through which the setting is described and the fact that behind him there is the adult narrator warning us that if children usually see the positive side of the past, that is an illusion since nothing can be perfect. Students in this category did not always describe how some of the other students (see next subsection) were able to reach a more advanced outcome, but understanding of the text was nevertheless expanded after the hermeneutic reflection on response variation. As reported in the next outcome, the crucial shift between the categories was found in the ability to link the author's formal choices, in particular, tenses and lexicon to narrative point of view, to understand that the story was told by an adult narrator, but from an exaggerated child point of view and predict that what was once beautiful, no longer exists.

<u>Inferring text outcome (2) – Category B</u>

As already shown, for category A the reflection on response variation resulted in an expanded awareness of the temporal levels of the story. In category B the changes are

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[158] [**A2:** The effect the situation in the tale has on me now is practically the same as my initial hypothesis – that is, the traveler lived there for a while, then he had to go back to his house in the city. Perhaps the only changes that I will make will be that perhaps, all the exaggeration of the valley's beauty has been all a dream. However, I know that my first hypothesis will never happen but it was a nice conjecture!].

more subtle but show nevertheless an expanded awareness of different aspects of the text.[159] For example, B2 indicated that she realized that the descriptions were exaggerated: "adesso, penso che la descrizione sia troppo perfetto" [now, I think that the description is too perfect]. Some responses mention the outcomes of the collective reflection and incorporate their new understanding to explain that the narrator is reflecting on the beautiful past and foreshadowing a negative change.[160]

Reflection on response variation and a non threatening hermeneutic class environment were conducive to tease out "openness" to different peers' responses. Across categories A and B, curiosity and respect of others' interpretations also seem to lower resistance to considering alternative responses especially among younger students who considered others' interpretations and weighed them up against theirs. B5, on the other hand, especially in the first cycle, showed little appreciation in class of the reflective process and, as her re-writing shows, became annoyed at some students' creative responses:

> **B5:** *Expectations changed? No. [...][161] We all seem to agree that there is a sense of impending doom, yet I my self do not recognize in the story any hints as to the nature of the 'doom'. Thus while students have given a detailed story of what will eventuate I feel this is a flight of fancy and the detail of their suppositions is not evidenced in the story. No, my understanding of the story has not changed. In fact, I am reinforced in my conclusions! I feel confident that many students have taken liberties in imagining the conclusions which are not justified by the author's writing in these two paragraphs.*

Whilst in her previous response she explained that "worst was yet to come" with the cynical, adult's narrator's tone emerging from the exaggerated descriptions of the valley, in her second response she states that she does not detect any hints of the doom in the text. Her attitude towards the process and students' imaginative inferences

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[159] For private reasons B1 did not participate in the class reflection and discussion and therefore did not rewrite the text outcome. B1.2 instead handed in an almost identical response and was rather sceptical about the hermeneutic process and the reflective variation exercise.

[160] **B3:** Tante persone nella classe credono che la vita perfetta non duri; ma una cosa brutta succeda. Alcune persone (che include io) crediamo che ci sia una guerra che distrugga la casa. Sembra che il protagonista rifletta sul passato, prima di un cambiamento brutto [Many people in the class believe that the perfect life will not last; and that something bad will happen. Some people (including me), believe that there will be a war that will destroy the house. It seems that the protagonist is reflecting on the past, before a bad change].

[161] This inference and also other written texts in the next sections have not been quoted in full because they were very long. In the abridged texts, I have however included the salient aspects of students' texts in terms of textual understanding and interpreting.

seemed to lead her to focus almost entirely on criticising other students rather than on providing extra explanations. Her first inference may have been the most advanced in terms of literary analysis, but did not mention for example, the metaphor of the assassins, picked up by other students in category B and discussed in class. Her attitude helped me become more aware of how some mature age students, very self assured and experienced, but at the same time, used to traditional pedagogical methods and set in their own beliefs, can feel threatened by hermeneutic pedagogical approaches. Another mature age student was extremely successful in predicting the outcome and linking it to the text. She however remained firm in her opinion that there can be only one possibly right interpretation intended by the author, and therefore skipped the reflection on strategies, which, according to her, caused students to arrive at wild interpretations or parallels. My response in class was that although the author may have written the text with a particular intent and have inscribed it into the formal and discourse levels, the text only comes alive in its transaction with the reader and each reader reads it differently according to her background knowledge and experience as well as her cultural, literary and linguistic abilities.

In terms of written language expression, at the group level, all students were able to express their responses in coherent Italian sentences and paragraphs. Although the level of grammatical accuracy varied, almost all students were able to use the subjunctive mood correctly. Most students also wrote more than the required number of words required in Italian. Changes in language abilities were of course more noticeable at the end of the last cycle and will be discussed in section 6.2.3, using representative examples of individual students, across the cyclic process.

Variation in reading approaches in native and non native languages

The variation found in students' reading approaches in their native language, in Italian and other languages reported in chapter 5, indicated an association between personalized strategic reading approaches and more complex understandings (B1.2; B2.1; B4 and B5). For example, B2.1 in her first reading skips unknown words but ensures that the main ideas and the feelings are clear: "ci sono molte parole che non so ma penso che le idee principali e l'umore siano chiari dopo aver letto il testo

brevemente". [There are many words I do not know but I think that the main ideas and the feelings are clear after reading the text briefly]. Then she reads a second time and looks up words she does know to locate the key images in the texts and a third time as well with the intention of understanding. The remaining students (B1.2; B4; B5) besides using their own strategic approaches to reading, actually expressed their intention of reading for purposes beyond the understanding of the text, for example, "to extend my reading level" (B1.2); and a differentiation between intent and methods according to the aim of reading: "In realtà i metodi che uso quando leggo in italiano dipende dallo scopo che ho mentre sto leggendo. A volte voglio solo leggere un racconto [...] a volte leggo anche con lo scopo di imparare delle parole e dunque uso il dizionario per trovarne il significato". [In actual fact, the methods I use when I read in Italian derive from the purpose I have while I read. At times I only want to read a short story [...] at times I read also with the aim of learning words and therefore I use the dictionary to find their meaning". Clearly, in this case, it is the reader who drives the text.[162]

Finally, in the detailed description of her traditional, attentive and sophisticated reading approach reported in note form, B5 displays her passion for different aspects of books, including their physical appearance, her overall canon driven perception of literature and her awareness that different types of texts require different reading approaches. This response provides a good example of the striking variation in reading approach there can be within a group of students of Italian. The students' in-depth approach to reading is not representative of the main ways in which literary texts were studied within this study; for this reason, her input into class reflection was useful in narrowing the gap between very experienced readers and, surprisingly, students with no experience of reading literature.[163]

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[162]Results of research conducted in 1998 and 1999, as discussed in chapters 4 and 5, revealed overall text-focused perceptions of literature and text-dependent reading approaches.

[163] [**B5**: "Non fiction and fiction require different strategies of course, the overview of the former being more demanding. I always check the publisher as this is a sure sign of the status or reputation of a book, and simply I cannot resist a handsome volume. By this I do not necessarily mean a lush or glossy production, but rather an intangible, and very personal, appeal to the senses sometimes found in the most minimalist of productions (Yes, I do see a book as a production). Aesthetic considerations aside, I note reviews of the book and, importantly, who is reviewing. As for the book itself, I carefully read the introduction or foreword, the author's intentions and its history, and observe the chapter headings. In the case of non-fiction, I read the author's conclusions before any other chapters, as well as the bibliography and index. When it comes to reading fiction, I do not skim or jump about. As a person of limited imagination (è vero! [it is true!]), I do not ever attempt to guess the ending of a story. I use the internet or library to find background information on those foreign language authors of whom I know little or

These students' predominant tendency was to read the L2 text (whether in Italian, French or other languages) as literary texts in English at least initially, to try and understand the meaning of unknown words from the context and then to consult a dictionary (A1; A2; A3; A4; A4; A4.1; B0; B1; B2; B3). For example: "*When reading in my own language I speed read [...] In Italian I do a similar thing in that I read the text first and try to get the general gist of it. Then I get out my dictionary and look up the words I don't know.*" Some of these students use particular techniques such as translating most of the text into English in their minds (A3; A4.1):

- **Thinking with images** (A3):"Quando leggo in inglese penso con le immagini e non leggo veloce perché poi non capisco il contesto. Però quando leggo nelle lingue straniere devo cambiare le parole all'inglese perché non penso in altre lingue dall'inglese."[164]

- **Looking for cognates in English to guess the meaning of unknown Italian words** (A4 and A5): "*when reading literature in another language, I typically read the text about 2 or 3 times [...] to get an understanding of the theme [...] regardless of those words I do not understand [...] I go through it again and pick out the words I do not understand and see if any of them are cognates.*"

- Understanding the meaning of unknown verbs (B0): "*When I read in Italian or French, I read through the text first, to see how much I understand. I then try to find the verbs I am unfamiliar with, and look them up. Usually, most of the story is easier to understand, in context, once I understand the verbs.*"

Critical variation in response to task 1 seems to be linked to students' experience with reading literature as well as how they approached the text to form their inferences. Some students (e.g., B1) were able to quickly construct an appropriate outcome because of their literary competence in L1 and their familiarity with literary narrative form. However, especially when high literary competence was combined with limited language competence, understanding of the text meaning is attained at the meta-linguistic level, for example by noticing universal narrative structures and themes with minimal focus on style and language form. Interestingly, some students with limited

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nothing. When reading in Italian, I read over the paragraph, then return to the beginning to consider each word, its placement and its ending. I follow the school training of thirty years ago (in Latin and French) of first finding the subject, object and verb in a sentence. I use a dictionary constantly and thus not only am I a slow reader, I am always side-tracked by the exciting world of a good dictionary!"].

[164] [**A3**: When I read in English I think in images and I do not read quickly otherwise I do not understand the context. Instead, when I read in foreign languages I must change the words in English because I do not think in other languages other than English.]

literary competence and limited to medium language abilities concentrated strongly on form at first and were better able to link their hypothesis with parts of the text. They however gained an insight into the underlying themes, use of narrative voice and irony only after classroom activities.

The fact that all three mature age students, irrespective of their language abilities, could see through illusions of impossible beautiful valleys and interpret cues in the text to predict its outcome seems to point to an association between age, experience with reading literature and ability to predict a text outcome. However, category B included also four students under twenty years of age and two between twenty and twenty five, all of non Italian background, who produced elaborate predictions, based on the text but also on personal experience or schemata. Furthermore, most students in category A, mostly under twenty years of age from different backgrounds, were able to respond appropriately to the task, in a less complex way but perhaps more creatively. Experience with reading literature and age though were not always associated with an in-depth reading of the text (e.g., B1) or a willingness to reflect on others' students responses (e.g., B5), and was not necessarily linked to more advanced language abilities (B1; B5). Two out of the three mature age students experienced with reading literature (B1; B3) applied mainly top down strategies to predict the text's conclusion. However, younger students experienced in reading literature combined their expertise either with personal experience and schemata (B3) or with linguistics competence (B4).

Students less experienced with reading literature (category A) seem to use a combination of bottom up processes, often restating what happened in the text, and inter genre techniques, by inserting text reconstructions and predictions based on other genres. Interestingly, it was generally the younger students with less experience with reading literature (category A) who envisaged the more elaborate outcomes. These imaginative outcomes may have been influenced by other genres with which the students were more familiar such as television series, adventure stories and fables. In a sense, less focus on the text and on its literary meaning, and more reliance on external factors, such as familiarity with other genres, gave students the incentive to give free rein to their imagination.

6.2.2 *Cycle 2 (weeks 10-11): Repeated readings of the entire short story-Recall (Ricostruzione libera) — Differences in understanding the whole story 1 and 2*

At the end of the second cycle which consisted of repeated readings of the whole tale "La casa bella" and a written response on the text (200 words in Italian) and class reflection on response variation, students had to write a reconstruction of the text (150-200 words in Italian) in class recalling anything they remembered about the story without looking at the story again. At first, some students expressed their anxiety at having to write 200 words in Italian but most of them wrote more than the required amount in circa 35 minutes (e.g., B2.1: 173 words; A3: 196 words; B4: 222 words). In class, I helped with the grammar and lexicon by making them work through their inaccuracies, and come up with appropriate forms. My implicit suggestions lessened students' anxiety by helping them notice problems which they quickly solved by themselves. As for the first task, less experienced readers of literature reached a higher level of understanding of the text after the classroom discussion. The whole tale, "La casa bella" was understood in different ways:

1. Understanding the story as being about natural and artificial beauty and change
2. Understanding the story as a power struggle for land rights
3. Understanding the story as an allegory of the existential struggle between the individual and forces s/he cannot control

Once students had read the whole story several times and also reflected on the variation in comparison with cycle 1 ("Inferring text outcome"), there was a general shift in responses from a focus on its literal meaning to interpretations of its metaphorical meaning. This shift is reflected in the excerpts from students' responses written after reading the story at home and in class ("Recall") provided below. I have used the same "labels" assigned to students for the analysis of data from cycle 1 (A1 - B5), to allow the readers of this thesis to trace students' evolution across the different tasks.[165] I have used different labels when quoting students whose texts had not been included in analysis of cycle 1 for reasons already explained in section 6.2.1, but have been included here because they provided examples of the non critical variation within

[165] Cycle 1 – Task 1: Inferring text outcome: Category A (A1 to A5); Category B (B0 to B5). Cycle 2 – readings of tale 1: Category 1 (students A1; A3; B0; B1; B.2.1; B3); Category 2 (A4; A4.1; A4.2; A5); Category 3 (B1.2; B2; B4; B5). Cycles 3 and 4 – Linking the three tales: Category 1 (A1; A2; A3; A4; A4.1; A4.2; A5; B1; B1.2); Category 2 (B2.1; B4; B4.1; B5); Category 3: (B0; B2; B3).

categories and also because, in some instances, comments about change were only expressed at the end of cycle 2. The most significant critical variation amongst the three main ways of understanding the story resided in the ability to interpret the story as an allegory by maintaining an attentive awareness of language form and connecting the author's stylistic choices to the wider cultural background and also to universal literary themes.

Reading the whole tale (1) - Category 1: Understanding the story as being about natural and artificial beauty and change

Eight students expressed this way of understanding the story by focusing on the most explicit themes of the tale and linking them to universal themes of natural and artificial beauty. Responses[166] varied in rhetorical terms depending on students' ability to paraphrase the text or to elaborate and explain their responses and / or provide interpretations of the text by linking it also to previous reading experiences and / or personal background. Examples of this variation are provided below:

> **A3**: Non ho mai letto dei racconti simili a questo. Però si sente che succedono questi tipi di cose quando vende oppure almeno affitti una casa, gli abitanti cambiano le case e qualche volta non sono per il meglio. Questa racconto inizia con un narrativa bella, tutto è veramente bello e quando passa, tutto così qualcosa cambierà per sempre. La bella famiglia ed animali naturali non sono abbastanza belli per fare una pubblicità, allora viene nuove persone e un'atmosfera artificiale. Non è più la casa di prima con il "gallo più bello della zona", e "mucche dagli occhi dolci" adesso sono "i galli pettinati" e le mucche che muggono perché nessuno le munge. Adesso, non è più la casa che preferisce l'autore allora va via e dice che sono fortunati quelli che non hanno una casa che vivono alla giornata sulla strada perché non le verrà mai rubata la casa. Seconda me, il senso della storia è che le cose sono più belle quando sono naturali. Tre parole che rappresentano il racconto sono: 1. "più bella" che descrivi tutti; 2. "le galline" che sono "niente affatto stupide"; e 3. "il papa" che "aveva una faccia come la corteccia del castagno", che poi si mise a piangere perché non lo volevano usare. Questi parole mi aiutano a formare un immagine che

[166] Most students' responses were rather long (a minimum of 203 words in Italian and 167 words in English: B1; A1 to a maximum of 360 words in Italian and 461 in English: B4) in the first responses written at home; and in class, most responses were more than the minimum 150 words required in Italian. I have reported the sections of their text that addressed more specifically the task as well as significant comments relating to their reading and interpreting processes. I have omitted mainly repetitions or shortened at times lengthy quotations from Benni's text.

descrive essattamente come era l'atmosfera e la zona che circondava la casa.[167]

In her response A3 mainly paraphrases the content of the tale but also adds a brief sentence enclosing the meaning of the story: "things are more beautiful when they are natural". For her choice of the three representative words she quotes from Benni's tale: "più bella"; "le galline niente affatto stupide"; "il papà che aveva una faccia come la corteccia del castagno" which emphasize the simple yet not stupid, rough beauty of country life. Like most students, she also stated that she had never read similar texts, but like A1 she relates what happens in the tale to experiences she heard about in the newspapers. A3's text is representative of responses, mainly restating the facts, with minimal interpretation and explanation of textual key words and themes (A2). A1 quoted below is representative of responses (A4.2 and B4.1) that provide a summary of the story as well as a deeper interpretation of what the text is about:

A1: Ho letto i racconti come quello di signor Benni nei giornali e raccontavano come le persone di una zona si sentivano quando hanno sentito che ci sarà un nuovo aeroporto nella loro zona. Le persone non erano felici di avere aeroplani rumorosi vicino alle loro case perché credevano che la bellezza delle case fosse meno. Il racconto tratta di una casa bella che nell'opinione del protagonista cambia e si diventa meno bella. Il protagonista viveva nella valle più bella e nella casa più bella. I signori passavano la casa spesso e anche loro pensavano che la casa fosse la più bella e per questo volevano fare le publicità. Non era importante per che cosa facevano le publicità, solo che le facevano nella casa più bella. Quando tutti sono venuti, hanno cambiato la casa e la valle. La casa non ha più appartenato al protagonista ma invece ai signori e per questo il protagonista ha deciso di andare via [...].[168]

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[167] [**A3:** I have never read tales similar to this one. However, one hears that similar things happen when you sell or rent a house, the inhabitants change house and some time it is not for the better. This tale begins with a beautiful narrative, everything is really beautiful and when it is not so anymore, something will change forever. The beautiful family and natural animals are not beautiful enough to do the advertisement, so new people come and an artificial atmosphere. It is not the house it was before with the "most beautiful rooster in the area", and "the sweet eyed cows" now it is "the combed roosters" and the cows that bellow because nobody milks them. Now, it is no longer the house that the author prefers so he goes away and says that those who do not have a house and live from hand to mouth are lucky because their house will never be stolen. According to me, the sense of the story is that things are more beautiful when they are natural. Three words that represent the tale are: 1. "more beautiful" which describes everything; 2. "the chickens" which are "not at all stupid"; and 3. "the daddy" who "had a face like the bark of a chestnut tree", who started crying because they did not want to use him. These words help me form an image that describes exactly how the atmosphere and the area surrounding the house were].

[168] [**A1:** I have heard stories like that of Mr. Benni in the newspapers which recounted how people in a particular area felt when they heard that there would be a new airport in their suburb. The tale is about a beautiful home that in the opinion of the protagonist changes and becomes less beautiful. The protagonist lived in the most beautiful valley and in the most beautiful home. The gentlemen often passed by the

This quotation shows that A1 links Benni's tale to stories read in genres more familiar to her such as newspaper articles. Her personal experience allows her to draw a comparison between the feelings of the protagonist of Benni's tale and those of Australian residents. In both cases there is opposition to change imposed by the external forces of "progress". Instead B1[169] responded to the question of whether the story reminded her of anything she had read or experienced before by linking the tale to their background and using their personal experience to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of Benni's tale:

B1 is reminded of her childhood town in Australia and how it has changed throughout the years because of commercial development. The tapping into the students' background experiences, elicited with carefully worded questions (see table 3.5.2) chapter 3), results into a more complex, intercultural interpretations of Benni's tale, across different times and spaces.

> **B1**: Il racconto mi ricorda della piccolo città della mia infanzia. Quando ero una piccola ragazza, le strade e gli edifici, la spiagga e il faro – tutto hanno un significato speciale per me e per gli altri abitanti. Durante gli anni, la città è cambiata completamente e, ora, i luoghi amati della mia infanzia sono prodotti "in vendita" ai turisti. Non posso ricordare simili tematiche nella letteratura. [...] Il racconto tratta dell'esperienza del protagonista quando era un piccolo ragazzo. Secondo lui, il sua casa infantil era un paradiso. Questo paradiso era rovinato quando era comprato da una compagnia pubblicita. [...] In un nuovo mondo dove i soldi puo comprare

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house and they too thought that the house was the most beautiful and that is why they wanted to do the advertisement. It was not important for what product the advertisement was for, only that they did it in the most beautiful house. When everyone came, they changed the house and the valley. The house did not belong to the protagonist but instead to the gentlemen and that is why the protagonist decided to go away]. *The moral of the story is that fame and beauty don't always bring you what you want and that you should value what you have. I don't think it is possible to use single words to describe this so I have chosen three phrases that I think encapsulate the story:* 1.Vivevo nella valle più bella e la mia casa era la casa più bella [I lived in the most beautiful valley and my house was the most beautiful]; 2. Vollero rendere tutto ancora più bello. [They decide to make everything even more beautiful]; 3. Beato te, che vivi in un dormitorio di periferia.... perché la tua casa non ti verrà mai rubata. [Lucky you, you live in a suburban dormitory and your home will never be stolen]. *The first phrase shows how beautiful everything was and how much focus was placed on beauty in the story. The second phrase shows how every one wants to make everything more beautiful even if it isn't theirs and again that there is a large focus on how beautiful something is. The last phrase shows that although what you have may not be the most wonderful it is yours and will not be taken from you by those who envy and want what you have.*]

[169] Similarly to B0, not quoted here.

> tutto, la casa è diventata un oggetto di desiderio. [...] Trattavano tutti [...] come oggetti [...].[170]

B1's response to the whole story constitutes a bridge between categories 1, 2 and 3 since she adds an extra layer to the theme of natural versus artificial beauty with her political comments about commercialization and global economy. Like the protagonist of "La casa bella" she grieves for her lost natural paradise and blames the "new" mercenary world where anything desired can be bought with money. Her response and her choice of key words show a more existential interpretation of the underlying meanings of the tales such as the lack of control human beings have over their lives. Although she identifies the key meanings of the text, she does not explain them by linking them to the text's style.

B2.1 strengthens the theme of change by adding that all good things must end. She also adds an extra dimension with her comment that the tale is also making a social comment about the artificiality of the media. In her response the student also includes comments about the difficulties involved in interpreting literature in L1 and L2: "La questione 'di che cosa tratta il racconto' è sempre dificile soppratutto in italiano, ma anche quando leggiamo in inglese. Spesso è difficile scegliere gli avvenimenti importante alla trama quando non capiamo tutto."[171] She recognizes that the feelings expressed in the tale are universal, but observes that the tale's plot is original.[172] B2.1 stresses the social significance of the description of the father's face by explaining the parallels in the

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[170] [**B1**: The tale reminds of the little town of my childhood. When I was a little girl, the streets and buildings, the beach and the lighthouse – all had a special meaning for me and for the other inhabitants. During the years the city has completely changed and now the cherished places of my childhood are products "on sale" for the tourists. I can not remember similar themes in literature. [...] The tale deals with the protagonist's experience when he was a small boy. According to him, his childhood home was a paradise. This paradise was ruined when it was bought by an advertising agency. [...] In a new world where money can buy anything, the house has become an object of desire. [...] They treated everyone [...] as objects [...].]*To me the words that exemplify this story are: 1. the "global economy" (ie the current world where the market rules and people, traditions and community are not valued highly and often become the helpless victims of "market forces"); 2. "shipwreck" as in "life is in itself and forever shipwreck" [...]. It encapsulates the idea that the things upon which our happiness depends, and which we often take for granted, can at any moment be swept away by forces beyond our control.*

[171] **B2.1**: [The question "what the short story deals with" is always difficult especially in Italy, but also when we read in English. Often it is difficult to choose events that are important for the plot, when we do not understand everything].

[172] **B2.1**: "Mi ha piaciuto molto questo racconto, perché non è completamente come qualcosa che ho letto nel passato. Però, gli idee sono simili a molti racconti, film, cansoni e anche rifletta i sentimenti della vita abbastanza comune. ["I really liked this tale, because it is not completely like anything I've read in the past. However, the ideas are similar to many short stories, films, songs and also reflect fairly common feelings in life. Whilst there are ideas similar to other tales, I think that the plot is original].

story between natural beauty, exemplified by the bark-like face of the father,[173] and the falseness of artificial beauty, represented by a perfectly tanned face, or by the "made up" pigs as we would see in a television advertisement of life in the country side.[174]

B3's response adds a different dimension by indicating that the key words of the tale about the destruction of natural beauty are lack of appreciation and respect for nature and the inhabitants of "La casa bella": "la mancanza di rispetto e la mancanza di apprezzamento". Her affective response is based on the feelings of the protagonist, firstly when his mother dies and then when the television troupe takes over the house. Although she does not explicitly state it, she notices that it is at this point, after the extremely beautiful death of the mother that "feelings" in the story changes. Although the mother dies suffocated by beautiful red apples, obviously one's own mother's death can never be beautiful, in other words the adult narrator is being ironic although supportive of the protagonist's point of view that life in the beautiful home up to that point was good, despite the terrible accidents that can occur. [175]

Reading the whole tale (1) - Category 2: Understanding the story as a power struggle for land rights

Two students linked Benni's tale about modern society taking over and destroying the natural beauty of the land (of course this is a bit idealised since the narration especially at the beginning is filtered through a child's point of view) to Aboriginal land rights. The link is quite appropriate since Aborigines had/have a great attachment to the land, a land that has been spoilt by whites as the "Casa bella" was spoilt by the advertising agency (symbolizing the multimedia society). Four students (A4; A4.1; A4.2, and A5) in fact added a transcultural dimension to their interpretation of the theme of loss of land and change, comparing the protagonist of "La casa bella" to the dispossession of Aboriginal land. The theme of attachment to one's land and loss of identity resulting

[173] **B2.1**: "È un commento sociale: dice che la televisione e la pubblicità sono falso ma che la vita vero è bellissima, una faccia come la corteccia è più bella che una faccia "perfetta" e abbronzata." [It is a social comment: it says that television and publicity are false but that natural life is extremely beautiful, a bark-like face is more beautiful than a "perfect" tanned face].

[174] Examples of such advertisements are the images and slogans set in a lovely and perfect countryside of the popular brand of products called "Mulino bianco" [White Mill] which includes "healthy" and "wholesome" snacks for the whole family, as the slogan stresses.

[175] **B3:** *When I read this story I thought it was strange because I have never read anything like it before. I felt really sorry for the father and his son, because everything they've worked hard for has been overtaken and ruined just for commercial purposes. Although I have never read a story with this type of theme, the structure is that of a typical narrative, with its orientation, complication, resolution and coda or moral.*

from uprooting runs strongly in Benni's first tale and also in Australian literary and artistic production. As for the first task, less experienced readers of literature reached a more complex understanding of the text after classroom reflection. However, some of the less experienced readers of literary texts were able to make the most interesting cross-cultural links between Benni's narrator being forced to abandon his beautiful home and valley and Australian Aborigines being forced off the land. I will quote the most complex response of the three in which the student is able to explain her parallel with Aboriginal land rights in Australia with specific aspects of Benni's tale.[176]

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[176] This student chose to write her interpretation of the whole story in English and the description of her reading processes in Italian. Since her text consists of 4.5 pages, I have quoted only the sections that show her original, cross-cultural analysis of "La casa bella": **A5**: This story does not actually remind me of any literature I have read before or of any particular events that occurred in my life. It does, however, remind me of a current issue that Australia is facing today, that is, the issue of land rights of the aboriginal community in Australia. In the story the protagonist describes the beautiful environment of his homeland, which is overtaken and destroyed by powerful men. The history of the aborigines follows the same pattern. They contentedly lived on their sacred land, surrounded by the natural environment until British colonists settled in Australia and they too, took over and declared the land as their own. They treated the aborigines as though they were not even human, therefore believing they had the rights to take control of the land, cultivate it and destroy its sacred significance for the aborigines. I believe [...] that the power men mistreat the residents of the valley, by forcing them to act out degrading roles. [...] In the stolen generation aboriginal children were forced to grow up in an Anglo-Saxon society and adopt their life styles. Such as eating foods and wearing clothes they weren't used to and also practicing Christianity. The same way in the story the protagonist is told to wear clogs and his father made to act as a scarecrow. [...] In the story the protagonist is eventually forced to leave as he cannot adapt to the changes, the same way that some aborigines disappeared into the desert and other environments to escape modern society. At first the story seemed very simple and straightforward. I believed it was simply a story about a group of advertising producers who overtake a small town and destroy its beauty by adding the artificial elements of a studio set. However, upon reading the questions that we needed to answer, such as identifying the themes and meaning of the tale, I became suddenly aware that the story was far more intense and complex that what it first appeared to be. I constantly had to re-read particular sections to determine if they contained a hidden theme or message. Two themes which I immediately recognized were the themes of 'power' and 'struggle'. The men who come into town and overtake represent 'Power'. An example of this is when the power men buy the valley and gain immediate control over it: "comprarono valle, terreno, casa, animali e vegetali" [they bought valley, land, home, animals and vegetables] [...] and turn what was once a naturally beautiful valley into an artificial land, robbed of its true identity: "Pettinarono il gallo, aggiunsero dei soli artificiali, misero dei campanacci d'argento alle mucche e una scritta "forno" sul forno" [They combed the rooster, added artificial suns, put silver bells on the cows and a sign on the oven: "Oven". The theme of 'struggle' is represented by the residents of the valley [...]. What was once to them a carefree life style has now become a life of struggle caused by the imposters. This also gives rise to the theme of 'adaptation to change'. Change within a community is a very difficult process [...] The story ends with a powerful theme of independence. The protagonist struggles to come to terms with change [...]. He realizes his valley has been violated to an extent that it shall never return to its natural state. Upon realizing that his home has lost its true identity, he realizes he must escape, possibly fearing he may lose his own identity in the process. [...] Three words which exemplify the tale are: signori, spaventapasseri, and rubato [sirs, scarecrow and stolen]. [...] 'Spaventapasseri' [...] represents the whole community [...] and can be perceived as almost a prisoner [...] it is powerless [...] The word 'rubato' virtually sums up the whole story [...].

By recontextualising the tale in an Aboriginal Australian environment, this reader politicises Benni's tale and gives it transcultural meaning. The themes of loss of land and identity are drawn out and explained by using the words "rubato" and "spaventapasseri", with which the student underlines the crucial distinction between dispossession and the powerlessness of both Aborigines and protagonist of the story. However, the student interprets the ending of "La casa bella" positively, as avoiding loss of identity by leaving the "changed" valley and affirming one's independence by becoming a traveler. This response shows that less experienced readers of literature, by drawing transcultural comparisons, may produce more daring analyses of literary texts because they are less constrained by rules of what is strictly defined as literary competence and author-driven interpretations.

Reading the whole tale (1) - Category 3: Understanding the story as an allegory of the struggle of the powerless to preserve their way of life

This way of understanding the story was expressed by four students B2, B1.2, B4 and B5 (1 below twenty years of age, one between 20 and 25 and two above 35). I will quote especially from B2's and B5's response to show the crucial difference between interpretations of "La casa bella" in this category and the previously reported responses in category 1 and 2, is that in this category students' responses showed awareness of fundamental existential themes such as change, and have linked it to the modern struggle between country and city ideology. In order to formulate their understanding of the text, these students have all looked closely at the style of the text, as well as adding their personal experience in Australia, in some cases:

> **B2**: [...] Credo che il racconto sia un'allegoria dell'intrusione dei valori moderni in un mondiale tradizionale causando disordine [...]. Un'ideologia della campagna contro una ideologia della città. L'esistenza ideale dell'autore è distrutta non dalla conquista fisica ma dalla distruzione del codice morale [...]. "Fecero della valle un posto falso" [...]. Niente in questo racconto è mai successo a me e non credo di aver mai letto un altro racconto come "La casa bella". [...] L'autore dipinge un quadro idillico [...]. Il lettore subito si accorge che le descrizioni sono idealistiche e non vere. Nel passato un paradiso come questo sarebbe minacciato da un esercito [...] il paradiso viene sconvolto da una forza più contemporanea – una stazione televisiva. Mentre un esercito destruggerebbe la valle fisicamente, la stazione

televisiva assalisce i valori e la qualità di vita, che sono caratteristiche della comunità [...].[177]

B2 grasps the cultural schemata of the tale by using both her personal experience and her background knowledge of literary text. Similarly, B1.2 captures the absurdity intrinsic in the struggle between natural and artificial world: the beautiful home and valley became ugly because of their beauty: "Il racconto si svolge in un posto che era bellissimo ma è diventato brutto per colpa della sua bellezza".[178] To end her response, B1.2 also used key phrases from the text which encapsulate the feelings of the protagonist: had he never had a beautiful home, his dream would never have crumbled as well as the broader meaning referring to a disappeared way of life. [179]

For B4, the tale carried a particular emotional significance as it reminded her of her personal experience of when her farm was sold: "Posso pensare delle cose simili nella mia vita, per esempio quando mio padre ha venduto la mia casa al uomo americano molto ricco [...] era un grande cambio, molto difficile per la mia famiglia".[180] After a reflection, written in Italian, on her personal experience and a comparison with a similar situation in Benni's tale, B4 provides an in-depth interpretation in English based on the text's style, in particular some of the images and metaphors and how they are linked within the text.[181] In particular, B4's is the only way of understanding the text that

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[177] **B2:** [...] I believe that the tale is an allegory of the intrusion of modern values in a traditional world which causes disorder [...]: countryside ideology against city ideology. The ideal existence of the author is destroyed not by the physical conquest but the destruction of the moral code [...]. They turned the valley into a fake place [...]. Nothing in this tale has ever happened to me and I do not believe that I have read another tale like "The beautiful home". [...] The author portrays an idyllic picture [...]. The reader realizes immediately that the descriptions are idealistic and untruthful. In the past, a similar paradise would have been threatened by an army [...] the paradise is thrown into confusion by a more contemporary force – a television troupe. Whilst an army would have destroyed the valley physically, the television troupe attacks the values and quality of life which are characteristic of the community [...].

[178] **B1.2** [The tale takes place in a place that used to be incredibly beautiful but that has become ugly because of its beauty].

[179] **B1.2**: "Il racconto è quasi sommato alla fine quando il protagonista osserva che sarebbe stato più fortunato di aver vissuto in "vicolo fatiscente". Questo commento descrive il dolore che sente avendo visto la rovina della sua bella casa. Tutto questo serve di sviluppare il tema dell'intrusione della vita moderna e la frammentazione della natura e la vita dei contadini. [The way in which this irony is developed utilizes fantasy. For example, the descriptions of the animals are fanciful [...]. I think that the theme of this story refers to the search for beauty [...]. The tale is almost summed up at the end when the protagonist observes that he would have been luckier if he had lived in "a crumbling alley". This comment describes grief he feels having seen the ruin of his beautiful home. All this serves to develop the theme of the intrusion of modern life and the fragmentation of nature and peasants' way of life.]

[180] **B4** [I can think of similar things in my life, for example when my father sold our house to a very rich American man. He uses the house for big parties and the weddings of famous people. It was a big change, very difficult for my family].

[181] **B4:** It is difficult to understand the plot and storyline without committing to a full translation of the text. There is always method in an author's choice of words and phrases, carrying specific connotations in

includes a perceptive, sensitive explanation of the image of the moon[182] to symbolize the departure of the protagonist. Perhaps because she had grown up in the country and also her familiarity with literary symbols and mythology, this student noticed this change in the text, indicated also by the adversative conjunction "ma" [but"]. In this case, as also for some of the other students, the discourse abilities are more advanced than her language abilities, only to be expected given that the students were only in their 4th semester of Italian, and given this student was an experienced reader of literature.[183] Allowing English after the required amount in Italian proved rewarding for the students because it meant they could express themselves partly in their native language without the constraints of having to express difficult thoughts in Italian. It also highlighted links between variation in understanding and L2 language writing. Despite the difficulty of writing about literature in their L2, most students often wrote more than the required amount in Italian thus strengthening their L2 writing as well as their L2 reading abilities. By the last assignment, most of them had developed enough metalanguage to write their responses mostly in Italian. B5 wrote all her responses entirely in Italian, even though her discourse and literary abilities were much higher than her language abilities. Her response may be grammatically inaccurate at times, however her flamboyant style, with asides, exclamations and provoking questions make her text entertaining as well as informative:

> **B5**: Ho letto racconti simili a questo? Forse, non mi ricordo. Però, le cose simile succedono tutti i giorni, cioè vediamo l'ipocrisia della vita, le cose

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their language, which quiet often fails to successfully translate again into English. This is especially the case with my limited understanding of Italian! However, for me (and I believe each person's interpretation can differ significantly) the story carries a message about the emphasis humans tend to place on the value of material possessions. [...] The earlier use of the metaphor "fermava i coltelli degli assassini", indicated that this idealistic life was facing change and challenge in the future. Benni deliberately wrote the opening narrative to give subtle tastes of this impending threat amid a dominantly positive account of the life the narrator loves, or indeed, loved. For me, the use of the image "una gran luna vera" indicated another change or a resolution in the story. The moon, as an astrological and mythical body often promotes images of truth and wisdom. It carries the notion that nature prevails in the end, amid this focus on human possessions and earth-bound joy. This idea is supported with the line "che casa mia non sarebbe più stata il più bel posto del paese." Earthly beauty is merely skin deep and can just as easily be destroyed or tarnished, as it is loved and cherished. Again the following contrasting images, taken from the opening and close of the story seem to support this: "il gallo più bello della zona, sembrava un leone dipinto, e quando la mattina cantava spaccava i sogni col martello" as opposed to "salutai il gallo che se ne stava triste in un angolo, con le piume cotonate, chiusi gli occhi e mi misi a correre alla cieca".

[182] In rural settings in Emilia-Romagna, Benni's region, farmers still use a calendar called in dialect, "E lunéri di smembar" [Lunar calendar of the members] which displays all the moon cycles and suggestions for planting the crops.

[183] Kramsch and Nolden (1994) also found that the discourse abilities of some of the students in their third semester German who participated in their study were greater than their linguistic abilities.

> naturali suppiantate dall'artificio: penso che questo sia l'argomento del racconto di Benni. Non mi ricordo di aver letto un libro che tratta di questi temi. Eppure mi divertito gli scritti del giornalista Ian Warden che mostra un senso d'umore beffardo che ha molto in comune con Benni – ironico ed anche nello stesso momento simpatico. Un momento! Questi sono tipici degli scritti di Shakespeare, non è vero? Quando leggo in inglese, qualche volta non ho pazienza con questo stilo di scritto (excluse Shakespeare!). Comunque mi piace quello stilo in italiano: ogni parola sembra un viaggio della scoperta. Mi preferisco leggere i gialli (io sono filistina!), anche la storia antica e moderna, la biografia (il sogetto non importa). Secondo me, il racconto mostri un stilo in quale il scrittore sembra distante dall'attività. Sebbene esprima sentimenti, questi sono agli occhi degli animali, dei genitori. L'introduzione fa crescere l'attesa di qualcosa brutta, come la guerra, la morte, la distruzione, però il risultato si rivela una delusione: l'arrivato di una troupe cinematografico (il dizionario da' 'o' non 'a'...). Le parole sono scelte bene, tuttavia non si tiene molto alla gente, soltanto agli animali, al gallo che "se ne stava triste in un angolo con le piume cotonate". Che bell'immagine! Le descrizioni sono squisite, per esempio "dei maiali troppo maiali", "una faina travestita" [...]. Il tono e l'argomento sono ironichissimi per me, questi esempi esprimono bene il senso del racconto.[184]

B5's playful and ironic response contains intertextual references, comments about her reading preferences as well as a stylistic analysis used to highlight the main themes. She signals her outrage at how the troupe treated the protagonist's father with the emphatic phrase: "Che vergogna!" [correct version]. Her passion for reading, and in particular her appreciation of Benni's text is expressed through her metaphor: "every word is a voyage of discovery" translated literally by the student into Italian as "ogni parola sembra un viaggio della scoperta" which reiterates Vygotsky's (1986) and Frye's (1970) emphasis on the decisive importance of every word in written discourse, especially in literary texts. A more appropriate version would be: "ogni parola sembra un viaggio alla

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[184] [**B5:** Have I read tales similar to this one? Perhaps, I do not remember. However, similar things happen every day, that is, we see the hypocrisy of life, natural things supplanted by artifice: I think that this is the theme of Benni's tale. I do not remember having read any books dealing with these themes. Nevertheless I enjoyed the writings of the journalist Ian Warden which show a mocking sense of humor that has a lot in common with Benni – ironic and also likeable at the same time. Wait a moment! This is typical of Shakespeare's writings, right? When I read in English, sometime I do not have patience with this style of writing (excluding Shakespeare!). Anyhow I like this style in Italian: every word seems like a voyage of discovery. I prefer to read thrillers (I am a philistine!), also ancient and modern history, biography (the subject is unimportant). According to me, the style of the tale reveals a distance between writer and activity; although it expresses feelings, these emerge through the eyes of animals and the parents. The introduction increases the expectation of something bad, such as war, death, destruction, but the outcome is disappointing: the arrival of a filming troupe (the dictionary gives 'o' not 'a'...). The words are well chosen, despite this, one does not care much about the people, only about the animals, about the rooster who "stood alone and sad in a corner with his teased feathers". What a beautiful image! The descriptions are exquisite, for example "pigs which looked too much like pig", "a beech-marten in disguise" [...]. For me, the tone and the theme are incredibly ironic, these convey well the sense of the tale.]

scoperta [di qualcosa]". In short, her synthetic account is focused on concepts as well as on formal textual features.

Outcomes of reflection on variation as shown in students' recall of tale 1

Class reflection on students' response variation of the whole tale also gave me the opportunity to clarify narrative and linguistic issues that students had raised in their first responses. For example, many students had not understood the meaning of the word 'cavedagna' because it is a Northern Italian lexicon item and is listed only in the most comprehensive dictionaries (e.g., Devoto Oli), so I explained that it meant 'the section that remains unploughed at the edge of a field' - adding that it is a word that belongs to a "disappearing world", that of "contadini" which of course is very linked to the deeper meaning of the story. That is why Benni used it even though he must have been aware that many Italians, indeed many Emiliano-Romagnoli, would not know it. I did not, all I remembered from my childhood, was a Romagnolo word, 'cavdel' - cavedale, which defines the land boundaries of properties. By using the term "*cavedagna*" Benni evokes not only a disappearing world but also a language that may also disappear as it is spoken now by a small elderly minority.

After class discussion, the students had one hour to write their "ricostruzione libera" [written recall] in which they could write anything they recalled about the text and also their reading experience. Time constraints and different conditions, for example the inability to check the text again while writing, yielded different results in terms of what students chose to focus on and their writing ability.

Category 1

In the case of A1 and A3 these results varied substantially: A3 interpreted the tale at a more literary level and also in terms of reader reception, whilst A1 produced a simpler outcome, mainly restating the events of the story:

> **A1**: Mi ricordo che le cose che hanno successo nel racconto ma non tutte le parole. All'inizio del racconto tutto e bello. La casa, la valle, i maiali, le mucche, il bosco di castagne etc. Il protagonista trova tutto meraviglioso e è felice che abita li. Ma anche il protagonista vede il pericolo della bellezza perché ha detto che è qui comincia il brutto. Tutti quelli che vedono la casa

pensano anche che tutto è bello e vogliono usare la bellezza per le loro ragioni e anche fare tutto come vogliono non lasciarlo com'è. Quindi alla fine del racconto la casa non è lo stesso e al protagonista non piaciono le cambie. Lui crede che sia meglio di avere qualcosa meno bella che avere qualcosa di bello che è rubato. Ogni volta che ho letto il racconto diventavo più sicura di capire tutto o almeno abbastanza.[185]

A3: Il testo inizia con una descrizione di una casa che sembra troppo bella ad essere vera. Una persone sta parlando dell sua vita, una riflessione di qualcosa che non c'è ne più. Usano le metaphore esaggerate per descrivere gli animali e le verdure, queste parole sono forte fanno le imagini strani nelle mente dei lettori. La prima volta che ho letto i primi due paragrafi ho sapevo che qualcosa succedera che rovinerà questa bella atmosfera, però non lo sapevo sarà colpo della media. È veramente una storia che fa pensare ai lettori, come per ogni persona l'ambiente può essere diverso e può significare diverse cose. La media ha pensato che dopo aver finito a fare una pubblicità in questo paese dipittono una scena più bella di quella vera, invece per il narrattore non era. La media hanno rubato sua casa e non poteva più abitare la dentro. La storia è fatta in un modo comico che alcune volte avevo difficoltà in scoprire la significato però vedo adesso l'umore del narratore, per esempio quando parlava del suo padre, lui poteva spaventare i passeri nel mezzo del campo senza d'essere il spaventa-passeri. Era una storia triste però bella.[186]

B3: La prima volta che ho letto il racconto, non ho potuto capire il senso della trama. [...] Dopo aver letto il racconto più volte, potevo interpretare il racconto, realizzare le complessità del testo. Per me il racconto dimonstra come alcune persone non rispettano o apprezzano la bellezza di natura. Questo è vero oggi, con la società moderna e la tecnologia. Molte persone

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[185] [**A1:** I remember that the things that happened in the tale but not all the words. In the beginning of the tale everything is beautiful, the house, the valley, the pigs, the cows, the chestnut wood etc. The protagonist finds everything marvelous and is happy to live there. But the protagonist too sees the dangers of beauty because he said and it is here that the worst begins. Everyone who sees the house also thinks it is beautiful and wanted to use this beauty for their own reasons and also do everything as they want it and not leave it as it is. Therefore at the end of the tale the house is not the same and the protagonist does not like changes. He believes that it is better to have something less beautiful than to have something beautiful which is stolen from you. Every time I read the story I became surer that I understandood everything or enough].

[186] [**A3:** The text begins with a description of a house that seems too beautiful to be true. A person is talking about his life, a reflection of something that is no longer there. They use exaggerated metaphors to describe animals and vegetables, these words are strong and create strange images in the minds of readers. The first time that I read the first two paragraphs I knew that something would happen to ruin this beautiful atmosphere, but I did not know it would be the fault of the media. It is truly a story that makes readers think, like how environments can be different and mean different things. The media thought that after having finished doing the advertisement in this town they would portray a more beautiful scene than the real one, but this was not so for the narrator. The media stole his house and he could no longer live there. The story is recounted in a comical way and therefore at times I had difficulties in discovering its meaning but now I see the narrator's humor, for example when he spoke about his father who could frighten the sparrows in the middle of the field without being a scarecrow. It was a sad but beautiful story].

> dimenticano le cose semplici (come la natura) e invece, si concentrano sulle comodità moderne.[187]

If I compare B3's first written response to the whole tale to her text, reported above, after collective reflection on response variation, the most noticeable change is a shift from a descriptive analysis, restating the facts from Benni's tale, to a more political, albeit vaguely hinted, interpretation of the theme as well as an explanation of how the text affected her and changed her at the personal level. By reflecting on Benni's tale, she gained a stronger appreciation of things that she normally takes for granted in her own life. The three examples quoted, A1, A3 and B3, show the variation in responses in this group of students. There was a progression from a restating of the facts with the awareness now that something bad will happen (A1), to an acquired awareness in the second writing of the importance of point of view ("la media ha pensato che dopo aver finito a fare una pubblicità in questo paese dipittono una scena più bella di quella vera, invece per il narratore non era"), the tragic irony behind the mocking tone of the writer ("suo padre, lui poteva spaventare i passeri nel mezzo del campo senza d'essere il spaventa-passeri") and reader-response (A3). B3, as already mentioned, interprets the story as the intrusion of technology in the natural environment.

Category 2

Interestingly, in her class recall A5 focused on explaining how her reading approach had changed throughout the cycles, rather than on providing a "ricostruzione libera" of the tale for which she had already written an extensive interpretation written in English which traces the steps of her change, from her own perception:[188]

> **A5:** A primo, il racconto "la casa bella" sembrava dificile, perché aveva molte parole che non capivo. Dopo ho cercato le parole nel dizionario, ho capito il racconto più meglio. Però il racconto è diventato dificile perché abbiamo dovuto analizzare le teme e il messagio del racconto. Quando

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[187] [**B3:** The first time I read the tale, I could not understand the meaning of the plot. After reading the tale several times, I could interpret the tale when I became aware of the complexity of the text. According to me the tale shows that some people do not respect or appreciate the beauty of nature. This is true today, in modern technological society. Many people forget simple things (like nature) and instead, they concentrate on modern commodities.] *With every reading of the story, I found it easier to go beyond the literal interpretation of the passage and find the meaning of the theme. I found that the imposition of the men and their technology on the house and land of the protagonist, is comparable to what happens in society today with the buildings and suburbs and cities. People don't stop to think of what they are destroying or who they are affecting by doing this, and that's where this story made me aware and appreciate the simple things I take for granted.*

[188] Although students' perceptions may not be valued by some traditional applied linguists, they are considered as crucial to understanding differences in students' learning outcomes by phenomenographers and general educational researchers, as already explained in chapter 2 and 3.

> leggo literatura in inglese o un'altra lingua non paga mai attenzione delle teme e messagi, dunque per me questa parte dell'esercizio era difficile. Ho dovuto discutere questo parte dell'esercizio con una compagna perché non ero sicuro di me a fare da solo. Però dopo l'ho discusa mi sentivo sicura di me. Era interessante perché dapprimo non sapevo che potevo scrivere però quando ho comincio scrivere non potevo fermare. Quando ho letto le idee delle compagne del classe, ero un poco preocupata perché loro avevano l'idee diferenta da me, però ho scelto di ignorare le loro idee diferenta da me però ho scelto a ignorare le loro idee, perché avrai perduto sicuro di me. Adesso sono molto orgogliosa dei miei sforzi perché non ho mai guardato a una storia in una maniera analitica.[189]

The student is referring in particular to comments by one of the adult students in the class who held very firm traditional beliefs about respecting the author's intent according to which literary texts should be read (B5). It is worth underlining that such a strict, exclusively text-based rather than reader-based, interpretation of literary texts can narrow the scope of the text read and intimidate some less experienced students during classroom dialogue. In fact, during classroom reflection, tensions developed between such 'personal' readings, based on background experience and knowledge of one's own cultural world, and strictly text-based readings based on the notion of author's intention. Classroom reflection and discussion on reading and interpretation, mediated by the teacher, focused on the importance of relating unknown texts to one's knowledge of the world, to be able to make sense of them, especially initially. It was also stressed that readers should be able to justify and defend their own statements about the text with elements internal to the text. Culturally though, parallels could be drawn between very different societies, as the themes included in Benni's tales are universal.

Category 3

The most significant changes within category 3, as shown by the following students' responses, occurred in students who had been very cautious in their response to task 1 (infer story outcome) and had firmly stood by their first interpretation of the beginning

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[189] [**A5:** At first the tale "The beautiful home" seemed difficult because it had many words that I did not understand. After having looked up all words in the dictionary, I understood the tale better. However, the tale became difficult because we had to analyse the themes and the message of the tale. When I read literature in English or in another language I never pay attention to the themes and messages, so for me this part of the exercise was difficult. I had to discuss this part of the exercise with a peer because I was not sure of my self and that I could do it on my own. It was interesting because at first I did not know that I could write but when I began writing I could not stop. When I read the ideas of my class peers, I was a bit worried because they had different ideas from me however I decided to ignore their ideas which were different from mine, however I chose to ignore their ideas because I would have lost confidence in my self. Now I am very proud of my efforts because I had never looked at a story in an analytical manner].

of the tale (e.g., B1.2) or students who had previously provided detailed responses (e.g., B2.1). This is shown by the following responses after having read the whole tale:

> **B1.2**: La prima volta che ho letto i due primi paragrafi dal testo mi hanno dato un'altra impressione di quello che ce l'ho adesso avendo letto tutto il racconto. All'inizio ho pensato che il brano non fosse un commento ironico sulla vita moderna. Invece ho pensato che il protagonista sarebbe tornato alla sua casa dopo un viaggio in cui avrebbe trovato che il mondo esterno fosse stato brutto. Comunque la storia continua ad essere basata nella valle e la valle era diventata una riflessione del mondo esterno. Dopo aver letto tutto il racconto ho notato che il racconto è scritto usando un tono ironico. Infatti questo tono è così ironico che l'ironia può essere descritta "ironia tagliente". Dunque l'impressione che ho tratto dal racconto è cambiata in modo significativo.[190]

> **B2.1**: La mia comprensione del racconto ha cambiato molto dopo ogni volta di l'aver letto. Come tutti i racconti intelligenti, il senso diviene più chiaro al lettore dopo un po' di tempo – penso che non sia un racconto veramente forte si tutti i temi e gli idee sono chiari dalla commincia. Dopo la prima volta di aver letto il racconto, non ero sicuri del senso – ho capito gli idee generale e i temi evidenti come la bellezza. Ho capito solamente i temi ovvi e direttamente chiari dal *text* / vocabolario. Anche non ero sicuro della trama perché ci sono gli elementi non evidenti dalla commincia. Come in inglese, prende molte volte, e il tempo a pensare per capire gli elementi e i temi delicati (*subtle*). Per esempio, la battaglia della famiglia per la loro valle è ovvio, ma il tema del dominio diviene chiaro più tardi. Anche, che la valle è bella è chiaro inizialmente, ma la bellezza vero e falso è meno chiaro. Il mio punto di vista è cambiato molto durante le due settimane.[191]

The student's statement that her point of view has changed substantially during the two-week cycles of reading, writing and reflection, is exemplified by her explanation of how

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[190] [**B1.2:** The first time that I read the two paragraphs from the text they gave me a different impression from the one I have now having read the whole tale. In the beginning I thought that the excerpt was not an ironic comment on modern life. Instead I thought that the protagonist would go back to his home after traveling and finding out that the external world was ugly. However the story continues to be set in the valley and the valley had become a reflection of the external world. After reading the whole tale I noticed that the short story is written using an ironic tone. In fact this tone is so ironic that the irony can be described as "cutting irony". So the impression I have drawn from the tale has changed in a significant way.]

[191] [**B2.1:** My comprehension of the tale has changed a lot each time I read it. Like all intelligent short stories, the meaning becomes clearer to the reader after a while – I think that it would not be a strong tale if all the themes and ideas are clear from the beginning. After reading the tale the first time, I was not sure of its meaning – I understood the general ideas and the obvious themes, such as beauty. I understood only the themes that were obvious and directly clear from the text / vocabulary. I was not sure about the plot either because from the beginning there are elements that are not obvious. As in English, it takes many times, and time, to think in order to understand the elements and the subtle themes. For example, the battle of the family for their beautiful valley is clear initially, but true and false beauty is less clear. My point of view has changed a lot during the two weeks.]

she processed the deeper themes and meanings of the text. As she underlines, even in English it takes several readings before understanding the less evident themes. Although such observations may seem obvious, students do not necessarily read texts, even in L2, more than once or twice, especially if they are reading solely for entertainment. That is why it is advisable to provide a pedagogic frame that elicits repeated readings and more complex interpretations.

During class reflection on response variation, as is shown in some of these responses, ideas bounced and were re-elaborated in students' class recall of the tale, for example both B1.2 and B5 use the phrase "ironia tagliente" to describe Benni's sharp ironic tone in the tale, and B4 has refocused her previously personalized interpretations by defining its discourse also in terms of country and city ideology:

> **B4**: "La casa bella" [...] è un racconto di una famiglia che abita nella campagna, e viva una vita ideale. C'è la tema dell'intrusione dei valori moderni in un mondo tradizionale. Benni ha scritto un racconto che, al primo, ha un fuoco con la fantasia. Ma, c'è un cambio con la realtà della società del mondo moderno. C'è uno scontro dell'ideologia della campagna [...] verso l'ideologia della città. E purtroppo, la vita della città, la televisione e le cose moderne, hanno vinto nel racconto. Però, al inizio dopo ho letto il testo ero un po' confusa, specialmente con "gli assassini". Ma adesso, ho un nuovo comprensivo. Lo so che c'è un'immagina per il senso della perfezione e che perfino una persona molto determinata (per esempio gli assassini) fermava con la bellezza della valle. Allora, adesso, penso vedere il messaggio di essere l'effetto del cambio e la vita moderna sulle vite dei altri, la distruzione e il mercantilismo della televisione e l'industria, sono gravi per la famiglia e la loro bella vita nel racconto.[192]

> **B5**: Mi ricordo che le belle descrizioni fanno crescere il senso di attesa di una cosa brutta [...]. Però, siamo delusi! [...] (Infatti le descrizioni sono tanto nauseanti che mi aspettavo il peggio). Agli nuovi piace il villaggio [...]. Però devono cambiare tutte per sottostare la loro idea delle attese della gente in generale. Devono fare cambiare le cose naturali che esistono già nel stato perfetto. Il padre diventa il spaventapasseri – che vergoga. Sono felice

[192] [**B4:** "The beautiful home" is a tale of a family who lives in the country and leads an ideal life. There is the theme of the intrusion of modern values in a traditional world. Benni has written a tale that, at first, is focused on fantasy. But, there is a change with the reality of modern world society. There is a clash between country ideology [...] and city ideology. And unfortunately, city life, television and modern things, have won in the tale. However, at first I was a bit confused after reading the text, especially with "the assassins". But now, I have a new comprehension. I know that there is an image that conveys the sense of perfection that even very determined people (for example the assassins) could be stopped by the beauty of the valley. So, now, I think that I see the message as being the effects of change and modern life on others' lives, the destruction and the mercenary commercialism of television and industry which are painful for the family and their beautiful life in the tale.]

> di aver comprendre le parole "i coltelli degli assassini" finalmente! Però il mio punto di vista non ha cambiato. Il tono è ironico, tagliente. I protagonisti nella valle sono impotenti [...]".[193]

B5's class recall besides a few orthographical errors is a concise account of the significant moments in the tale. The point of view of the student may not have changed. However, she is now able to understand the symbolic meaning of the assassin's knives. Furthermore, she describes the introductory descriptions as "nauseating", reinforcing the sense of disappointment she perhaps feels as a reader since no great tragedy takes place in her view. Her recall ends with a topical sentence relating to the theme of powerlessness that was not included in her first response to the whole story, but foregrounded by several students in category 1 and 2. As a result, her recall was expanded to include a social perspective on the tale. Her final analysis of the plot is based on the ironic tone that runs through the tale. Most students perhaps interpreted the tale too seriously given the ironic, almost mocking tone of the tale. Behind the cynicism there is nevertheless tragedy: the loss of a natural way of life which was by no means perfect, but was better than the imposed alternative which forces the protagonist to leave his home and valley.

In summary, the second reflective cycle consisted of more analytical tasks as it involved comparing their responses to the whole text written at home and a written recall in class. Although some students stated that they had not changed their views or changed them slightly, and others said that their views were stronger because similar to those of the other students, their texts show that their understanding of the text was expanded after the class reflection on variation. As analysis of students' texts has shown, most students modified some aspects of their interpretation of the text, and in some cases what changed was actually students' reading and interpreting processing of literary texts and their self perception as readers of literature (e.g., A5). Students' evaluation of the cyclic process, reported in section 6.4.1 will however reveal that many students attributed variation in the level of text understanding especially to collective reflection in class.

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[193] [**B5:** I remember the beautiful descriptions that increase the sense of expectation of something bad [...]. However, we are deceived! [...] (In fact the descriptions are so nauseating that I expected the worst). The new people like the village [...]. However they must change everything to yield to their idea of people's general expectations. They must change the natural things that are already perfect in their natural form. The father becomes a scarecrow – how shameful! I am happy that I have understood the words "the knives of the assassins" at last! However my point of view has not changed. The tone is ironic, cutting. The protagonists in the valley are powerless [...].]

Variation in the reading approaches to Tale 1

The variation found in reading approaches is critical only for certain aspects. I will start by outlining the similarities across the three categories and then point out the main elements of critical variation among groups. All students indicated in their written responses or in class that the repeated reading method was useful, since each reading allowed them to focus on certain aspects of the text and progressively gain a deeper understanding of its style and meaning: "I found myself [...] reading and re-reading the passage several times, firstly to gain meaning and then to make sense of the whole story" (B3); "Come in inglese, prende molte volte, e il tempo a pensare per capire gli elementi e i temi delicati (subtle). Per esempio, la battaglia della famiglia per la loro valle è ovvio, ma il tema del dominio diviene chiaro più tardi. Anche, che la valle è bella è chiaro inizialmente, ma la bellezza vero e falso è meno chiaro. Il mio punto di vista è cambiato molto durante le due settimane" (B2.1) [As in English, it takes many times, and the time to think, in order to understand the subtle elements and themes].

Unlike in study 1 (1999) reported in chapter 5, none of the students complained or resented having to read the text several times. In my view, three aspects influenced this positive outcome: 1) the text selected was only 2.5 pages long; 2) the text was more descriptive and simpler in terms of narrative structure, in comparison with literature read in 1999; 3) initially students only read the first two paragraphs; 4) activities were structured to allow students to discover the meaning of the tale gradually, by focusing and linking formal and narrative features to their own background experience and schemata.

Most students stated that they had never read texts similar to "La casa Bella", although some (e.g. B2.1) recognized in it themes that were universal and other students (A1; A3), or linked it to stories they heard or read in the newspapers; whilst other were reminded of events that occurred in their childhood (B1; B4). None of the students linked the tale to any of the short stories they had previously read as part of their Italian course, although some of the themes were similar to those in "La casa bella", albeit expressed in a very different style, as some students themselves remarked in their final assignment. This seems to indicate that it is easier to tap into one's own personal experience and background rather than relating newly processed literary material with

texts read previously in the same language. All students indicated that they read the tale several times, from a minimum of three times (e.g., A2; B0; B4; B4.1) to a maximum of ten times (A5), and most students had trouble identifying the meaning of difficult words, such as "cadevagna'. Most students indicated that they read the whole story quickly the first time (A1; A4; A4.1; A4.2; A5; B0; B1; B2.1): "I read the story fairly quickly, marking the words and phrases I did not understand but skipping over them" (B1), and then re-read it several times more slowly. Conversely, some students first read the story slowly (A2; A3; B1.2; B3; B4.1), whilst B5 read it slowly and quickly, but did not indicate in which order.

The ways in which students described their reading processes during task 1 revealed a critical variation between categories A and B.[194] For example, the "slow" readers from category A (A2 and A3) concentrated almost exclusively on difficulties encountered in translating difficult words: "I first read it very slowly, mistakenly concentrating on the unfamiliar words, rather than trying to grasp what the story was about" (A2); whilst responses from category B (B1.2; B3; B4.1) explained the intention behind their reading procedures: "Ho letto il racconto piano per assicurarmi di comprendere il racconto e il suo significato completamente" [I read the short story slowly to ensure I understood the story and its meaning completely.]. A2's statement about choosing the "wrong" reading approach, reading the text slowly at first, rather than skimming over it, is representative of perceptions of L2 reading held by many students in the class, perhaps derived from textbooks and previous language educators. Results from chapter 5 reinforce my view that, skim reading the first time is advisable to gain a sense of achievement by understanding the basic storyline as long as students understand that more attentive readings are also necessary to achieve a holistic interpretation based on the elaboration of links between style and meaning.

Another aspect which varied across the groups was the environment in which students read the tale. For example, some students (A4; A5) indicated that they needed a silent, quiet place such as a library or their study, to be able to concentrate; conversely some students (A1; B5), due to their busy schedule seem to read anywhere and everywhere: "every break I had from work on Tuesday so it was in different places as I work in three

[194] This was similar in 1999: category 1 and 2 focused on individual items of texts whilst categories 3 and 4 had a deep, at times also strategic, approaches to texts.

different places. This meant that the process was stilted with lots of stops and starts but I found that each time I was fresh and could concentrate better rather than trying to do it all at once" (A1). A1's statement seem to reaffirm that reading a whole text at once quickly is not the best method of L2 reading. The student is able to see the positive side of her "disrupted" reading of the tale: because she read it in sections and at different times, her mind was fresh and her concentration was greater than if she had read it all in one go. In terms of critical variation, B5 (from category 3) related Benni's mocking irony to writings by the Australian journalist Ian Warden who lives and works in Canberra, as well as Shakespeare.

In this second task, all students showed an expanded ability to interpret the text critically and to make use of metalanguage in their responses. Given that they were only in their fourth semester of Italian, they also displayed remarkable linguistic and discursive abilities in how they were able to express complex concepts in fairly accurate Italian, inserting their own authorial voices, with their personal stories and their language marked by their cultural and linguistic intercultural experiences as readers of a literary text in a non native language.

6.2.3 *Cycles 3 and 4 (weeks 11-13): Readings of Tales 2 and 3; Interactive lecture; Written responses: Differences in linking the three Tales of the Traveller*

Students read tales 2 and 3 from week 11 to week 13. As already explained, to allow students' perspectives on the text to come to the fore, my intervention in class was minimal until week 11 and consisted of explanations of difficult lexical items such as "*cavedagna*" not included in dictionaries, of probing questions as to why the author might have included it, navigation of reflection activities and, when needed, negotiation of students' different responses. In week 11, after the free reconstruction exercise, I gave a brief interactive lecture on the short story (see chapter 3) followed by a creative writing exercise focused on understanding the use of metaphors and hyperbole in everyday speech *vis à vis* literature. This activity aimed firstly at further developing students' understanding of how deeper and hidden textual meanings are foreshadowed in the author's stylistic choices, and secondly, at diagnosing their processing of this information by asking them to produce a text which included a simile and / or a metaphor. In short, the lecture was especially focused especially on literary aspects that

had proven difficult for some of the students to assist these students form their competence and improve their final outcome

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At the end of the final cycle students wrote an assignment on the three tales that did not include a second writing since it was carried out on the last day of the semester and represented the culmination the process. As already described in chapter 3, this task encouraged students to link the three stories and also search for meaningful associations with other texts read or discussed in class. Although students were familiar with Benni's style and themes by that stage, the task was more difficult than the previous two, since students ideally were supposed to link Benni's three tales and also make inter textual links to arrive at a more complex understanding of the texts and also situate them in the Italian literary and cultural world. Students' written responses to the three tales show a change both in the ability to interpret texts, by making links within the three tales and other texts, as well as an improvement in written expression and quantity of writing. However, there are differences at the beginning and at the end of the six weeks in the way learners approached the texts. As you would expect, these differences are similar to the differences in approaches to studying L2 literature described in chapter 5.[195] Differences in approaching the text were categorised as follows:

1. Nine students succeeded in identifying the surface elements connecting the three tales; intertextual analysis was either absent or superficial, and use of information I had provided in the lecture was limited
2. Four students were able to reach a higher level of understanding by comparing the three texts read to other texts read during the year, thus placing the Benni's tale within the cultural framework of the changes that occurred in Italy from World War Two onwards.
3. Three students achieved the most complex understanding of Benni's tales by comparing different aspect of the texts such as style, form and narrative structure

[195] Generally, students who participated in study 2 developed more advanced approaches to the study of literature in comparison students in the same category in study 1 despite the fact that they were only in their 4th semester of Italian and tasks and final assignment were more complex than in 1999. In category 1 of cycle 3 (2000), similarly to categories 1 and 2 (1999), adopted a surface approach but in 2000 they nevertheless managed to focus on form and plot together to link the three tales. In category 2 (2000) students' interpretations were very advanced; even though they did not discuss the links with Dante they situated Benni's three tales in their cultural and historical context. In 1999 category 3 was similar. Category 3, similarly to category 4 (1999) adopted a deep strategic approach to the study of literature. A more advanced study approach was therefore achieved by a larger number of students which is precisely the outcome I was hoping to achieve with the alternate pedagogical approach implemented for study 2.

also in the light of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and also linking the three tales to other texts read.

Linking the three Tales of the Traveller: Category 1

Category 1 includes nine students who succeeded in identifying evident differences and similarities in the three short stories with limited elaboration and expansion. These students were: A1, A2, A3, A4, A4.1, A4.2, A5, B1 and B1.2. Four students in this category were below twenty (A1; A3; A4; A4.2), three were between 20 and 25 years of age (A2; A5 and B1.2) and one was above 36 (B1). B1.2, by choice, did not participate in most of the classroom reflection cycle and displayed a slight scepticism towards the pedagogical classroom approach. B1 could not attend classes for private reasons. Results for these two students remained stable throughout the process.

My analysis concentrates especially on two ways of understanding exemplified by A5 in this category and B3 in category 3, which are particularly representative of texts produced and also of personal variables (A5 is of Italian background, between 20 and 25 years of age; B3 is of Anglo-Saxon background and was below twenty). The two students present interesting characteristics of change at the linguistic, discourse, interpretative and self-awareness level. I will now provide two representative examples (A1 and A5) from this category. A1 did not write her own description of enjoyable literature nor comments in regard to the role of L2 literature, but had indicated that she read literature in her language and strongly agreed that reading literature improved her language skills in Italian. Both A1 and A5 agreed that literature should be included at all language levels. A5's description of enjoyable literature was: "literature that I understand and is not too complicated". Her comment on the role of L2 literature: "I believe that literature is significant to one's learning of a language. However literature should be introduced in the first year of learning a language, so it better prepares students for the more difficult literature introduced in second year."

The following students' responses are indicative of the way of understanding achieved within this group and the critical variation between this category and the two other categories. They also exemplify either change or stability by comparison with the same students' previous responses in cycles 1 and 2:

> **A1**: A livello narrativo tutti i racconti cominciano con una descrizione di qualcosa per dare un'impressione da dove il racconto viene. Alla fine dei

> racconti si capisce che la descrizione, all'inizio, non era la verità ma solo un'apparenza. A livello sintassi tutti i racconti usano il passato remoto e l'imperfetto[196] [...]. Il scrittore usa anche i metafore spesso. A livello lessico credo che perché i tre racconti parlano di cose diverse il lessico non sia molto simile. I racconti descrivono come la vita italiana cambiava continuamente. Non è una cosa fissata. Il tema è tutto non è come sembra. C'è un collegamento narrativo tra i tre racconti [...]. Nel primo racconto la bellezza della casa della valle diminuisce quando la vede da un altro punto di vista. Nel secondo racconto all'inizio la puntualità sembra una nobile forma di rispetto per gli altri e contribuisce all'armonia del mondo ma alla fine si capisce che il mondo non conosce sempre armonia e la puntualità è anche una cosa che dà fastidio a qualche persona, non è molto importante come sembrava. Nel terzo racconto tutto sembra cattivo. C'è un guasto eletronico e un gran confusione. Dalla confusione troviamo un uomo buono che anche se i poveri rubano che lui ha lui rimane in mezzo di loro perché se loro soffrono anche lui dovrebbe soffrire. Dal buio poi viene la luce. Il morale dei racconti è le apparenze inguanano la verità. La verità. Il cambiamento. La diversità. Ho scelto queste tre parole per riassumere i racconti perché mi sembra che la verità che sia rivelata, è la diversità della vita italiana.[197]

This way of linking the three tales captures some important themes in the tales with limited examples from Benni's tales and no intertextual links. Compared with her inference on text outcome in cycle 1, in which she predicted that the story would continue with a banquet, her ability to grasp the meaning behind the literal level of texts, has improved. She is able to summarize the crux of the tales with two brief, punchy statements: "appearances are deceptive" and "from the dark comes the light", a proverb to highlight a narrative characteristic common to the three tales and the glint of

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[196] The "passato remoto" and the "imperfetto" are two simple Italian past tenses. The passato remoto is used to express completed actions in the distant past and is usually translated into English with the simple past tense (e.g., was; were; did; went. The "imperfetto" is used to provide descriptions in the past and also to express progressive actions occurred in the past; it is usually translated into English with the past continuous (e.g., "were doing").

[197] [**A1:** At the narrative level all tales begin with a description of something to give the impression of where the tale comes from. At the end of the tales one understands that the description, in the beginning, was not the truth but only an appearance. At the level of syntax all tales use the simple past tense and the "imperfetto" [...]. The writer often also uses metaphors. At the lexical level I believe that since the three tales talk about different things the lexicon is not very similar. The tales describe how Italian life changed continuously. It is not a fixed thing. The theme is everything is not as it appears to be. There is also a narrative link amongst the three tales [...]. In the first tale the beauty of the house and valley diminishes when one sees it from another point of view. In the second tale at the beginning punctuality seems a noble form of respect for others contributing to the world's harmony but in the end it is also something that annoys some people, it is not as important as it seemed. In the third tale everything looks bad. There is an electronic malfunction and great confusion. From the confusion we find a good man who, even if he is robbed by the poor, remains amidst them because if they suffer, he should suffer too. From the dark emerges the light. The moral of the tales is appearances deceive truth. Truth. Change. Diversity. I chose these three words to summarize the tales because it seems to me that the truth that is revealed is the diversity of Italian life].

hope expressed at the end of tale three. She also aptly observes that culture and society are not fixed and undergo processes of change. Her comment regarding the apparent harmony created by punctuality[198] is very perceptive however, the underlying suggestion in the text is that in fact, for the "punctual man" this lack of harmony, linked in his mind to lack of punctuality, may lead to desperate acts, so it is of crucial importance to society as a whole although unimportant to many individuals. Indeed, the author seems to suggest that the imperfect harmony of the rural world is lost forever and cannot be recaptured either by attempting to structure time with clocks, or by more sophisticated technology. As the student suggests, things come to a head in the third tale with heightened confusion and negativity. If we compare her interpretation and recall of "La casa bella" to this final response, we notice that the student links what she sees as the universal themes in the three stories with Italian social cultural reality, although she does not elaborate on how it has changed. Although her text contains inaccuracies at the grammatical (e.g., omission or selection of the wrong preposition) and cohesive level (e.g., omission of conjunctions), both her vocabulary and ability to express concepts in Italian have improved.

A5 (similarly to A2 A3, A3.1 and A3.2), is representative of a more politically oriented way of linking the three tales. Like A3 and A3.2, A5 makes intertextual links with one or more texts and provides some explanation of the differences and / or similarities between the texts. She also provides an elaborate description of her experience during the cycles:

> **A5**: In questo esercizio esaminerò i racconti La casa bella, L'inferno, L'uomo puntuale di Stefano Benni e Il problema dei posteggi di Dino Buzzati. Tra ogni di questi racconti c'è un anello comune. Ogni racconto riflette una problema che sta accadendo in società moderna. Adesso che sono familiare con il lavoro di Stefano Benni, credo il suo obiettivo sia a riflettere lo stato del mondo attraverso i suoi racconti. Lui ha una maniera unico per fare questo. Questa singnifica che i suoi riflessione di società siano nascosto negli eventi del racconto. Uno ha bisogno analizzare i racconti di Benni in profondità grande a dipinge il messaggio nascosto. Il autore Dino Buzzati, dunque, prende un approcio diverso. Il suo racconto "Il problema dei posteggi esamina essatamente che il titolo indica. Per me il

[198] There is an ironic overtone in tale 2 in the idea of punctuality is embodied by an obsessive, possibly violent man which vaguely evokes Mussolini's fascist government. The punctual man identifies punctuality with harmony, albeit apparent. Under Mussolini, trains in Italy supposedly ran on time. Mussolini, in order to portray the idea that he had brought order and stability to Italy, often stated that for the first tme trains in Italy were punctual.

racconto non c'erava alcune tema nascoste. Le temi erano veramente ovviamente. Per me i racconti di Stefano Benni erano una sfida da leggere. Ho dovuto esaminare attentamente ogni dettaglio. Quando ho letto il racconto di Dino Buzzati, era come un fiato d'aria fresca. Il racconto era molto semplice a seguire, non mi sono preoccupata per alcune teme nascosto. Tutto era chiaro. Adesso esaminerò le temi ed i messaggi dei racconti in relazione con i problemi di società moderna. "La casa bella" è un racconto che demonstra il sviluppo di una società moderna. Lo esamina una provincia piccola e tranquilla che ha sorprassato degli construttori ed i residenti della provincia rappresentano la communità innocente. Durante il formazione della pubblicità la communità esperienza crescita e trasformazione. Questi temi accandono attorno il mondo nel sviluppo di città grande. "L'inferno" è un racconto che mette in evidenza il esistenza di razzismo. Questa tema di razzismo aveva demonstrato attraverso le vagone su un treno, dove la gente avevano diviso in classi sociali, a seconda i suoi colori. La gente negre rappresenta la classe basso, e la gente bianche rappresenta la borghesia. Nel treno c'è un uomo che è sofisticato e intelligente però il suo carale demoralizza lui alle vagone di classe basso. Questo racconto significa il migrazione di gente negre in Italia. "L'uomo puntuale" è un racconto che epresa la pressione di tempo. Lo demonstra come tutti sono sempre in fretta e sotto pressione constante in vita. L'uomo con la valligia rappresenta una persona che non può far fronte ai pressioni di società. Questa aveva riflettuto attraverso la sua puntualità. La bomba è un risultato del suo crollare mentale. Il racconto è una riflessione delle terroriste che ha attacchato i treni in Bologna con una bombe. Il racconto conclude "che dietro le bombe misteriose non ci fosse alcuna organizzazione criminale, ma solo disperata ribellione di quell'ometto puntuale contro un mondo in perenne ritardo." "Il problema dei posteggi" è un altro racconto che demonstra il pressione di tempo. L'ha riflettato attraverso la sfida di un uomo che sta cercando per un posteggio, può arrivare al lavoro a tempo. L'uomo non può far fronte al pressione di questo compito, che al fine si sbarazza la sua macchina, perché sia più facile nel sua vita. Questo racconto è un riflessione anche del sviluppo constante di città grande.[199]

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[199] Since the student's text is rather long, I have reported my English translation and the rest of her text in English in note form, as follows: **A5:** "In this exercise I will examine the tales "The beautiful home", "Hell", "The punctual man" and "The problem of parking places" by Dino Buzzati. There is a common link among these tales. Every tale reflects a problem occurring in modern society. Now that I am familiar with the works of Stefano Benni, I believe that his aim is to reflect the state of the world through his tales. He has a unique manner of doing this. This means that his reflections on society are hidden in the events of the tales. One needs to analyse Benni's tales in great depth to detect the hidden message. The author Dino Buzzati, however, takes a different approach. His tale "The problem of parking places" examines exactly what the title indicates. For me there were no hidden themes in the short story. The themes were obvious. For me it was a challenge to read Benni's tales. I had to examine attentively each detail. When I read the tale by Dino Buzzati, it was like a breath of fresh air. The tale was very simple to follow, I did not worry about any hidden themes. Everything was clear. Now I will examine the themes and messages in the tales in relation to the problems of modern society. "La casa bella" is a tale that shows the development of modern society. It examines a small and tranquil province which is overtaken by construction firms. In the tale, the advertising directors are representative of the construction firms and the residents represent the innocent community. During the set up of the advertisement the community experiences growth and transformation. These are themes around the world as big cities develop. "L'inferno" is a tale that highlights the existence of racism. This theme is shown with train compartments in which people subdivided in social classes, according to their colour. Black people represent the lower

Although the student's text includes inaccuracies at the grammatical, orthographical and lexical level and a tendency to translate vocabulary literally from English (e.g., anello=ring; link; correct: collegamento), she is able to use the subjunctive correctly ("credo... sia") and the meaning of her discourse is clear. The literal translation, "anello", however captures subconsciously the Benni's circular discourse across the tales of the traveler: the hope expressed at the beginning of tale 1 remerges, albeit faintly and with ironic overtones, at the end of tale 3. At the same time, in this third task, she is able to use correctly in her text sophisticated verbal forms from my instructions and from the literary texts, such as "mette in evidenza" [highlights]; "far fronte" [to face]; "si sbarazza" [gets rid of]. The linguistic abilities of this student of Italian background seem to have developed less than her interpretative ability throughout the cycle, however the amount of text she wrote in Italian increased for each task: 1) required words: 100; amount written at home: 236; in class: 105; 2) required amount: 100 at home; 150-200 in class; amount written at home: 167; in class: 179; 3) required words: 400; amount written: 581 words (plus circa 800 in English). If we evaluate her last response with the previous ones, her discourse ability has also expanded as she is able to write her interpretation in Italian, whereas for task 2 she had opted to write in English and write the description of her reading approach in Italian. As already explained in chapter 5, students of Italian background whose parents and grandparents are predominantly dialect speakers often find Italian morphology very

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class and white people represent the bourgeoisie. In the train there is a man who is sophisticated and intelligent however his colour demoralizes him so he stays in the compartment with the lower class. This tale is symbolic of the migration of black people to Italy. "The punctual man" is a tale that expresses the pressures of time. It shows how everyone is always in a hurry and under constant pressure, so much so that they forget the most important things in life. The man with the suitcase is representative of people who cannot face the pressures of society. This is reflected through his punctuality. The bomb is a result of his mental break down. The tale is a reflection on the terrorists' who attacked the trains in Bologna with bombs. The tale concludes that [added for cohesion: perhaps behind] "the mysterious bombs there may not be any criminal organization, but only the desperate rebellion of that little punctual man against a world which is perennially late." "The problem of parking places" is another tale which shows time pressures. This is reflected in the challenge of a man who is looking for a park so he can arrive at work on time. The man cannot face the pressures involved in this task so at the end he gets rid of the car to so that his life may be easier. This tale is a reflection also of the constant development of big cities. *Three words that sum up the concepts of all three stories are: society, pressure and development. Society is an obvious concept that arises in all the stories. Even though Benni does it in a subtle way each of his stories are a reflection of what is occurring in society everyday. For example, the growth of communities' racism, the fast pace of society. Buzzati's story has a very clear example of traffic issues and the growth of a community. Pressure is another word which is expressed in each of the stories. The stories demonstrate the pressure of society. Development describes the growth and change of society in each of these stories. When you analyse these words, you find that they all contain a link which fits into the themes of Benni and Buzzati's stories. For example, in order to create a society there needs to be development and it is this development that puts pressure on the people in the society."*

difficult to learn, since it differs substantially from most Italian dialects. Although such students may at times be advantaged at comprehension and discourse level, they are definitely not at the grammatical level.

In her summaries of the storyline A5 at times changed the events described in the story to come closer to the meaning behind these events, for example the man in white in tale three cannot reach his first class seat because the corridors of the train are crammed with people, whereas the student states that he chooses to stay with the lower class, which is the meaning conveyed by his words. She also succeeds in grasping the common links between Benni's tales in general terms and states that the author has a unique way in which he expresses his themes. She elaborates further on her comment by indicating that Benni's themes are hidden in the events recounted in the tales, but does not provide any examples to show how this is achieved at a formal level. Her comparison with Buzzati's text is vividly expressed with the phrase "a breath of fresh air" (translated literally into Italian; correct version: una boccata d'aria fresca), to highlight the difference between the two authors; in Buzzati's texts the themes are obvious, because expressed in a simpler style. The way of linking the texts expressed in this student's text is representative of a more political perspective on the texts, with a tendency to restate the facts contained in the tale, as was already evident in the same group of students in their responses to the whole first tale. A5 politicized themes contained in each tale: the change from a rural to an artificial mode of life, then to a society in turmoil over which the individual has no control; and finally to a multicultural chaotic, technological *inferno*, making use also of information I had provided in my lecture, whilst in category 2 students analyzed the themes in a more philosophical way.

Linking the three Tales of the Traveller: Category 2

Category 2 includes four students who were able to reach a more complex level of understanding by comparing the three tales with other texts (except for B4) read during the year and situating Benni's tale within the cultural framework of the changes that occurred in Italy from World War II onwards by analysing the links between style,

narrative structure and meaning. These students were: B1.2, B2, B2.1, B4.1[200] and B5. Two students (B2 and B2.1) were below 20, one between 25 and 29 (B4.1) and one was above 36 years of age (B5). Only one student was partly of Italian background (B1.2). All agreed that literature enhanced appreciation and understanding of culture as well as improving language skills, only one (B4) slightly disagreed that literature should be included at all language levels. Their preferred types of literature were plays (B4), novels and poetry (B2.1) and novels, biography, history and classical writers (B5). In terms of general literature and also L2 literature, B2.1 is the only student in all three samples who made a comment on the importance of not reading passively: "Writing that makes you think, that forces you not to read passively, that after has the greatest effect on you days later. In other languages it is enjoyable if I can understand it! (As well as the above reasons)". B5 instead expressed her strong wish to study Italian Medieval and Renaissance authors. B4 focused only on L2 literature, and, like B2.1 expressed concern in regard to texts being appropriate for the students' language level, otherwise they would become a "burden", and also specific concerns with difficult vocabulary such as idiomatic phrases. Despite the concerns expressed about the role of L2 literature in the pre-process survey, as their responses show, their linguistic and interpretative abilities developed throughout the cycles:

> **B4**: Tutti i tre racconti [...] cominciano con le aperture generali per esempio, "Vivevo nella valle più bella" [...]. Tutti anche hanno le conclusioni con una morale, come una favola, o fin commento, generalmente, sulla società nel racconto. I tre racconti parlano della vita in Italia, ma i fuoci specifici sono diversi, per esempio, "La casa bella" si tratta della una famiglia e dei loro dintorni. Qui la sintassi, l'uso dell'imperfetto indicativo: "avevamo un pollaio", "cuocevamo il pane" nel racconto offrono uno sguardo al passato e alla vita di questa famiglia, particolarmente attraverso gli occhi del narratore, il bambino/il figlio. Il lessico è affettivo perché le parole portano l'emozione e un'impressione che questa "casa bella" è molto importante e preziosa alla famiglia – dunque il titolo del racconto. Il secondo e il terzo racconto offrono anche i commenti sulla società d'Italia. Il numero secondo parla del periodo movimentato degli anni Ottanta e il narratore dice "ero puntuale in un mondo di non puntuali". Penso che sia un commento sulla confusione della gente nella vita, e l'ambiente della stazione è molto appropriato perché quasi ogni persona può riferirsi alla vita dei appuntamenti e delle scadenze. E anche tutti noi sappiamo la senzazione ad una stazione "grande ed affollata" dove è difficile orientarsi. [...] Tutti e tre i racconti hanno significati culturali della vita nell'Italia degli anni ottanta, e

[200] As already explained, B4.1's responses were written separately, and often after the classes, so quotations from her texts will be only referred to when they add elements not included in any of the other texts.

> penso che siano significati anche, generalmente intorno il mondo. I temi sono universali e i commenti, per esempio "la vita del puntuale è un inferno di solitudini immeritate", può applicato alla vita dappertutto. (e anche durante gli anni novanta). Allora qui c'è un collegamento narrativo tra i tre racconti. C'è anche un collegamento metaforico per esempio con l'espressione "ma una notte che c'era una gran luna vera." Questo è un commento generale e porta un senso diverso per ogni persona. Secondo me, è un commento sulla vita e come tutte le persone hanno generalmente un fuoco nel presente, la loro vita e ogni cosa sulla terra. Posso vedere come questo commento può applicare ai altri racconti, per esempio una critica sulla loro vita e alla stazione, la vita è sempre una fretta. Forse l'autore ci vorrebbe pensare del quadro più grande – forse tutti gli autori vorrebbero ci pensarlo.[201]

Although B4 does not link Benni's tales to other texts, her comparative interpretation of the three texts is complex and succeeds in linking several levels of the text, formal, stylistic, thematic and personal to Italian culture and beyond, to existential universal feelings of disorientation, loneliness and self-centredeness. Apart from a few problems of cohesion due to omission of appropriate connectives, her complex, analytical yet affective discourse is clear and studded with significant quotations from Benni's tales. She also always used the subjunctive mood correctly, her vocabulary was expanded significantly to include words from my lecture, from the text and other new words (e.g., "sguardo" [glance]; "periodo movimentato" [a period of turmoil]; "scadenze" [deadlines]; "affollata" [crowded]; "collegamento narrativo" [narrative link].

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[201] [**B4:** All three tales [...] begin with general openings, for example, "I lived in the most beautiful valley" [...]. All of them also have conclusions with a moral, such as fable or end comment, generally on the society within the tale. The three tales talk about life in Italy, but the specific focuses are different, for example, "The beautiful home" is about a family and their surroundings. Here the syntax [added: "includes"] the use of the "imperfetto indicativo": "we used to have a chicken coop", "we cooked bread" in the tale offer a glance into the past and the life of this family, in particular, through the eyes of the child / the son. The lexicon is affectionate because the words carry the emotion and impression that this "beautiful home" is very important and precious to the family – thus the title of the tale. The second and third offer also comments on Italian society. The second talks about the agitated period during the 1980s and the narrator says: "I was punctual in a world of non punctual people". I think that it is a comment about the confusion people have in their life, and the station environment is very appropriate because almost every person can relate to a life with appointments and deadlines. And also all of us are acquainted with the feelings of being in a "big and crowded" station where it is difficult to orient one self [...]. All three tales have cultural meanings about life in Italy in the 1980s, and I think that they are also meanings, generally about the worlds. The themes are universal and the comments, for example, "the life of a punctual person is an inferno of undeserved solitudes" can be applied to life anywhere (and also during the 1990s). So, here is a narrative link between the three texts. There is also a metaphorical link, for example with the expression "but one night when there was a big real moon". This is a general comment and carries a different meaning for every person. According to me, it is a comment about life and how everyone has generally only one focus in the present, their life and all things on earth. I can see how this comment can be applied to the other tales, for example a criticism of how people only focus on their own lives and at the station, life is always in a hurry. Perhaps the author would like us to think about the larger picture – perhaps all authors would like us to do so].

B2.1 provides the most complex analysis of how language form reflects narrative choices as her response is almost entirely focused on this aspect, besides a political interpretation of the themes of the texts and a brief comparison with other texts read to draw the final conclusions:

> **B2.1**: Ci sono molti elementi diversi nei racconti. Strutturalmente il primo racconto non è come gli altri due perché la sintassi è più semplice [...] la struttura dei phrasi è più regolare, non sono le phrasi inattesi: i verbi, gli aggettivi e il soggetto sono sempre nella posizione corretto, questo fatto rifletta l'ambiente del racconto — descriva una vita normale e ... perfetta — dunque la forma è 'perfetta' — tradizionalmente. È necessario notare che un racconto perfetto non rifletti la realtà, dunque penso che al lessico primo racconto sia esagerato [...] Però, la forma degli altri racconti rifletta più alla realtà, credo che non sia mellifluo o prevedibile. C'è il voce del narratore, poi le parole dei personaggi, ci sono i frasi corti ma anche lunghi, i paragrafi non sono regolari. La sintassi cambia e il lessico non è esaggerato, penso che sia più sottile, più come la realtà — non come un sogno. Anche vediamo che Benni usa le stesse parole nei racconti II e III per riflettere cose simili. La forma narrativa rifletta gli idee e il contenuto dei racconti, dunque il primo è strutturato più tradizionalmente mentre i racconti seguenti sono più irregolari. Non c'è un forte collegamento narrativo tra il I e il II / III racconti. Però le tematiche dei racconti sono simile, anche se è presentato diversamente. Penso che gli idee dell'individuo e della potenza siano simili. Credo che tutti i racconti dicano che ci sono i gruppi nella società con più di forza, più influenti che gli altri. Nel primo sono i uomini di pubblicità della città, nel secondo – ci sono i strutture sociali, l'orario fatto dagli uomini [...] nel terzo descriva la potenza di un gruppo nella società su un altro e anche dei strutture sociale come nel II. Penso che tutti i racconti spiegino i problemi per l'individuo contro gli altri. Gli altri racconti di "Il problema dei posteggi' e "La città tutta per lui" dicono le stesse cose - l'individuo non ha la potenza conro il sistema della società, i polizi, le regole, le grandi compagnie. L'altro tema comune è questa della vita in città, dell'industrializzazione e dei problemi che l'hanno creato. [...] questo spiega l'opinione di Benni sulla sua Italia moderna – pensa che non vada bene.[202]

[202] [**B2.1:** There are many different elements in the tales. Structurally the first tale is not like the other two because the syntax is simpler [...] the structure of the sentences is more regular and there are no unexpected phrases: the verbs, the adjectives and the subject are always in the correct position, this fact reflects the environment of the tale - it describes a normal and ... perfect life – therefore the form is perfect – traditional. It is necessary to notice that a perfect tale does not reflect reality so I think that the lexicon in the first tale is exaggerated [...]. However the form of the other tales is more reflective of reality. I think that it is neither honeyed nor foreseeable. There is the narrator's voice and the characters' words. There are short sentences but also long ones and the paragraphs are not regular. The syntax changes and the lexicon is not exaggerated, I think it is more subtle, more like reality – not dream-like. We also see that Benni uses similar words in tales II and III to reflect similar things. Narrative form reflects the ideas and content of the tales so the first is structured more traditionally and the following tales are more irregular. There is not a strong narrative link between the first tale and the second and third tales. However, the themes in the tales are similar even though they are presented in different ways. I think that the ideas concerning the individual and power are similar. I believe that all tales say that there

B2.1's way of understanding captures the links between dimensions in the text not explicitly mentioned by other students, such as the simple, natural environment and life style portrayed at the beginning of "La casa bella" reflected by the regular, simpler, traditional syntax: a perfect world expressed with perfect syntax, as she acutely observes, or vice-versa. She also provides an in-depth thematic comparison of the three tales and other tales read in the Italian course, commenting on modern Italy and existential themes such as the lack of power of the individual. Her complex outcome at the end of the cycles is particularly satisfying given that in her survey replies, she only slightly agreed that literature should be included at all language levels and was concerned with the length and difficulty of literary texts.

B5's text is the most complex in terms of intertextual links. Her long experience with literature and eagerness to read different types of text provide her with the tools for roving freely and wittily across texts and genres:

> **B5**: I tre racconti sviluppano il tema della vita senza controllo vediamo l'individuo circondato da avvenimenti che non può cambiare mai: l'arrivo della troupe televisiva in campagna, il comportamento strano dell'uono puntuale, il mondo affollato dov'è difficile orientarsi. Nel primo racconto il scrittore crea un'ambiente piacevole, tranqilla. Ci avvince con le sue descrizioni della vita perfetta in campagna. Usa il senso d'umore ironico per esprimere la sua opinione. Fa effetto della vita perfetta in campagna, ma c'è la vita troppo perfetta. Li aspettiamo il peggiore, eppure siamo sbagliati. In fatti il peggiore è soltanto l'arrivo della troupe televisiva. Non è peggio di quel che immaginavamo: non è la guerra, neanche la destruzione materiale. Però questa è la distruzione culturale. Per me 'L'uomo puntuale' è il racconto più interessante. Vedo qui l'esistenzialismo di Sartre e Camus: l'uomo allontanato dal mondo e dalla gente, l'uomo che vede troppo profondamente cose della vita. Si vede questo tema esistenziale nel racconto di Sartre "Destati" in cui un'uomo vuole uccidere degli stranieri senza ragione politica, infatti senza ragioni. Mi piacerebbe scrivere molto della condizione umana. Essere umano significa anche essere allontanato dalla vita, dalla gente. Il brano "da allora perché non pensarlo" è qualcosa su cui riflettere. Vediamo nell'Inferno il riferimento all'opera di Dante, il protagonista ci fa scendere nelle camere degli inferi. I racconti in *Crescendo*

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are groups with more power and more influence than others in society. In the first there are advertising men from the city, in the second – social structures, man made time schedules [...] the third describes the power of a group over another in society and also of social structures, as in the second. I think that all tales explain the problems of the individual against the others. The other tales, "The problem of parking spots?" and "The city all to himself" say the same things – the individual has no power against the social system, the police, the rules, the big companies. The other common theme is that of life in the city, industrialization and the problems it has created. [...] this explains Benni's opinion on his modern Italy – he thinks that it is not going well.

> anche esprimono il senso dell'uomo senza controllo nel mondo su di cui l'uomo solo non ha controllo mai – per esempio "Il problema dei posteggi". Si può paragonare l'uomo puntuale al racconto: 'Allergia' — entrambi protagonisti sono controllati dalle ossessioni.[203]

Although she includes a brief mention of Dante's *Inferno* and Benni's third tale, the reference is not sufficiently explained, although the student's metaphorical sentence: "the protagonist makes us descend into the infernal realms" conveys the intense chaos and suffering of the train compartments, parallel to Dante's infernal circles. B5 did not write any comments on her experience at the end of the cycles and stood firm on her initial ideas which were "appropriate" in literary terms.

B4.1 added to the variation in students' responses by making pertinent observations about the similarities and differences in the opening descriptions of the setting, from the country (tale I) to provincial railway station (tale II) to the station in a big city (tale III), and how the author uses the same tenses and words to continue the recounting thread from tale I and II, yet depicting the two railway stations with opposite adjectives: "piccola, vecchia, deserta e triste" [small, old, deserted and sad] and "grande, affollata e caotica" [big, crowded and chaotic] to contrast the two different environments. Similarly, she observes that Benni exaggerates the beautifulness of the countryside to create a striking contrast with the infernal tale III, in which words and descriptions express sarcasm and add a dark tone to the narrative. Other different remarks are that, unlike other authors read before who admired the "provincial man", Benni ridicules the new provincial [or perhaps global?] man, showing him enslaved by his incessantly shrieking cellular phone in a new mechanized Italy that in replacing "un'Italia autentica [...] a misura d'uomo", has caused nothing but "caos, disorientamento e perfino perdita

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[203] [**B5:** The three tales develop the theme of life without control. We see the individual surrounded by events that he can never change: the arrival of the television troupe in the countryside, the strange behavior of the punctual man, a crowded world in which it is difficult to orient one self. In the first tale the writer creates a pleasant and tranquil environment. He charms us with descriptions of perfect life in the countryside. There we expect the worst, but we are wrong. In fact the worst is only the arrival of a television troupe. It is not worse than we imagined: it is not the war or material destruction. It is however material destruction. For me "The punctual man" is the most interesting tale. I see here the existentialism of Sartre and Camus: the man removed from the world and from people, the man who sees too profoundly things in life. This existential theme can be seen in Sartre's tale "Wake up' (?), in which a man wants to kill foreigners without any political reasons, in fact with no reason. I would like to write about the human condition. To be human also means to be removed from life and people. The excerpt "from that moment onward, why not believe it" is something to ponder. We see in the Inferno the reference to Dante's work, the protagonist makes us descend into the infernal realms. The short stories in *Crescendo* also express the sense that man has no control over a world in which man alone never has control – for example "The problem of parking". The tale "The punctual man" can be compared to the tale "Allergy" – both protagonists are controlled by their obsessions].

personale [...] e perdita dell'autenticità culturale" [chaos, disorientation and even loss at the personal level and the loss of cultural authenticity]. Similarly to B5, she interpreted the story as an individual's reaction to different types of chaos that has different effects in the three tales: resignation (tale I); disharmony (tale II); escape (tale III).

Linking the three Tales of the Traveller: Category 3

The most complex level was achieved by three students: two were below twenty and had both studied Italian at high school, and one of them had one parent of Italian background; the other student was above thirty six years of age and had started studying Italian as a beginner the previous year. I am not suggesting that background factors alone have influenced the students' outcome; as shown in chapter 5, perceptions, approaches and the willingness to change them in order to achieve better learning proved crucial in the 1999 sample. All three students agreed that literature should be included at all levels of the Italian language curriculum and one of the two younger students slightly disagreed that studying literature improved appreciation and understanding of the language and culture (B0 below). This student did not write any comments on the role of L2 literature. The three students indicated a preference for novels and short stories and stressed the importance of enjoyment and challenge in their descriptions of general literature. The remaining young student stressed the importance of understanding the context of the story while reading in an L2, whilst the mature age students underlined the crucial role of reading in language learning as exposure to the complexities of the language as expressed through the author's themes and ideas.

The three students with the most advanced text interpretations were able to use their pre-existing literary competence, incorporate in their reading approach elements from other students' processes and perspectives as well as re-shape the teacher's input, and draw comparisons with other literary texts to strengthen their written analysis. For example, B0 linked Benni's tales to other short stories included in the Italian course.[204]

[204] [**B0**: I teme simili tra i racconti di Benni e il racconto "La città tutta per lui" di Italo Calvino e "Il problema dei posteggi" di Dino Buzzati sono l'idea della bellezza della natura, e come l'Italia era stato industrializzato. [...] "C'è anche un collegamento tra "Il problema dei posteggi", e "L'inferno" di Benni, e Dante, quando Buzzati dice "Eccomi di nuovo risucchiato nel vortice che gira, gira e non si può fermare mai perché non c'è posto da fermare." Questo rifletta che il traffico sia come l'inferno, e nessuno possono restare [Similar themes between Benni's tales and Italo Calvino's short story "The city all to himself" and "The problem of parking places" by Dino Buzzati are the idea of the beauty of nature, and the industrialization of Italy [...]. There is a link between "The problem of parking places" and "The inferno" by Benni, and Dante, when Buzzati says: Here I am, once again sucked/eddied in a vortex that

Similarly, B2 linked Benni's tales to four short stories read throughout the academic year.[205] B3 also commented on formal similarities and differences between the three tales by Benni and other texts, besides drawing thematic comparisons:

> **B3**: Quando si paragona i tre racconti da Benni con altri testi (come 'Gita domenicale' e 'Il problema dei posteggi'). Ci sono le similarità e le differenze. Tutti i testi erano scritto nella prima persona. Ci sono anche le tematiche centrali del movimento e di far avanzare con la tecnologia e l'industrializzazione. Tutti i racconti descrivono la vita del protagonista che fa un viaggio dalla campagna alla città o vice versa. La differenza principale tra tutti i testi è che 'La gita domenicale' e 'Il problema dei posteggi' non usano le metafore e le similitudini come i tre racconti da Benni. 'La gita domenicale' e 'Il problema dei posteggi' sono racconti letterali.[206]

Interestingly, B3 defines Cassola's short story, "La gita domenicale" and Buzzati's text, "Il problema dei posteggi" as "literal" in contrast with Benni's tales. This is probably due to the simpler and plainer prose of these two short stories both written in the 1950s-60's, when the influence of Neo-realism was still felt in authors such as Cassola especially, and also in some of Buzzati's works, wishing to depict everyday life by using everyday language.

Although my input as educator was minimal,[207] the three students also picked up essential points, such as the parallel structure of Benni's tales and Dante's *Divina*

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spirals and spirals and can never stop because there is no place in which to stop.' This reflects that the traffic is like hell, and nobody can rest.]

[205] [**B2**: The other short stories that I have read during the year "Gita domenicale", [Sunday excursion], "La città per lui", "Guardami alla tivù" and "Il problema dei posteggi" contain similar threads. [...] We've complicated our lives with technology [...]. We seem consumed with our own lives and do not have the time for others. [...] With the technological aids [...] there is no need to communicate verbally with others [...]. In "Guardami alla tivù" the man does not have enough time to spend his wealth [...]". Actually, in the story the protagonist does not have the time to visit his mother so he tells as to "watch him on television" since that is his occupation.]

[206] [**B3:** When we compare Benni's three tales with other texts (such as "Sunday excursion" and "The problem of parking places"), there are similarities and differences. All texts were written in the first person. There are also the central themes of movement and advancement with technology and industrialization. All tales describe the life of the protagonist who goes on a trip from the country to the city or vice versa. The main difference amongst the texts is that "The Sunday excursion" and "The problem of parking places" do not use metaphors and similes like the three tales by Benni. "The Sunday excursion" and "The parking places" are literal short stories].

[207] I provided a map of Dante's *Inferno* and explained that each circle corresponded to a sin and a punishment and that the sins and punishements increased downwards. During my talk I encouraged students to participate with any information they knew. Most of the class had heard about Dante, more than half had a basic idea that *the Divine Comedy* consisted of three books and one student (B5) had a more detailed idea and had read parts of it in English. Surprisingly, she did not use her knowledge to link the three tales to Dante's text. Some other students (B0; B3) borrowed copies of the *Divine Comedy* and had a week before the final assignment to become aware of the influence it had on the tales of the

Commedia that enabled them to link and explain their comparison to Dante's text by providing examples from the texts as well as provide a cultural, philosophical and linguistic interpretation of the three tales:

> **B0**: Tutti e tre i racconti sono scritto come un narrativa retrospettiva ma il lessico non è lo stesso nei tre racconti. Loro sono nel passato remoto, ma il lessico diventia più dramatico e più antiquato verso ala fine del terzo racconto si chiama l'Inferno. Benni usa delle parole vecchie come 'ove' invece di 'dove' [...] penso che questa lingua sia come questo nella Commedia Divina di Dante. Ci sono altre somiglianze, ma in ordine inverso [...]. I racconti di Benni comminciano con La Casa Bella che è come l'ultimo racconto di Dante Il Paradiso. Perché i racconti di Benni sono inversi, La casa bella finisce con un paradiso perduto, e il viaggiatore va al Purgatorio, come il Poeta, nel secondo racconto del viaggiatore, L'uomo puntuale. Il viaggiatore vede un uomo puntuale, chi è caricato (come nel Purgatorio), da un mondo che non ha il rispetto essere puntuale. L'uomo è sfogato quando parlare con il viaggiatore ma invece di va al Paradiso, come Dante, il viaggiatore va all'Inferno. Come l'Inferno di Dante, il racconto di Benni è costruito nei piani diversi, per come Benni dice, "i peccati di diversa specie." Nel vagone infernale del treno i passeggeri soffrono i punizioni diversi come nei diversi cerchi dell'Inferno di Dante. In uno vagone i passeggeri non possono restare, un altro è così caldo, un altro, così freddo, così affollato. È veramente l'inferno. Alla fina però, c'è una sensazione della speranza con l'uomo idealistico, vestito di bianco. [...] Penso che Benni veda che c'è la speranza attraverso il mondo industriale negli anni Ottanta, perché l'uomo vestito di bianco non cambia la sua mente su aiutando il mondo.[208]

After a complex comparative analysis of the structure and form of Benni's tales and Dante's *Divine Comedy*, B0 ends her text with cultural and philosophical comments on

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traveller, as emerged in their responses. All students had the opportunity to discuss, in groups, the parallels between Benni's texts and Dante's text and then in a final class dialogue with me. All students were encouraged to further explore links with Dante's texts and other texts before the classroom assignment, on their own or with their peers. Students were also allowed to bring copies of Benni's texts, and other texts they thought would enable them to reach a more complex final learning outcome.

[208] [**B0**: All three tales are written as a retrospective narrative but the lexicon is not the same in the three tales. They are in the past simple tense but the lexicon becomes more dramatic and archaic towards the end of the third tale called "The inferno". Benni uses old words such as "ove" instead of "dove" ("where") [...]. I think that this language is like that of *The Divine Comedy* by Dante. There are other similarities, but in the reverse order [...]. "The beautiful house" finishes with a lost paradise, and the traveler goes to the *Purgatory*, as does the Poet, in the second tale of the traveler, "The punctual man". The traveler sees a punctual man who is burdened (as in the Purgatory) by a world that does not respect punctuality. The man gives vent to his feelings when he speaks to the traveler but instead of going to Paradise, like Dante, the traveler goes to the *Inferno*. Like Dante's *Inferno*, Benni's tale is built on different levels, for what Benni says, "different kinds of sins". In the infernal train compartments passengers suffer different punishments as in the various circles of Dante's *Inferno*. In one compartment the passengers can not rest, another is so hot, another, so cold, so crowded. It is really hell. At the end though, there is a feeling of hope with the idealistic man, dressed in white. [...] I think that Benni can see hope through the industrial world of the 1980s, because the man dressed in white does not change his mind about helping the world].

the man in white as a positive sign, a way out of the chaos. He does seem a kind of Virgil leading the traveller (and the readers) to salvation by finding a way of distancing oneself (reading the book) in order to survive chaos and technology, and even after the attack, by pursuing his intent to believe in people. I sense the author's hint of sarcasm at the almost saintly man in white and at the same time a positive helplessness and optimism accompanied by mockery: this is Italy today, this is how people are, what else can one do but keep travelling and reading and writing books? The search for the lost paradise continues, but unlike Dante, Benni's traveller does not find his Beatrice at the end of three stories.

> **B2:** "La casa bella" dimostra l'incapacità dell'uomo d'accettare una perfezione che lui non ha creato [...] "L'uomo puntuale" parla dell'incapacità dell'uomo di trovare la soddisfazione e l'appagamento in un mondo dove lui si considera d'avere la virtù della puntualità ma il risultato è l'infelicità perché il resto del mondo non riconosce o non valuta questa virtù. [...] I valori del passato non sono rispettati [...]: "Ahimé pensavo che la puntualità fosse una nobile forma di rispetto per gli altri e contribuisse all'armonia del mondo." Parla anche dello stress della vita moderna [...]. La tecnologia dovrebbe semplificare la nostra vita, invece c'e la complica perché noi dipendiamo moltissimo su tante forme di tecnologia che ci stiamo dimenticando come formare relazioni umane. "Da allora un singolare pensiero mi tormenta." [...] E' un'osservazione irrazionale dello scrittore [...]. "L'inferno" è una parodia dei viaggi di Dante per l'inferno nel primo libro della "Commedia divina". Le carrozze del treno sono popolate con della gente il quale comportamento è una parodia esagerata delle loro caratteristiche principali [...]. Ognuno di noi ha un ruolo nella vita come i peccatori nell'inferno. Veniamo giudicati da altre persone da come vestiamo, parliamo, dal colore della nostra pelle e dalle nostre azioni. Non valutiamo le relazioni e non abbiamo il tempo iniziarle e cultivarle. Stiamo più sicuri nel nostro ambiente, come l'uomo vestito di bianco. Dice: "Io devo viaggiare altre quattro ore. Ma per fortuna ho un libro con me, un libro che mi terrà compagnia." Un tema parallelo che corre i tre racconti è la confusione del viaggiatore. Lui è incapace capire le complessità della società tecnologica in cui vive. Questi tre racconti ci fanno vedere come tutti vogliamo perfezione nella nostra vita, però anche con la tecnologia moderna dobbiamo cercare un bilancio ideale per noi e scoprire l'importanza dei nostri valori personali e i conflitti tra loro, per esempio nel racconto "Luomo puntuale" – "la vita puntuale è un inferno di solitudini immeritate."[209]

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[209] [**B2**: "The beautiful home" shows man's incapacity to accept a perfection that he has not created [...] "The punctual man" talks about the incapacity of man to find satisfaction and gratification in a world in which he considers himself to have the virtue of punctuality but the result is unhappiness because the rest of the world does not recognize or value this virtue. [...] The values of the past are not respected: "Alas! I thought that punctuality was a noble form of respect for others and that it contributed to the world's harmony". He also talks about the stress of modern life [...]. Technology should simplify our lives instead it complicates it because we depend so much on many forms of technology that we are forgetting how to form human relationships. "From that moment a peculiar thought torments me". [...] It is an

B2 focused less on the link with literary tradition and more on the struggle between technology and the natural world and the stress it causes. The significance of these three tales lies precisely in the multi levels of meaning, at the "real" level, Benni was representing situations and events that for many Italians are a daily nightmare: the often stifling, late, overcrowded trains (although I can attest that the situation has improved) and events forever engraved in Italian cultural memory such as the bombing of the Bologna-Firenze train and the Bologna station. She also highlights the powerful theme of the inability to form relationships that will alleviate existential loneliness and frustration: the hell we create for one another. I cannot help being reminded of Sartre's (1947) stifling room in his play *Huis clos* in which the characters are confined in a small space where they cannot escape each others' gaze, in particular, Garcin's statement: "l'enfer, c'est les Autres" (p. 92) [It is others who make life hell]. B5 in fact linked Benni's tales to Sartre and commented on the existential vein running through the second tale especially. Another short story by Benni's (1994) in the same collection as the "Three tales of the traveller" also has an immigrant senselessly killed by a group of Italian socialites in a villa in Italy.

B3 opens her text with a comparison of the structure of Benni's three tales and the *Divine Comedy*:

> **B3**: I tre racconti sono come una trilogia e corrispondono alla "commedia divina" da Dante che descrive un viaggio dall'inferno su al purgatorio e finalmente arrivare in paradiso. Però, nei racconti, il protagonista procede dal paradiso all'inferno. [...] Dopo dei signori comprano la terra per fare una pubblicità, invadono la terra con gli attori e le macchine da presa e distruggono la bellezza naturale del posto. Il protagonista decide che non può rimanere a guardare la distruzione del paradiso e parte. Qui comincia il suo viaggio al purgatorio. [...] Nel secondo racconto il protagonista arriva

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irrational observation of the writer [...]. "The inferno" is a parody of Dante's travels through hell in the first book of the *Divine comedy*. The train compartments are populated with people whose behavior is an exaggerated parody of their main characteristics [...]. Everyone has a role in life as the sinners in hell. We are judged by other people according to how we dress, talk, the colour of our skin and our actions. We do not value relationships and we do not have the time to initiate them and cultivate them. We are safer in our environment, like the man dressed in white who says: "I have to travel another four hours. But luckily I have a book with me, a book that will keep me company". A parallel theme that runs through the three tales is the confusion of the travel. He is incapable of understanding the complexities of the technological society in which he lives. These three tales show us how we all want perfection in our lives, however even with modern technology we must search for an ideal equilibrium for us and discover the importance of our personal values and the conflicts amongst those values, for example in the tale "L'uomo puntuale" – "punctual life is an inferno of undeserved solitudes"].

alla piccola stazione per prendere un treno. Incontra un'uomo che ha una complesso della puntualitá. [...] Sembra che il complesso dell'uomo sia una metafora per il fatto che tante persone non rispettano che la vita è breve [...]. Nel racconto ci sono riferimenti a "l'inferno" e "la morte". L'uomo dice "Così è la vita del puntuale: un inferno in cui si attende la morte, sperando che almeno lei sia in orario." Alla fine del racconto il treno arriva in ritardo, e l'uomo sale su un vagone di coda e lì mette una bomba. Il protagonista è lontano dal vagone della valigia-bomba quando esplode ma rimane con il peso di sapere che "questa disperata ribellione dell'uomo contro un mondo in perenne ritardo" non consegue niente – il mondo è il stesso mondo. Questo racconto è parallelo al purgatorio [...] che descrive le persone che portanto il peso dei loro peccati sulle spalle. Nel terzo racconto il protagonista è in un'altra stazione e descrive il suo viaggio, spostarsi dal un vagone all'altro sul treno. Questo corrisponde all'inferno di Dante che descrive i livelli dell'inferno dove i livelli profondi si riferono ai peccati peggiori. In questo modo ogni vagone è come un livello d'inferno. [...] Nell'ultimo vagone il protagonista parla con un'uomo che ha un posto di prima classe ma non può spostarsi tra gli altri passeggeri. Lui dice: "ci rendiamo conto di come la nostra vita scorra tra agi e privilegi ed è pur vero che non soltanto con le parole dobbiamo batterci per l'abolizione delle ingiustizie ma, talvolta con le azioni." Queste parole sono pertinenti al protagonista che ha perso la casa bella nel primo racconto a causa dell'ingiustizia dei signori che invadono e distruggono la terra. Quindi alla fine del viaggio c'è la speranza che il protagonista rientrerò in possesso di quello che ha perso e ritorna in paradiso. A parte dal collegamento narrativo e metaforico tra i tre racconti, c'è anche una somiglianza con l'uso della gramatica tra i tre raconti. Tutti erano scritto in passato, cioè ne l'uso dell'imperfetto e del passato remoto. Però, una differenza principale tra i tre racconti è l'uso delle parole 'vecchie' specialmente nel racconto terzo [...].[210]

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[210] **[B3**: The three tales are like a trilogy and correspond to Dante's *Divine comedy* that describes a voyage from hell up to the purgatory to arrive finally in paradise. However, in the tales the protagonist proceeds from paradise to hell. [...] Afterwards some gentlemen buy the land to make an advertisement, invade the land with actors and cameras and destroy the natural beauty of the place. The protagonist decides that he cannot remain and watch the destruction of his paradise and leaves. Here begins his voyage into purgatory. [...] In the second tale the protagonist arrives in a small station to catch a train. He meets a man who is obsessed with punctuality. [...] It seems as if the man's obsession is a metaphor for the fact that many people do not respect the fact that life is brief [...]. In the tale there are references to "hell" and "death". The man says: "Such is the life of the punctual man: a hell in which one awaits death hoping that she, at least, will arrive on time." At the end of the tale the train arrives late and the man gets on one of the tail end compartments and there he puts a bomb. The protagonist is far away from the compartment with the suitcase containing the bomb when it explodes, but he is left with the burden of knowing that "this desperate rebellion of man against a world that is perennially late" does not achieve anything – the world is the same world. This tale is parallel with purgatory [...] which describes people who carry the weight of their sins on their shoulders. In the third tale the protagonist is in another station and describes his voyage, moving from one compartment to the other on a train. This corresponds to Dante's hell in which the different levels are described where the deepest levels refer to the worst sins. This way, every compartment is like a level of hell. [...] In the last compartment the protagonist speaks with a man who has a seat in first class but can not move amongst the other passengers. He says: "we are aware of how our life runs amongst comforts and privileges and it is indeed true that we must not fight with words alone for the abolition of injustice, but sometimes with actions." These words are pertinent to the protagonist who has lost his beautiful home in the first tale because of the injustice of the gentlemen who invade and destroy the land. Therefore at the end of the voyage there is the hope that the protagonist will regain possession of what he has lost and return to paradise. Apart from the narrative and metaphorical

The student provides an in depth comparative narrative and lexical analyses of Benni's text in reference to Dante's text. She also adds her personal interpretation of the ending, based more on her optimistic faith in people and life, shown also in her response to "La casa bella". Whereas in A5 (category 1) the change was represented especially by an expanded ability to write longer and more analytical texts in Italian, B3's texts remained concise, however she elaborated and integrated into her previous linguistic and literary abilities the information and suggestions provided by me (e.g., on Dante) and by other students in class at each reflective cycle (e.g., the metaphor of the assassins in her first task). Her understanding of the texts developed to incorporate into her affective /literary approach also an intertextual cultural perspective, without ever losing sight of the author's style.

These three students used all elements at their disposal and also they shifted their perspective and approach in order to reach a higher level of understanding, as they themselves indicated at the end of the cyclic process: "I have found the methods of reading the texts, by doing exercises on the themes, have helped me appreciate the texts [...] I have gotten a deeper understanding and deeper insight into them" (B0); "At the beginning [...] I approached literature with apprehension [...] I felt more confident as the discussion went on and appreciated and considered the many varied ideas" (B2); "My change in approaching the texts was triggered by the different readings [...] My new strategy of reading [...] allows me to look beyond the literal meaning". These students' perceptions are not just their own unsupported ideas of change; they are reflected in their texts and in my evaluation as a researcher and my colleague's evaluations. For example, B0 unlike in her previous responses, she is able to connect the formal narrative aspects of the texts, style and structure to specific linguistic elements to show how the author's choice of lexicon marks the movement towards the literary tradition of "Hell". As she explains, meta-reflection on her reading approaches increased her insight into the text, and comparative intertextual analysis, especially of Dante's *Divine Comedy,* provided her the instruments to gain a deeper understanding of Benni's themes. Her perception of the pedagogical process is reflected in her response to the text reported in this section. Like B2.1 and B4, B0 also had expressed doubts and

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links amongst the three tales, there is also similarity in the use of grammar in the three tales. They are all written in the past tense that is, the "imperfect" and simple past. However, a main difference amongst the three tales is the use of 'old' words especially in the third tale [...].]

concern about the inclusion of L2 literature in the language curriculum. The quality of her final assignment but also her ability to reflect on her experience and outcome after the cyclic process, are therefore particularly rewarding, since they indicate that the experience of reading L2 literary texts can be enhanced even for students with initial sceptical attitudes.

These students also showed greater improvement in their written ability in terms of marks assigned, which reflect their expanded awareness. I am not claiming that this improvement was entirely due to the cyclic pedagogy and repetitive readings of the literary texts, as I am sure that the other section of the course also contributed to strengthening the students' written competence. However, given the short time involved, six weeks, and two weekly hours of face to face contact (in total 12 hours, including one for the written recall and the last two for the written assignment), it seems reasonable to underline that the improvement for these three students and overall was greater than would normally be expected, as the students themselves remarked.

Linking the three Tales of the Traveller: Variation across categories 1, 2 and 3

All the different approaches and understandings of the texts, from the different categories, some more linguistic as in this case, others more literary, as in B5, or cultural/affective (B2) and others again more cultural (e.g., A5), contributed to enhancing classroom discussion and producing in some cases critical variation in text understanding, as shown in the difference in their responses throughout the cycles, and also as reported in students' own words. What was not explored by the students was the ironic streak and ambiguity of the presumably absent author which infiltrates itself especially in the dialogues and the subsequent absolute statements about punctuality, society, the world. Given how difficult it is for any reader, particularly if not very well acquainted with the social historical background and all the shades and tones of literary narratives within a non native language, this level of interpretation can only be expected in the L2 at more advanced language levels. For example, the man in white is preaching, that is where Benni manages to provide a slight tone of disbelief, although it is left very ambiguous so the reader can decide for herself about the meaning of his line. The man's words can actually be referred not just to his goodwill towards the migrants in the train, but also to other drastic actions, such as the presumed train bomber of the second tale. Conclusions about the meaning of the tales can be seen in the above

responses to be influenced by certain schemata and views of the world: religious, philosophical, humanist.

Linking the three Tales of the Traveller: Variation in reading approaches - Relating approach to levels of understanding

Students' interpretations of Benni's tales and their replies to the second section of the last assignment, which asked students to reflect on their own experience of the cyclic process, revealed an association between students' levels of understanding and their reading approaches. As found in study 1 (1999), students who achieved a more complex understanding of the texts were those who adopted a deep strategic approach to reading (e.g., B0; B2; B3: already shown; and B1.2; B2.1 below) and shifted their focus from form to content and back to form. These students also linked the text with their previous experiences and to universal narrative themes and structures. Furthermore, the students also became actively engaged in the repeated reading, reflection and writing process and incorporated new acquired knowledge and strategies into their reading approaches and texts' interpretations.

> **B2.1**: C'era un gran numero di parole e di strutture grammaticali che non sapevo, sopratutto il vocabolario nuovo. Ci sono delle parole simili alle altre parole che già so, e alle parole inglesi, dunque potevo indovinare il senso delle parole (per esempio: valle, carote, nudo, profumate).[211]

> **B1.2**: Ho letto il racconto usando il dizionario e scrivendo le parole che non ho conosciuto sulla pagina. In seguito ho riletto il brano un'altra volta. Poi con le domande ho letto il racconto con lo scopo di risponderle.[212]

This seems to confirm Marton & Booth's (1997) concept that 'variation' in text understanding is necessary if an advanced understanding of the complexity of texts is to be achieved. It also underlines the importance of linking form and meaning, of basing one's assumptions about meaning on text features. If these relationships are perhaps obvious to some teachers and researchers, and even some students either consciously or subconsciously, they are by no means adopted and put into practice by all students.

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[211] [**B2.1**: There was great number of words and grammatical structures that I did not know; especially new vocabulary. There are words similar to those I already know, and also similar to English words, so I could guess the meaning of the words (for example: valley, carrots, naked, perfumed].

[212] [**B1.2**: I read the tale while using a dictionary and writing the words I did not know on the page. Subsequently I reread the paragraph another time. Then, with the questions [in mind], I read the tale with the aim of answering them].

Certainly there can be as many different readings as there are readers (Borges, 1995, Calvino, 1979): "In a metaphorical sense the group of readers can be thought of as a prism through which the text passed, to be refracted and to exit in distinctly different meanings" (Marton & Booth 1997, p. 150). Marton and Booth's metaphorical interpretation of variation was explored by students through reflection and discussion in class to allow readers to explore other readings of the texts, whether "plausible" (Culler, 1978) or not.

The role of L2 educators is to strive to set learning situations conducive to higher quality learning. This must take into account students' perceptions of the learning situation, their awareness of the object of learning, in this case literary texts, and awareness of the difference in students' readings. At the same time, students' prior experience and approaches to learning, in this case reading L2 literary texts, must emerge in classroom discussion and provide a valuable catalyst for change.

6.3 Evaluations of process outcomes

This section reports on: 1) students' evaluations of the cycles reading, writing and reflection on Benni's three tales, and comments regarding their own learning outcomes; and 2) a holistic evaluation of students' outcomes based on the findings which includes my colleague's evaluation of students' learning.

6.3.1 Students' evaluations at the end of the cyclic process

Readers of this thesis can observe through the students' reported responses and their evaluations of the cyclic process to what extent these changes justify my conclusions to this chapter. In their evaluations students focused on the factors that, according to them, had enhanced their learning: methodology (the repeated "narrow" reading approach); pedagogical practices (implicit instruction; tasks; reflection on response variation; hermeneutic class); and syllabus (three short linked tales with universal appeal).[213] By the end of the cycles all students, as expressed in class, were really surprised at how much they had been able to write; some students in fact wrote more than the 400 words required in Italian. Students' ability to reflect on their reading approach and / or writing abilities also increased across the whole group as emerges from their responses in the final written assignment. Some students provided precise explanations of how change

[213] Students' complete evaluations of the cyclic process are in appendix D.

occurred in their reading abilities and why (e.g., B0; B3, appendix D). Most of the other students also indicated that their ability to reflect and critically analyse a text - and also enjoy it - had been significantly improved by the guided tasks, the repeated reading method and the choice of three related texts written by the same author (e.g., A1 and A2, appendix D).

The repeated reading approach proved very useful since it helped students notice new key words, ideas, concepts and meanings each time they re-read the tale as the following comments show: "*My change in approaching the texts was triggered by the different readings [...]. I needed time to read and re-read the story as with each reading I gained more insight into the text*" (B3); "*Each story was read several times and with each reading, I added a new dimension of comprehension of both the storyline and point, to my mind*" (B4). As often explained, I believe that simultaneous focus on form and discourse textual levels are necessary in reading L2 literature, and as shown, the most complex understandings were achieved when students focused and linked formal, discourse and narrative levels of texts.

These students' confidence to read L2 literature in Italian, increased as changes occurred at the metalinguistic level (reading and interpretative approach), linguistic and literary. The repeated reading method combined with class discussion gave this student the opportunity to gain a thorough understanding of the text: "*My view of the text changed after each of the first few times I read them and discussing them in class or just with another person [...]. Each time I read them [...] I realized pieces I had missed and understood the text as a whole better*" (A4.2). Although for her the pedagogical process was sometimes frustrating, she comments at the end that it gave the class the opportunity to develop students' reading skills and understand Italian literary texts.

The pedagogical approach, in particular the class as a dialogic learning community proved particularly helpful in expanding students' awareness and improve their outcomes and their self-confidence. As students remark, this context provided the opportunity for reflection on response variation and expansion through dialogue: "*I found that discussing the texts with my peers helped in the development of my own ideas*" (A3); "*After discussing the texts in class (hearing other people's opinions) I could collate my own reflections and conclusions* (A4.1); "*Class discussions helped me*

develop my opinions as we compared our different interpretations, which were often quite diverse" (B4). Through the hermeneutic class and phenomenographic reflection on variation this student was able to expand her ability to process the meaning of metaphors and gain a deeper understanding of "La casa bella": "*My first reaction when reading 'la casa bella' was that it was too difficult for me (for my ability), even though I knew most of the 'lessico', although my vocabulary and my dictionary were strained. However, after discussing the text in class (hearing other people's opinions) I could collate my own reflections and conclusion* (A4.1). For A4.1 newly acquired reading strategies such as identifying key words proved useful. She seems to have switched from a bottom-up reading to a top-down approach. A1 focuses on changes in her reading approach and the prediction task. She explains that reading the first two paragraphs helped her search for the metaphors in the text and indicates that she learns new strategies without indicating which ones. A4 comments on how reading three linked stories became progressively easier because of familiarity with the style of the author and improvement in her strategies: "*reading slowly*".[214] In this case, the student reversed the pattern of reading for gist first to reading slowly.

Selection of three texts by the same author was also influential in facilitating understanding of the texts and developing the ability for complex interpretations: B2.1: "Penso anche che sia stato veramente utile leggere i tre racconti collegato perche i temi e i strutturi svillupavano con ogni racconto. Era più facile seguire i temi e i strutture dell'unico autore anche la mia scrittura sull'italiano ha cambiato anche – forse non ha migliorata ma considero gli altre cose quando scrivo oggi".[215] As some students remarked, tales two and three were 'easier' because they were narratively related to the first one and because the students were by then acquainted with the writer's style and use of irony. This is a significant comment given that in 1999 (study 1) the students who did not particularly enjoy reading literature were the ones who had more difficulty comprehending the texts because they focused too strongly on single items, such as words, without relating them to the context; this caused the students to lose confidence and abandon the task. Here the opposite occurred for all the reasons explained by the

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[215] (**B2.1**: "Penso anche che sia stato veramente utile leggere i tre racconti collegato perche i temi e i strutturi svillupavano con ogni racconto. Era più facile seguire i temi e i strutture dell'unico autore anche la mia scrittura sull'italiano ha cambiato anche – forse non ha migliorata ma considero gli altre cose quando scrivo oggi. [I also think that it was really useful to read three linked tales because the themes and the structure developed with each tale. It was easier to follow the themes and the structures of one author.

student, and the outcome is extremely positive in terms of the student's personal sense of achievement.

Students also underlined the usefulness of my "implicit" instructions aimed at developing students' awareness of the links between meaning and form: "*when reading in Italian [...] it is necessary to begin like this [...] the exercises we did in class were very useful because they helped us to think about the text, the ideas, the structure etc. — the exercises inspired us to think of the important things*" (B2.1); "*the methods of reading these texts, by doing exercises on the themes, and ideas in them, has helped me appreciate the texts more than I usually would have, as I have gotten a greater understanding and a deeper insight into them*" (B0). In her concise response, B1 explained that the prediction task was useful in gaining an insight into the author's "art" by understanding how Benni's first two paragraphs, through his stylistic choices especially, foreshadow the text outcome and raise readers' expectations to encourage them to read further. B1.2, (like B2.1) commented on a specific ability the course allowed her to develop: Reflecting on the project I think the most beneficial aspect has been the writing exercises because I needed practice at this aspect especially. In her response, A5 felt she had to justify her first predictions: "*This exercise caused my imagination to run wild. For example, I was under the impression that the entire valley was under a spell, caused by the odor from the "forno" [oven].*" The assassins of tale 1, as discussed in class, could be seen as the monsters of fables, but Benni reverses the roles and it turns out that they are what 'contadini' [peasants] would call 'signori' gentlemen — clearly ironic and so the morality of the television show (to keep one's property neat) is the same as the television troupe, to show an artificial nature, as against an 'authentic' nature, with all its good (the smell of freshly baked bread) which does indeed place a spell on the valley, a positive spell that keeps away evil forces; and bad (death by drowning in red apples and being beaten up by one's father).

Students also highlighted the changes in their own reading approaches: "*Thinking about my reading strategies and various themes let me see things I usually would not have seen.*" (B0). There were also observations on my interactive lecture: *I especially enjoyed the time in class spent on finding parallels between the stories written by Benni, and the Divine Comedy, as it allowed me a deeper reflection into the themes in Benni's stories* (B0). A5 remarked that it was better to have my lecture towards the end of the

process since, as she candidly admitted, her involvement would not have been as intense if I had presented the lecture first since then the texts would not have been challenging.

Finally, the following three examples (B2.1; B4 and B2), provide global evaluations of their own changes during the cyclic process. B2.1 provides a detailed, reflective account of her reading, writing and interpretative abilities and how they changed during the cyclic process. She traces the evolving reading and interpreting processes which the pedagogic design was aiming to draw out with the repeated readings and the reflection on variation in class, from a strong focus on comprehension of key words to a search for the meaning behind the words and images. The student underlines the significant changes in her reading and writing abilities which she attributes to the exercises because they encouraged students to think beyond the literal level and guided them towards the ideas and themes of the texts, thus inspiring them to think of "cose importanti" [important things]. She also provides a positive evaluation of the whole pedagogical process highlighting in particular the usefulness of the tasks on focusing both on forms as well as ideas and the selection of three texts by the same author. Her abilities at the morphological level may not have improved, however, her lexicon, her syntax and general discourse abilities as well as the ability to write long texts in Italian developed substantially. This student's comment underlines the importance in L2 literature education to implement pedagogical practices that can draw out students' existing abilities and also form new competencies during the learning process.

B4, who had expressed concerns in the pre-process survey about the inclusion of literature in the L2 curriculum, indicated that her confidence in reading literature has expanded and explains why: "*This term I have been able to practice identifying terms and expressions from the context of the sentence and with the aid of words I already know or learned up in the dictionary*". Key factors in changing this student's attitudes seem to have been the length of the texts and their universal themes which could also be interpreted across cultures, for example with Australian society: "*I think the choice of stories has been helpful in beginning to develop this skill, particularly as they are a reasonable length and carry themes of universal appeal*". She elaborates further on class discussion and how it was useful in making the students "question" their interpretation (reflective variation) and also observe variation at the formal level of

students' texts: "*A new strategy I am now using is to read the story / passage several times in Italian, firstly silently + then aloud, and together with the aural and visual comprehension, I am able to make sense of many foreign words, by their sound and appearance*". She incorporated the repeated reading method into her reading approach when reading Italian and other languages.

B2 sums up the kind of change I wished for all students who participated in the cycles, to deepen and expand their perspectives of literary texts by noticing the reflective variation in their written responses and subsequently in their oral class reflection and discussion. Her perception also illuminates a point I have made in chapter 5 especially when analysing students' comments on literary texts, included in their textbooks, which they had read as part of the language and culture section of the course. B2 affirmed that she had "nil" experience with the study of Italian literature.

Similarly, during the first cycle I asked students what they remembered of the literary texts that they had already read in Italian and whether they could draw any comparisons with Benni's tale, and the puzzled replies I received were that they could not recall any Italian literary texts studied in the Italian courses let alone find similarities with Benni's tale. It took a lot of coaxing on my part and also a lot of in-group dialogue in class with textbook in hand, for them to realize that indeed we had explored some of Benni's themes, countryside versus city; old versus new values; nature versus technology, throughout the year. The difference, as in the 1998 and 1999 samples, was that we had not studied those texts as "literature", again the fact that they were included in their language and culture textbook seem to influence their perceptions of the texts.

Another important point is that no student initially used any links with the Italian texts already read to try and guess the outcome of the story and understand the whole story, and six out of sixteen used those links in their final assignment. Although I cannot generalize since the sample was relatively small, the fact that it was heterogeneous in age, language and literary background allows me to put forward some hypothesis. The findings seem to indicate that it takes a long time to build up cultural schemata in a non native language and that in order to increase the speed it may be necessary to present literary texts first and foremost "as literature" while implicitly continuing to work towards greater awareness of form. It was easier, as would be expected, to tap into

background knowledge and personal experience of the world. It is therefore advisable, as Rosenblatt (1995) recommends, to let students read the text freely the first time and allow them to experience it affectively, but subsequently encourage them to delve deeper, for example, by making intertextual links. In summary, the major factors contributing to change in students' reading approach, from the students' point of view are:

- Reflection on and discussion of response variation in class
- Repeated "narrow" reading approach
- Different tasks and instruction related to each reading cycle
- Reflection on own reading approach
- Choice of three (short) and related literary texts by the same writer

6.3.2 Holistic evaluation (researcher/educator and second marker)

This section reports a global evaluation of the whole process in view of students' outcomes, as shown especially in the analysis of their last responses to the three tales. My global evaluation as researcher is more focused on students' changes during the cyclic process. These changes are reflected in qualitative changes, such as their ability to reflect on their reading and interpretation of literary texts and their increased self-esteem. My colleague's evaluation, as second marker of the students' assignments adhered quite strictly to the academic assessment criteria set out at the beginning of the course. The following evaluation bridges these two perspectives and reports students' outcomes across the whole group as well as the individual level. As the results show and as my colleague also remarked, there was an evolution in students' ability to understand literary texts as well as an increased ability at the linguistic and the interpretative level across the whole group.[216]

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[216] "L'analisi del terzo esercizio risulta in molti casi più approfondita e strutturata rispetto a quella dei due esercizi precedenti. C'è stata sicuramente un'evoluzione nei testi scritti degli studenti di tipo qualitativo, ma anche quantitativo. Ho notato che alcune studenti si sono servite di conoscenze acquisite durante le quattro settimane in cui si è svolto il progetto e hanno dimostrato buone capacità di elaborare in modo personale le informazioni che avevano a disposizione, oltre a cogliere e utilizzare in modo personale i suggerimenti dati dall'insegnante in classe." [Students' analysis in the third task is in many cases more in-depth and structured in comparison with the two previous exercises. There was certainly a qualitative, but also quantitative, evolution in students' written texts. I also noticed that some students used knowledge acquired during the four weeks during which the study took place and have shown good abilities in terms

The newly acquired information included vocabulary (from my instruction sheets and from the literary texts), reading and interpreting techniques, and strategies and elaboration of different perspectives and integration into students' own texts (from class reflection on variation and my suggestions and lecture). Overall, students' confidence in their ability to read literary texts and their written proficiency, especially in the amount written, but also at the discourse and lexical levels, improved substantially. This was greater than would be expected within six weeks (including the two-week break during which students read the beginning of "La casa bella"). According to my colleague, the success of the study was due in particular to the pedagogical design and implementation which succeeded in stimulating even the least experienced students to reflect and analyse the literary texts.[217]

Although it is to be expected that there would be an "evolution" from the first to the last task in any course, I wish to underline that the exercises became progressively more difficult in terms of length but especially in terms of critical abilities, from predicting the outcome of the story by reading two paragraphs to understanding the whole story (by linking themes and form to personal experience and background), to linking Benni's three tales and also making intertextual comments. Despite this steep teaching curve, or perhaps because of it, students' level of engagement with the texts and the pedagogical approach was high, as shown by their comments especially on their sense of achievement at the end of the course. As my colleague also observes, what contributed greatly to the positive outcome of the study was that the pedagogical approach, methods and research philosophy were holistically concentrated on providing the opportunity for the

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of being able to elaborate information at their disposal, beside grasping and using the suggestions provided by the teacher {Carroli} in class.]

[217] "Uno degli aspetti che a mio parere ha determinato il successo dell'esercizio è che ha stimolato l'analisi e la riflessione, anche nelle studenti senza alcuna esperienza di lettura di un testo letterario. Un alto aspetto da sottolineare è che quasi tutte le studenti sono state in grado di riflettere in maniera abbastanza approfondita sulle proprie strategie di lettura di un testo letterario. Quasi tutte le studenti hanno dimostrato buone capacità critiche e c'è stata un'evoluzione rispetto al primo esercizio. È chiaro che in questo caso le studenti avevano capito che cosa richiedeva l'esercizio. La domanda sulle strategie di lettura è stata posta più volte durante il progetto, quindi hanno avuto la possibilità di riflettere a fondo su questo aspetto." [One of the aspects that in my opinion determined the success of the study is that it has stimulated analysis and reflection, even in students with no experience with reading literary texts. Another aspect that should be underlined is that almost all students were able to reflect rather deeply on their own strategies of reading a literary text. Almost all students have shown good critical capacities and there has been an evolution in comparison to the first exercise. It is clear that in this case the students had understood what the exercise required. The questions on reading strategies were posed several times during the study therefore students had the opportunity to reflect in depth on this aspect.]

development of students' understanding of literature as well as their reading approaches. In particular, by using the repetitive reading method, within the cycle of reading/writing/reflection, students with little or no experience of interpreting literary text developed the ability to notice elements crucial to a deep understanding of literature such as detecting the hidden meanings of words and metaphors and narrative structures. This in turn could be attributed to an increased ability to notice syntactic and semantic clues related to meaning as well as an understanding of the author's rhetorical strategies (irony, naïve narrator voice).

At the individual level there were still discrepancies in the way students read and understood texts. This was due to different factors: from very limited literary competence at the beginning of the semester combined with limited proficiency, to high literary competence and limited proficiency. There was also in the most advanced students a development in the ability to link the texts to others and to the Italian literary tradition. Nearly half of the participants succeeded in linking Benni's three tales and identifying intra textual differences and similarities. Three students also processed the information interactively discussed in the lecture and incorporated it in their final assignment, providing their interpretations of the parallels between Benni's tales and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

There was also a significant improvement in all students' L2 writing abilities, although not all students improved in the same way. Some students acquired vocabulary and syntax from the tales and also from the set of tasks and instructions handed out, and used the new vocabulary and syntax in their own texts and in classroom oral interaction. For example, most students used the superlative adjectives and the subjunctive mood in hypothetical sentences that they had learnt just before reading Benni's tales. Although most students at first did not know the meaning of terms such as "lessico" [lexicon/vocabulary]; "trama" [plot], they used them later in their responses. Some students greatly increased the amount of text they could produce in Italian, but not the accuracy. All students' texts were clear at the discourse level. In summary, these students in their 4th semester of Italian were able to produce comprehensible, substantial amounts of L2 text on complex issues. Furthermore, students' responses were complex both grammatically and at the discourse level, for example as they expressed their hypothesis on the text's outcome by using the subjunctive mood. This shows that

literary texts can be successfully introduced at the Continuing level to the benefit of the students. This benefit extends far beyond the acquisition of language and reading and writing skills, to critical and intercultural analysis of literary texts and learning about contemporary and traditional Italian literary tradition.

Overall, the two markings and evaluations were similar and allocated similar marks. However, there were slight differences, especially in the marking of the final assignments. Whereas my colleague kept strictly to the assessment criteria I had set down for the task (see appendix D), I was more influenced in my evaluation by students' changes in learning. These changes included more complex text interpretation, competence in expressing written discourse in Italian, and an increased ability to reflect on and evaluate one's own reading and writing processes and how they had changed throughout the cyclic hermeneutic pedagogy. I did however structure the analysis of the final assignment around my colleague's evaluation in order to provide a non biased interpretation of the results.

My evaluation is that students' improved learning outcomes were due to several factors including the development of more effective reading approaches, focussing on analytical interpretation of texts. This in turn could be attributed to an increased ability to notice syntactic and semantic clues related to meaning, an understanding of the author's rhetorical strategies (irony, naïve narrator's voice); the ability to link the texts to other texts and, in some cases, to the Italian literary tradition. Overall, students' confidence in their ability to read L2 literary texts and their written proficiency improved substantially. The following table summarises changes in learning from students' and educators' perspectives:

Table 6.1 — Changes in learning

STUDENTS	STUDENTS' ASSESSMENT	EDUCATORS' ASSESSMENT
ALL	Improvement of language expression: 1.amount of text written 2.vocabulary 3.accuracy	Increased capacity to write longer responses in Italian + increased linguistic and discourse coherence in texts' in students' responses
ALL	Increased ability reflects own reading approach and use different strategies	Learning new reading strategies/techniques
MAJORITY	Increased reflective and critical analysis of literary texts resulting from exercises and activities	Learning of literary devices through guided tasks, collective comparison and reflection
THREE	Intertextual and intercultural ability: Benni and other texts and cultures	Accessed previous learning and linked it to the analysis of Benni's tales
THREE	Intertextual ability (structural and thematic links between Benni's tales and Dante's *Divina Commedia*	Processed lecture and incorporated in own analysis

The key issues I wish to highlight with this table are that students' evaluations of their learning mirror educators' evaluation. Perhaps even more salient is that students' evaluations of their improvement meet the pedagogical aims that I set out for the study. Such aims included the development of linguistic and meta-linguistic abilities, in particular an increased awareness of reading processes and response variation to provoke deeper approaches and more complex interpretations of literary texts.

My perceptions reflected quantitatively in the marks assigned were drawn by looking mainly at students' ability to understand the tales and also to link them with other literature. My colleague, who provided a second marking of all written tasks, followed the assessment criteria set out by me (see appendix D), so her marks were very close to mine throughout the cycles, although her final evaluation was based on stricter literary criteria while mine looked more closely at the overall progress from the beginning to the end of process. For all assignments my colleague's marks and mine were added up and divided by two. The marks assigned to individually written tasks at home were moderated by the marks assigned to students' individual responses after the classroom reflection. Another marking criterion was students' qualitative ability to monitor their awareness of processes and change in reading literary texts — as emerged from their descriptions of their reading processes included in each written task. Students' perceptions were in fact gathered from their responses to the second section of each task, which was focused on their reading processes. The best result, for me as a

researcher, was that the eclectic theoretical framework behind the design and implementation of the course yielded the outcomes I was hoping for, and at the same time it was enjoyable and rewarding not just for me, but for all students involved. As a language arts educator, I was most gratified by the fact that very young students could achieve such complex levels of understanding and response in Italian to short but complex literary texts in Italian and also be able to monitor and explain their process of change.

The process was intensive and focused and stimulated students' curiosity. These features may in turn have stimulated many students to write more than the required amount of words in Italian in their responses. A marked improvement in their written expression could also be attributed to factors such as focused topics, repeated readings and writings and shared learning environment. Another reason could be the way assessment was split. Initially more weight was given to content (70%) and less to form (30%) to encourage students to focus on content. Gradually the form percentage was increased to 50% for the last class assignment, which was also the longest and the most accurate in form and content. It appears that as students' confidence about the text increased, the confidence in their own ability to read and write a certain amount of words, also increased. This underlines the link between performance and motivation. Although it may be utopian to believe that all students could reach the same level, it is probably foreseeable that a more extended 'treatment' (at least a semester) would produce even better outcomes.

6.4 Discussion of findings

This study, by firstly investigating students' understanding of literature, over repeated readings of a literary text in Italian, provided a spectrum of the different ways in which these students read and interpreted L2 literary texts. Secondly, incorporating the strategies of successful students into the class did in fact contribute to a pedagogy of change. Students' self-confidence in reading and writing abilities increased. Students' analytical skills also improved along with their self-esteem. The findings support Luperini's (1998) proposal of the classroom as a learning community, the repeated reading method (Halász, 1983) expanded and adapted for L2 texts and the use of reflective variation in reading literary texts (Marton et al, 1994), not at the individual level but within the hermeneutic class, to elicit more complex understandings of

literature by developing students' awareness of how narrative and formal levels are linked and their own reading approaches.

The cycles of repeated readings of the text, the instructions, the reflection and discussion were also aimed at making students aware of how even small grammatical units (*comparativo di maggioranza*) are used sometimes (especially in literature) to provide the reader the necessary clues to anticipate the outcome of the text. Although it seems obvious that grammar communicates meaning, students can overlook how intrinsically connected form and themes are. At times a strong literary background (e.g., B1) can act as a deterrent to investing more effort on focusing on the formal aspects of texts. This seems to have consequences both for language development and for the level of understanding of the literary text. "Reading in a second language may be parasitic on language to a larger degree than first language reading" (Carrell, 1988, p. 244), but existing schemata (e.g., rhetorical, literary, of narrative grammars) and one's own background cultural knowledge, if it is tapped into, can produce new schemata to accommodate the new worlds encountered in the texts. As Hudson (1982) found, "schemata can override language proficiency as a factor in comprehension" (quoted in Carrell, 1988, p. 244). Lack of focus on form was also related to an inability to highlight the links between formal and metaphorical meaning in the text. Meaning emerges instead through a careful examination of the style of the text (e.g., hyperbole conveyed by using certain lexicon or grammatical structures such as superlatives). My pedagogical approach succeeded in "nudging" students to notice items in the text (bottom-up strategies) which led them to understand the deeper meaning (top-down), as well as making students notice, and if necessary change their own reading approach.

The different outcomes of study 2 were produced by the classroom reflection and discussion sessions as well as the link between subject matter and reading process strategies. Repeated readings of a text proved effective in building up students' understanding of the text. This was achieved by the "narrow" reading process, focusing very closely on form, and at the same time, coaxing students into link form to meaning and also to their reading approach. The repeated reading approach proved especially effective within a hermeneutic pedagogy, focused on learners sharing learning approaches and understanding of the text. Implications are that explicit teaching practices focused on content, students' approach to content and attention to individual

variables, are beneficial to students' learning. Using literary texts at the Continuing Level, by the same writer, one text under repeated readings, and two related stories later proved particularly effective as it reinforced students' comprehension at the language level as well as at the rhetorical and cultural level. Implicit instructions served two purposes: to coax students to focus on particular form and content features of the text and to stimulate students' curiosity about the text. As indicated by the research paradigms discussed earlier, in particular phenomenography and hermeneutics, educators can adopt particular classroom approaches to promote the class as a learning community and to make reading literature a valuable and enjoyable learning experience.

Which were the factors that contributed to change? Personal variables, including affective variables such as reasons for studying Italian, attitudes to literary studies and description of 'enjoyable' literature, gathered before the study, were helpful in gaining an insight into students' background and preferences which in turn was extremely useful for selecting the texts. The simultaneous emphasis on content and approach, and the subsequent comparison in class made students notice the importance of relating parts of the texts (syntax, lexicon, or the beginning) to understand the whole meaning. The instructions provided elicited overall a change in students' ability to read deeply (read for meaning) and in the best examples, to make links between form, culture and literary devices.

A very important role was played by the first task (inferring the story outcome by reading the first two paragraphs and linking them to the book cover). This task brought to the fore the active role readers play when beginning a text ("reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game" Goodman, 1967) (a role that nevertheless goes unnoticed if we have the whole short story). In their last written metalinguistic and literary reflections on the cycles of sequenced activities, students found the inference task challenging for two main reasons, unfamiliarity with the author's writing style and also with this type of exercise. Most students however found it very useful because it forced them to "work things out from the context", and also "to focus on the art of the writer" and look very closely at vocabulary and structures to work out the meaning of the opening of the story. Students also found the activity very exciting because they had the opportunity to construct, as it were, the rest of the text. Their comments about the cyclic approach indicate that the focus on reading-writing-reflection forced them to

scrutinize the text and to think creatively. The approach also increased students' confidence in their ability to read literature in Italian and write about literature in Italian. One student admitted that if the teacher had started by giving a lecture on the texts, she would not have given it "much attention and effort".

It seems therefore that some mediation, in the form of tasks and processes used for study 2, is necessary, at least for some students, when reading in second languages. The idea of experiencing the whole text without interference from the teacher (Rosenblatt's model) may be appropriate when reading L1 literary texts and L2 texts with experienced readers of literature. With less experienced readers of literature, a pedagogic approach, such as the one presented in this thesis, aimed at promoting awareness of several aspect of the text and expansion in perspective and reading approaches through collaborative reflection, seems to be more effective. The approach adopted for this study was also beneficial for students with medium to high language abilities and experience with reading L1 and L2 literature.

Summing up students' evaluations, evaluations by the second marker and myself, the major factors leading to change in this study were affective (motivation through curiosity and the possibility of inferring and constructing the text); methodological (building up cultural and rhetorical schemata as well as vocabulary and syntax over repeated readings of the same story and final comparison of the story with the other two linked short stories by same author); process (building up students' reading and writing strategies); dialogic (students' classroom reflections and discussion and rewriting); pedagogical (reading and writing framework; choice of texts, interactive holistic approach to teaching language, culture and literature).

6.5 Conclusions

Study 2 attempted to elicit advanced levels of understanding L2 literature by encouraging deep strategic approaches to reading and responding to L2 literary texts with a pedagogy based on cycles of repeated reading, writing and collective reflection on response variation within a pedagogical approach aimed at empowering all students to own the literary text, enjoy the literary experience. Pedagogically it succeeded as the combination of repeated reading, linked short stories, implicit tasks aimed at making

students notice links between language and meaning brought about a greater improvement in students' understanding of the texts and also in their reading processes. There remained quantitative and qualitative gaps in students' learning outcomes. Most students, however, remarked that their understanding of the texts and their reading approach had changed because of the 'guided' activities and the cycle of collective reflection and discussion. It seems then that a teaching practice focused:

- not just on content, but on process
- not just on teaching but especially on learning
- not just on individual reading and responding
- but also on dialectic comparison of variation
- a shared learning environment

in which students feel empowered because their reading and understanding count, may be the appropriate step forward towards fostering the will to learn and lead to change. The pedagogical approach stresses the centrality of students in the L2 language and culture learning process in the classroom as a hermeneutic community to value and learn from variation in perspectives on L2 literature.

Change in students' reading and understanding of texts occurred by turning the classroom into a learning community with practices aimed at promoting awareness in learners. To use this approach, 'informed' teacher flexibility is essential. Educators, by linking their knowledge of L2 reading theory, literary theory and pedagogical theory to their experience as practitioners and to students' personal variables, can choose appropriate literary texts and shape instructions to empower students and to make reading literature a shared learning experience. The question that remains to be investigated is: how can students with less effective reading approaches or less literary competence progress even further? Longer studies, over a semester or a year are needed to establish whether it reaches a plateau or whether the improvement would continue to grow. Although it is utopian, I like to think that it could.

Chapter 7

Conclusions and implications for literature in L2 education

7. Resumé of premises and assumptions

The impulse for this research came from a wish to enhance the role of literature in L2 language education. My view is that research into students' perceptions and approaches to L2 literature is crucial to enhancing the role of L2 literature. Thus the research programme undertaken for the thesis, which was integrated into the Italian language and literature curriculum at ANU, aspired to bring students to the fore, allowing them to participate in the research by including their "voices" at each stage of the study. To this end, I explored firstly aspects rarely considered in depth in L2 literature research: students' experiences of literature, including their perceptions, approaches and understanding of literary texts. Secondly, to enhance the role of L2 literature for all students, I implemented an eclectic pedagogical approach aimed at eliciting complex understandings of literary texts and students' awareness of linguistic and metalinguistic textual levels.

The assumptions spurring my research for study 1 especially were that the role of L2 literature is enhanced if students' perceptions of L1 and L2 literature are considered and educators are aware that perceptions can affect students' learning. The premises for study 2 are that a pedagogy based on phenomenographic, hermeneutic and L2 reading principles would enhance L2 literature for all students, including the least experienced readers of literature. Study 2 builds on the findings of study 1, expanding the parameters to the class as a hermeneutic community in an effort to optimize learning by sharing variation in students' interpretations of literature and approaches to reading literary texts in the class. At the pedagogical level, I implemented a dialogic hermeneutic approach aimed at developing awareness of one's own learning as well as of the variation of points of view. I wanted to see whether a particular reading method and tasks aimed at promoting reading as a form-focused as well as a dialogic activity would elicit more complex understandings of literary texts. I conducted study 2 in 2000 to investigate the effect of this pedagogy by monitoring changes in students' understanding and interpretation of literary texts through cycles of reading, writing and discussion.

The thesis went beyond the much debated question of whether L2 literary texts and should have a place in the L2 curriculum. I argued that not only do literary texts have a place in the L2 curriculum, but also that they are an integral part of the literacy and cultural learning process. Whilst the debate regarding L2 literature has often

concentrated on literature as language input, I consider literature and language in a broader sense, and in this thesis and in my teaching practice I engage with the nature of language and literature as valid educational content. Literature, not just the canon, in its many forms, encompasses the multiple languages and voices of the people of a language community. With its different levels of meaning, its evocative capacity, its cultural content, its language styles and registers, literature can be an immensely rich source in the L2 curriculum. Using literature reduces the risk of presenting outdated, stereotyped, uni-dimensional or simplified views of the language and culture and country studied in a limited range of writing styles, such as those often found in textbooks or media texts.

The texts selected for reading in the study, for example literary narrative written by young Italian writers from the 1990s, were representative of the various social, geographic and contextual registers and the youth cultures of Italy. At the same time, Maraini's text from the 1970s can still shock readers. By reading Benni's "Three tales of the traveller", one can incidentally find the resonance and universality of the structure and essence of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Thus by reading literature written in the early 1990s students can see the relevance of literary history, and with intertextual analysis they become aware of how it is interwoven into contemporary literature. Furthermore, Benni's themes of loss of land and invasion of technology are both local and global and lend themselves to cross-cultural analysis, since many cultures have experienced losing their land and their identity, including Australian Aborigines and Australian farmers.

7.1 Summary of main findings

The preliminary investigation and studies 1 and 2 aimed to enhance the role of L2 literature in the L2 curriculum by looking especially at what students think about and are doing with literature - deemed crucial to the principal aim of the research. The objectives of each investigation and findings are outlined below.

Preliminary investigation (1998): The most important findings were: what students understood as literature and how students' perceived the role of literature within the L2 curriculum differed significantly from the language arts educator (myself). The investigation also found that several students were not habitual readers of literature in their native language. They did not distinguish literary texts from other types of written

discourse and identified literary texts with literariness rather than with the type of discourse literary texts attempt to elicit in readers. I also found that quantitative methods focused on instruction or language output did not lead to a better understanding of students' learning processes or the disparity in their learning. These results spurred me on to further research into possible associations between perceptions of, and approaches to reading L1 and L2 literature, and students' learning. The 1998 data on perceptions of literature in general, combined with data from study 1 (1999), revealed that students perceived "entertainment", "knowledge" and "personal development" as the three major functions of literature in general.

Study 1 (1999): By delving into students' experiences and analysing links between perception and approach to the study of L2 literature and learning outcomes, the study found that there was considerable variation in the ways students perceived, approached and learnt from literary texts which affected their learning. The major outcome of study 1 is the uncovering of categories describing students' perceptions of literature, the role of L2 literature and students' approach to the study of L2 literary texts. Data analysis revealed a link between learning, approach and perception. Multifaceted holistic perceptions of literature and favourable views of the role of L2 literature seem to lead to an integrated approach to L2 literature that constantly links the parts to the whole. These holistic approaches achieved more complex and holistic language and literature learning. Conversely, less satisfactory learning was linked to less inclusive perceptions of literature, anxiety about L2 literature and an atomistic approach to L2 literature which revealed a lack of awareness of the links between language, culture and literature. Since only a minority of students had a holistic experience of literature in 1999, study 2 aimed at enhancing L2 literature learning for all students. The challenge was how to foster more inclusive experiences of L2 literature by encouraging deep study approaches which would yield more complex learning outcomes.

Study 2 (2000): The study investigated whether learners, when exposed several times to the same literary text, and also to variation in students' predictions, interpretations and reading strategies, could gain a more advanced understanding of the text. Findings from study 2 show that confident, competent (and happy!) students can be promoted by repeated reading combined with an interactive and holistic pedagogy aimed at fostering a sense of community as well as developing language, culture and literary competence,

the ability to reflect, discuss and, if necessary, modify one's strategies and processes. This cyclic pedagogy is adaptable to any literary texts and language level and focuses on four 'moments': reflection and analysis of the texts (individual and collective); critical awareness of one's reading approach, comparison and mediation (if necessary) of perceptions in class, language arts educator's intervention. The class thus becomes a hermeneutic community

Global findings: Taken as a group these three studies show that literature teaching and learning have indeed a place in the L2 language curriculum, at both language and culture levels. The majority of students supported the inclusion of L2 literature at all language levels. Perceptions of the role of L2 literature varied from a focus on language, on culture, or both. Students' major concerns with the inclusion of L2 literary texts were text length, vocabulary and pedagogical methods. Since many students perceived language learning as the main role of L2 literature, the challenge also included bringing to the fore the intrinsic link between language and culture, words and worlds, style and representation of the narrated world. While the most enlightened readers could already be described as "intercultural travellers", many students focused only on parts of the texts which seemed to prevent them from achieving advanced learning outcomes. The most important unanswered question of study 1 then was: is it possible to improve students' L2 learning outcomes with a particular pedagogic approach? Study 2 investigated the effects of an expanded version of the repeated reading approach within the L2 hermeneutic class, as a way of promoting both focus on language and culture within literature, and exposing students to variation in their class peer response to the text in an effort to enhance the role of L2 literature for all students. Implicit instruction encouraged students to discover by themselves, through reflective variation, hidden meanings and intercultural links in the L2 texts studied, and to build bridges between their own cultural background and the ones represented in the literature the students read. A shared learning environment, where students take charge of their learning, proved more conducive to change than pedagogical practice not inclusive of collective critical reflection and discussion of variation in students' responses to literature.

On the basis of these findings, what is advocated in this thesis is literature perceived as an intercultural space, inseparable from language within the class perceived as a reflective hermeneutic community. The place of literature becomes a negotiated place,

an intercultural space where low and high literature, canonic and popular literature, meet with students' culture, language arts educator's culture, informed by theory, to produce new meanings. Since variability in students' perceptions of literature and approach to the study of L2 literature are limited, it is possible, once the teacher is aware of those perceptions and approaches, to take them into account when selecting texts and pedagogical practices, to promote students' engagement with the texts for optimal learning experience and outcomes.

Viewed from this perspective, inclusive of students' experiences, the role of literature in the L2 curriculum is affirmed as intellectually enriching content and not as isolated instances of L2 language. Furthermore, the position of language studies in academia is strengthened if language is perceived as intellectually challenging content rather than skill-based learning.

7.2 Implications for pedagogical practice

The three major implications emerging from the research are: 1) the importance of taking learners' views as the starting point for a reconsideration of the role of L2 literature pedagogy and research; 2) the pedagogical implications of highlighting the links between language, culture and literature; 3) the need to incorporate students' views, approaches and successful strategies into the classroom by using a hermeneutic pedagogy to increase students' self-esteem and promote awareness and change in learning.

Literature is now perceived by many language educators as authentic material to advance students' intercultural awareness, as well as language learning and critical thinking (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994; Maxim, 1997; Maurer, Carroli & Hillman, 2000). A major issue still facing educators is appropriate text selection and pedagogical practices in the light of L2 literature's changed role within culture and education, and given changes in students' perceptions of literature in general and its role within L2 language learning. On the basis of the findings, it is suggested that selection of literary texts should look beyond language level appropriateness and search for texts which contain familiar elements (universal themes and traditional literary structures), but overturn conventions and change the way we perceive the world with the writers' novel

take on language, narrative structure and themes. Literary texts should be connected with students' own cultural values, but also reach back to Italian literary and cultural roots through intertextual links and echoes of past narratives that have defined Italian language and culture can arouse fresh emotions and ideas in students. On the basis of the outcome of study 2 it is also suggested, especially at the Continuing and Intermediate levels, that the literary texts be brief, that the syllabus includes a series of texts written by the same author, but challenging at the linguistic, cultural, historical and narrative levels.

The most significant implication of study 1 for L2 literature instruction is the relational aspect found between perceptions, approaches and learning outcomes. As was reported in chapter 5 there was a relationship between complex perceptions of literature, a holistic approach to learning language and literature, and optimal learning. Analysis of perceptions of 1) literature in general; and 2) attitudes to L2 literary texts should provide the basis for selecting texts and for discussion in class that allows exploration of different points of views to be aired, including the ways texts may affect learning. For example, L2 students at times may perceive literature primarily as a tool for learning language. In the 1999 sample, a minority perceived L2 literature as a way of expanding knowledge about culture and society, and an even smaller number as personal development and change, the majority being concerned about language learning, in particular, acquiring new vocabulary.

If on the one hand it is the role of language arts educators to ensure that appropriate curriculum and syllabus choices are made to ensure that activities aim at expanding knowledge of the language, on the other hand it is also crucial that teaching and learning processes aim at: 1) making students aware of the value of studying L2 literature; 2) providing the opportunity for students to develop the instruments for appreciating and interpreting literature. The first objective is achievable if literary texts are approached holistically, both as an individual's expression, and also as emerging from a particular culture and literary tradition. The value of studying L2 literature is found in the discovery of "the magic of words": "words in context" can signify a "world in a text". The second objective is achievable with a pedagogy based on phenomenographic principles of awareness and reflective variation and the class as a hermeneutic community. In short, it is the language arts educator's role perhaps less to

"shape" (Marton et al, 1994) students' awareness than to provide the opportunity for students: 1) to arrive at the texts' meaning through its language; 2) to gain a deeper understanding of the texts by using reflection and discussion of critical variation in students' responses in class. This might possibly lead to less anxiety and deeper approaches to the study of L2 literary texts and inspire in students a broader, more holistic perception of literature.

Thirty years of discussion about the benefits of L2 interactive reading and of integrated approaches based on the inseparability of language and culture and post structuralist reading theories[218] did not seem to have significantly changed perceptions of reading literature in my research samples in 1998 and 1999, about reading as mainly a receptive process instead of an organic transaction. It can only be assumed that theory and discussion of theory has not been translated into classroom practice, as Kramsch and Nolden point out (1994). Overall perceptions of literature in general and approaches to L2 literature did not encompass either post modern literary theory or theoretical models of reading which focus on the centrality of the reader. Nor did they show, overall, awareness of how culture is inscribed in language. For this reason, as explained in chapter 4, it is advisable to include in L2 literature education implicit reading instructions to nudge students into active reading, for example by exploring the text very closely in the effort to notice grammatical structures and vocabulary in their search for and discovery of meaning, individually and also through reflective variation and classroom dialogue.

Findings regarding students' perceptions of discussion of texts also support Kramsch's (1983) idea of the dialogic classroom, and more recently, the cross-cultural approach to teaching literary texts (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994), based on de Certeau's (1984) notion of oppositional practice. A strong focus on discussion of issues followed by negotiation of the texts' meaning did not however necessarily lead to L2 language oral production,

[218] Reading theories such as reception and especially reader-response have been discussed in chapter 2. Both stress the role of the reader. Reception theory (Rezeptionästhetik), associated especially with the German contemporary literary theorists Wolfgang Iser (1972, 1978, 1980) and Hans-Robert Jauss (1982) stress the importance of taking into account the history of the reception of literary texts as well as their current value and significance. Reception theory therefore, in comparison with reader-response theory, is more concerned with the larger issue of how texts are received within communities throughout history and how their canonical value changes or should change and how an understanding of the general cultural context of literary texts is necessary to make sense of literature. Reader-response emphasizes more the transaction between reader and text (Rosenblatt, 1995) and is therefore more useful in the context of this thesis for describing students' reading approaches (chapter 5) and processes (chapter 6).

since often students in heated debates reverted to English. This certainly presents a challenge for L2 educators, ways to encourage oral production in the non native language, without dampening the students' enthusiasm for the topic discussed. Perhaps considering a mixed use of English and Italian as a necessary inter-language in which the students feel comfortable at the Intermediate level might be an advisable compromise instead of drawing rigid boundaries between the two languages or insisting that students always use the language studied in classroom discussion.

The role of the language arts educator is also to highlight that the uniqueness of each literary text lies in the author's particular style through which the culture is represented. Literary texts often also continue, rewrite or innovate tradition, thus representing a bridge between past and present. In this sense, every book has been written before (Jauss, 1982), since often literary works, whether in their structure, theme or by direct reference, echo other texts and thus become linked to the narrative voices of the past, as with Benni's three "Tales of the traveller", whilst adding their individual imprint on the culture of the present and future. Literary texts can become cross-cultural bridges since they contain themes that are global and at the same time are representative of a local cultural world. As I repeatedly claimed throughout the thesis, even a single word, understood as part of a fluid, inter textual cultural process, can enclose a world in a text if students can perceive it and approach it in this way. Literary experiences which focus on language and culture, in relation to each other, and in relation to background experience and competence, have been found to be linked in this study to more advanced learning of Italian language and literature, integrating the two into personal change. This principle supports one aspect of Marton & Booth's (1997) concept of successful learning approaches: approaching the object of learning as parts in relation to the whole and gradually integrating "part by part into a greater whole" (Marton & Booth 1997, p. 27). What does this mean for L2 literature teaching? The results of study 2 certainly support an integrated, dialogic approach to L2 literature, as well as the need for increasing students' awareness of how culture is inscribed in the language of literary texts. The multiple values of studying literature should be brought to the fore so that the study of L2 literature can be an all encompassing learning experience for students.

Edmondson (1997) argued that foreign language educators and researchers should not be content with claims that literature has a special role in L2 teaching, and Shanahan

(1997) advocated the crucial need to conduct research that would clarify the contribution of literature and culture to language learning. A general theory of the role of literature in language learning, based on qualitative research in classroom practice and students' learning experiences, and not just assumptions, is essential, since it would uncover invalid assumptions but also some valid claims. Such a theory would have to include students' experiences of literature if it is to work towards better learning encompassed in a pedagogy of awareness. Study 1 has attempted to clarify some of these questions and doubts. Interestingly, students' descriptions of "enjoyable literature" in the 1998 and 1999 surveys, as shown in Chapter 4, indicate that most students perceived "entertainment", "knowledge" and "personal expansion" as the three major functions of literature in general. However, vocabulary learning came up as the top priority in the open-ended question about the role of literature in L2 learning in the same surveys administered at the beginning of the semester. In the interviews, however, after the students had read several L2 literary texts, this perception was expanded to include access to another world and changes in perspective in life.

7.3 Final reflections

I started the research with the aim of enhancing the role of L2 literature. As the research programme progressed, it assumed a dual purpose:

1) Ascertaining students' experiences of literature, what students understood by "literature", how they felt about it, how they approached it in L1 and L2 and how this affected their learning;

2) Providing a pedagogical approach to lessen the gap between different learning outcomes.

Researching students' experiences of literature and exploring the effects of an alternate approach has given me the opportunity to question and investigate theories and practices associated with literature in education. It also provided the opportunity for getting to know and understand my students' complex experiences with L2 literature, which in turn has allowed me to implement pedagogical practices aimed at optimizing their learning (Liddicoat & Jansen, 1998; Kramsch, 2002; Phipps & Gonzales, 2004).

In view of the findings emerging from students' views towards the inclusion of L2 literature in the L2 curriculum (all three investigations) and especially the changes in students' perceptions, study approach and text interpretation after the brief half semester 2000 study, my belief is reinforced: appropriately selected literary texts should be included in the L2 curriculum at all levels. Literary texts achieved multiple benefits for L2 students because theory and practice, language and culture, study approach and object of study were integrated in the foreground of the hermeneutic class. Literary texts were approached as intellectually enriching content, not just as tools aimed at developing language skills. Students thus had the opportunity to experience the texts aesthetically, linguistically and culturally, by participating in the process of reflecting on the variation in their approaches and interpretations within the class as a hermeneutic community. Once students saw the meaning intrinsic in words, and their imagination and background could act as a transaction to understand those words, the role of L2 literature was enhanced as students wondered at the myriad of cultural, historical and universal meanings three brief tales could elicit. Students' interpretations of the literary texts in turn are valid critical readings of those texts that expand the global understanding of those texts.

This thesis will hopefully provoke more interest in understanding the complex relationship between learners, literary texts and L2 language and culture learning and teaching and also provide some stimulus for much needed further research in this area aimed at exploring further how to bring about qualitative changes in the learning outcomes of all students of L2 literature.

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APPENDIX A

The global landscape

The 'local' landscape: Italian in Australia and beyond

The global landscape

Current discussion concerning L1 literature could perhaps best be situated in the debate about the literary canon and the wider preoccupation in Australia (Lo Bianco, 1998) and in other Western countries with perceptions of falling literacy levels and the growing use of internet communication tools. Many learners show a preference for audiovisual texts and new modes of communication, such as text messaging and electronic mail. Discussion about the role of languages, literatures and literacy in the internet era, and printed versus visual and electronic communication (Eco, 1994) abound at conferences, in books,[219] journals and on the web. The range of terms used to define literature and its uses mirrors the existence in various contexts of a broad variety of perceptions of literature as well as of methods and approaches to teaching literature. For instance, literature can be defined as an instrument for language learning by an ESL educator in Thailand but still be considered as a "sacred canon" in Rome by a relatively young Italian academic.[220] These narrow views of literature show that globally there may be shifts in the wider cultural landscape and the pedagogical domain but there are still many differences at the local and contextual level, in the way literature is produced, perceived and used.

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[219] See for example Kramsch and Thornes' chapter, "Foreign language learning as global communicative practice, in the forthcoming volume edited by Block and Cameron, *Language Learning and Teaching in the Age of Globalization*. London: Routledge. In their chapter (available on the web! 2004) Kramsch and Thorne question and discuss Blyth (1998), Warschauer (1999) and Warschauer and Kern's (2000) assertion that the internet opened up communication with authentic language contexts rather than decontextualized classroom contexts: "We interrogate the presumption that computer-mediated communication (CmC) naturally helps learners understand local conditions of language use and builds a global common ground for cross-cultural understanding". After analysing synchronous and asynchronous communication between American students of French students in the USA and French learners of English in France they come to the conclusion that American and French have different notions of communication: French encourages a notion of communication that is less the rational negotiation of intended meaning, or even the transmission of information, but a trust-building ritual [...] Neither the French nor the American students were aware that the global medium only exacerbated the discrepancies in social and cultural genres of communication; no "understanding of each other's lives" and no reconfiguration of one's own is possible. Between the global and the local lies genre, the social and historical base of our speech and thought. An understanding of this neglected dimension of foreign language teaching may lead to a reassessment of what we mean by "communicative competence" in a global world and what the communicative contract will be, upon which trust is built.

[220] At a conference in Thailand in 2002, I heard literature still described as a "tool" to be "exploited" for language learning in the typical terminology of the communicative approach, popular in the late 1970s and early 1980s and still used in the 21st century. Conversely, whilst presenting a paper at a conference in Rome, still in 2002, I was criticised by a colleague from Naples University for defining an innovative novel (Covito, 1999) that incorporated the language and modes of delivery of computers as literature (Carroli & Speziali, 2004).

The ongoing debates show that literature has not been superseded, and it is not true that people, including students, always prefer visual to written texts. The fear that books will disappear is unfounded according to Eco who stated, when interviewed by Regazzoni (1999) that the computer "porta il popolo di internet a scoprire il libro" [leads the internet people to discover the book]. Books still matter also in L2 literacy learning. Most of the available research — certainly not extensive — seems to indicate that the best literacy results are still achieved by reading printed texts since visual texts are too distracting as they contain several media: music, images of landscapes, people, and also dialogue or narrative (Chun & Plass, 1997; Chun, 2001). However, the interplay between visual and written texts[221] is not the focus of this thesis and will be considered only in relation to the thesis central concern, namely the role of L2 literature in language learning.

The 'local' landscape: Italian in Australia and beyond

Since the research was conducted with students of Italian as a second language I will provide a brief background to the study of Italian in particular in Australia and how perceptions of Italian have evolved in the past thirty years. In this thesis Italian is presented as a cultural language as opposed to a "community" language. Italian is a language with a strong literary tradition that dates back to the Duecento with the Sicilian School, the Tuscan School, religious poetry (e.g., Saint Francis of Assisi); and the Trecento with Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio. According to Bloom (1994) it was Boccaccio who invented ironic storytelling about storytelling. As will be discussed especially in chapter 4, I certainly do not share Bloom's individualistic and exclusive definition of literature; however the inclusion of Italian authors such as Dante and Boccaccio in his canon reaffirms the undeniable influence of early Italian literature in particular in the development of western culture.

Literacy in L2 Italian should also include a basic knowledge of literary history and philology. Students truly literate in L2 Italian should be aware that the history of the Italian language and the Italian nation is intrinsically linked to the history of Italian literature. Indeed for many centuries the idea of Italy as a unified country was alive only

[221] Sharma (1993) explores whether multimedia can help in the teaching of English literature to more visually-oriented Indian readers through an Open Distance Education Program.

in literature (Speziali & Carroli, 2004). This legacy also explains the varied linguistic and cultural background of Italy and also of Italian Australians. It is also extremely important that students perceive Italian as a cultural language and not just as a community or a "spaghetti' language. Although stereotypes, still widespread even among university students, are at times provocative pedagogical tools, the role of tertiary language and art educators is not to promote superficial knowledge of L2 languages but encompasses an ethical imperative towards enhancing inter and cross-cultural understanding of others' cultures through the learning of languages and literatures.

In Australia, Italian may have risen in popularity during the multicultural boom of the 1970s and 1980s because the Italian community is the third largest ethnic group after Anglo-Saxons and Celts but, paradoxically, this has also decreased in status because Italian has been labelled a "community" language, not worth learning per se for its cultural value, but because it is spoken by one of the largest Australian immigrant communities.[222] The label "community" or "ethnic" language often used to describe Italian in the Australian context has contributed to this diminished status of the Italian language because of its association with a migrant group rather than a strong cultural tradition. Unlike French and German, Italian was therefore often included in schools and universities because of its community status. Undoubtedly multiculturalism was useful in terms of highlighting the strong Italian presence in Australia and in increasing the teaching of Italian. However, as stressed by Comin (1993), then Professor of the Italian Department at Flinders University at a conference in Adelaide: "If Italian is to be a language for South Australia it must be attractive and accessible to all and must not run the risk of finding itself in an ethnic ghetto" (p. 88).

From the 1970s and especially the 1980s though the image of Italy and Italians abroad has slowly begun to change, from a migrant language Italian is gradually assuming the nuances of a "trendy" language. This process is due to the growing popularity of the "made in Italy" products, including cinema, fashion, racing cars, and also literature.[223]

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[222] As Bettoni pointed out, in the 1970s and 1980s many Italians in Australia did not speak Standard Italian and were instead trilingual "*Tra lingua dialetto e inglese*" [between standard language dialect and English (Bettoni 1985, title page).

[223] As De Mauro (2002) observed even exported products are a vehicle of culture as they highlight the link between economic and cultural values. Italian is less and less the language of poor migrants,

Despite being the official language in only two countries, Italy and Switzerland, Italian in the 21st century is by no means a marginal language (Clyne, 1991; Maglio, 2002). In fact Italian is one of the most widely taught languages at school level in Australia and the USA. It is however less widespread at university level in Australia.[224]

Over the last twenty years, at the Australian National University (ANU) there has been a decline in enrolments in Italian literature courses therefore, as electives, the literature courses have often fallen through for lack of enrolments. A possible reason is perhaps that most students of Italian start at the beginner level and even if they complete their major (7 courses) it is confined largely to the core language and culture courses. There are few honours and post graduate students. This situation seems parallel to other departments in other parts of the world and not just in Italian Studies. In order to avoid the complete erasure of literature from the Italian Program at ANU, I decided to integrate it into the language and culture courses – but not just as a tool for learning L2 vocabulary and grammar, or to teach only the literary Italian canon, or an incentive to discuss cultural topics.[225]

Traditional approaches to teaching literature, in my experience,[226] were and still are effective with motivated and linguistically very skilled students used to analysing literature in other languages, especially their L1, whilst they often lower the confidence of less experienced students. Many researchers and educators (Berhardt, 1994; Bretz, 1990; Friedman, 1992; Kramsch, 1985, 1993; Nance, 1994; Swaffar, 1985, 188; Swaffar et al, 1991)[227] have suggested that "the traditional lecture-discussion format" is

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associated with mandolins, pizza and mafia and is instead increasingly linked to a fast modern country itself bringing in immigrants now.

[224] In Australia there are 39 universities of which 2 are private. Italian is taught in 19 universities and in 12 there is an autonomous Italian Studies department (Maglio 2002). In Australia the teaching of Italian at university level is backed financially by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE) and the Cassamarca Foundation. In 2004 these institutions supported the tertiary teaching of Italian studies respectively with ten Lettori (lecturers from Italy) — one at the Australian National University (ANU) — and fourteen locally employed lecturers.

[225] Another solution to low enrolments in optional courses run by individual language programs was the development by staff members of the French, German and Italian Program (including myself) of courses with a European focus, such as Contemporary European Narrative: Literary and Visual, with a lecture in English and tutorials in the individual languages (Carroli, Hillman & Maurer, 1999).

[226] Having studied as a language student of French, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian in South Australia and subsequently worked as an educator of Italian in all three universities in South Australia and then at the Australian National University, I had observed that the traditional methods of teaching literature, often in English, was effective only with students with a strong literary background in their L1. Conversely, it seemed to de-motivate students with a 'weak' literary competence, especially if their background was not Anglo-Saxon.

[227] As reported in Fecteau, 1999, p. 475.

inadequate and the "traditional 'transmission model'[228] of literature teaching does little to foster direct engagement with the text or to develop students' literary competence" (Fecteau, 1999, p. 475).[229] The challenge was to develop courses that enhanced the role of L2 literature in the learning of L2 Italian. In order to achieve this aim it was necessary to investigate what students understood by literature, how they perceived the role of L2 literature, and how they approached L2 literary texts.

[228] As reported in Fecteau's article (1999, p. 490), according to Marshall et al (1995), the 'transmission model' based on the assumption that a message is transferred in its intact form from a sender, in this case the educator, to the passive receiver, the student, is still widespread in literature teaching (p. 6).

[229] When Italian literature courses are offered in English, another major problem is that students do not learn the language of criticism in Italian. As has been pointed out by major L2 learning scholars such as Kramsch (1993), language and culture are inextricably linked, this link should therefore be highlighted, not obscured. If courses are delivered in English students miss the opportunity for accessing important aspects of Italian language and culture and expanding their competence to be able to go on university exchanges in Italy. Approaches that integrate the teaching and learning of language and subject matter, in this case Italian literature, certainly pose different kinds of challenges for the educator, at the level of syllabus and course design, especially devising classroom tasks aimed at developing awareness of the links between language, culture and literature and also of students' own learning (see chapter 3).

APPENDIX B

Survey of Italian Students' Language Background, Reasons for Studying Italian and Attitudes Towards the Study of Literature

SURVEY OF ITALIAN STUDENTS' LANGUAGE BACKGROUND, REASONS FOR STUDYING ITALIAN AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

1998

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information on your background in Italian language study, in literature study in Italian or in other languages as well as your beliefs concerning language learning and literature so that materials and methods of instruction can be appropriately chosen. Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions thoughtfully.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name:.....

Age groups: Below twenty: 20 to 24: 25 to 29: 30-35: 36 and above:

Gender: Male Female

Native language:.....

Languages spoken at home:.....

Please circle one of the following numbers as appropriate:

1. I have studied Italian in high school for:

0 years 1 2 3 4 5 6

2. I have studied Italian at university for:

0 years 1 2 3 or more

3. I have had experience (lived in Italy, travelled to Italy; Italian-speaking partner) with Italian for:

0 years 1 2 3 4 or more

Please give your reasons for studying Italian (if you indicate more than one reason, please rank them in order of priority):

a. General interest in the language

b. General interest in the culture

c. General interest in the literature

d. Relevant to other university studies

e. Useful for current/future employment

f. Intending to travel to Italy

g. Family/friends are Italian speakers

h.Other (please specify)

.....

ATTITUDES TOWARDS LITERATURE

Please tick the box that corresponds most closely to your perception of literature:

	1 Strongly Agree	**2** Agree	**3** Slightly Agree	**4** Slightly Disagree	**5** Disagree	**6** Strongly Disagree
1. I read literature (eg. poetry, novels, short stories, plays) for enjoyment:						
a. in my own language						
b. in Italian;						
c. in languages other than my own or Italian.						
2. I believe reading literature improves my language skills:						
a. in my own language						
b. in languages other than my own or Italian.						
3. I believe that reading literature enhances my appreciation and understanding of the culture:						
a. in Italian;						
b. in languages other than my own or Italian.						
4. Literature should be included at all levels of the undergraduate language degree.						
5. Literature should be included only at the higher levels (3rd and 4th year) of the undergraduate degree.						

6. Please indicate your favourite kinds of literature (if you indicate more than one kind, rank in order of priority).

a. Novels
b. Poetry
c. Plays
d. Short stories
e. Other (please specify)

.....

7. Provide your own definition of "enjoyable literature":
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8. Any comments you may wish to add on the possible role/roles of literature in language learning:

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SURVEY OF ITALIAN STUDENTS' LANGUAGE BACKGROUND, REASONS FOR STUDYING ITALIAN AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE STUDY OF LITERATURE
1999 and 2000

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information on your background in Italian language study, in literature study in Italian or in other languages as well as your beliefs concerning language learning and literature so that materials and methods of instruction can be appropriately chosen. Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions thoughtfully.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name:.....

Age groups: Below twenty: 20 to 24: 25 to 29: 30-35: 36 and above:

Gender: Male Female

Native language:.....

Languages spoken at home:.....

Please circle one of the following numbers as appropriate:

1. I have studied Italian in high school for:

0 years 1 2 3 4 5 6

2. I have studied Italian at university for:

0 years 1 2 3 or more

3. I have had experience (lived in Italy, travelled to Italy; Italian-speaking partner) with Italian for:

0 years 1 2 3 4 or more

Please give your reasons for studying Italian (if you indicate more than one reason, please rank them in order of priority):

a. General interest in the language

b. General interest in the culture

c. General interest in the literature

d. Relevant to other university studies

e. Useful for current/future employment

f. Intending to travel to Italy

g. Family/friends are Italian speakers

h.Other (please specify)

.....

ATTITUDES TOWARDS LITERATURE

Please tick the box that corresponds most closely to your perception of literature:

	1 Strongly Agree	**2** Agree	**3** Slightly Agree	**4** Slightly Disagree	**5** Disagree	**6** Strongly Disagree
1. I read literature (eg. poetry, novels, short stories, plays) for enjoyment:						
a. in my own language						
b. in Italian;						
c. in languages other than my own or Italian.						
2. I believe reading literature improves my language skills:						
a. in my own language						
b. in languages other than my own or Italian.						
3. I believe that reading literature enhances my appreciation and understanding of the culture:						
a. in Italian;						
b. in languages other than my own or Italian.						
4. Literature should be included at all levels of the undergraduate language degree.						
5. Literature should be included only at the higher levels (3rd and 4th year) of the undergraduate degree.						

6. Please indicate your favourite kinds of literature (if you indicate more than one kind, rank in order of priority).

a. Novels
b. Poetry

c. Plays
d. Short stories
e. Other (please specify)

.....

7. Provide your own definition of "enjoyable literature":

.....

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8. Any comments you may wish to add on the possible role/roles of literature in language learning:

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9. Any comments you may wish to add about problems you experience when reading literature in a second language and how you deal with these:

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APPENDIX C

Materials related to Study 1 (1999):

"Open-ended Interview Guide"

OPEN-ENDED INTERVIEW GUIDE
Intermediate students of Italian
(Semester1, 1999)

Introduction

- Saluti
- Crucial issues of the study:

Have you understood what my study is about? Is the aim of this open-ended interview clear? I would like to assure you that there are no right answers, so please feel free to express your views openly.

- Survey: students' questions, comments and clarifications on their responses.

General issues

The general issues I wish to cover in our conversation today are:

- Your perception of literature (and reading)
- Your general attitude to reading literary texts (and other genres)
- Your attitude to reading L2 literature (role/s?)
- Your experience of Italian literature in general
- Your experience of Italian literature in the first 4 weeks of this semester.

Where would you like to start? (If no preference, prompt: e.g., "In your reply in the survey you stated that your preferred that type of literature is .....; "which was your favourite short story this year?).

Broad general questions

Describe your experience of literature in the last 4 weeks – you can express your views of the texts (from the literature anthology or grammar book), the exercises, the journal, the class (prompts: "pleasant; frustrating; useful"?).

Comparative / contrastive questions

- Which is your favourite Italian text you read this year? (Literary or non literary; included in the syllabus or not) Why? Was it more interesting? Why?
- Do you read the texts in the grammar book differently from the texts in the Literature Anthology *Incontri attuali*, or the texts you read on your own, not prescribed in the syllabus? How?

Structural questions (process)

- How did you organize your reading experience? Where did you read? How did you start?
- How long did it take you to read the first and the second short stories? (D. Maraini, "L'altra famiglia"; Alberto Moravia, "Regina d'Egitto") How many times did you read the texts?

- What were you looking for? Did you focus on the storyline? Did you focus on the lexicon and syntax?
- Did you have to check many words in the dictionary or was the provided glossary sufficient?
- Did the pre-reading activities help? Why? How? Did they help you understand the content of the text? Did they stimulate reflection on the text? Did they in any way diminish the pleasure of reading the texts?
- When you read the texts the second time (after the pre-reading in class) did you notice any differences in the way you read it? Or about the text?
- What do you remember about the texts? (Any of the words or phrases from the two short stories etc. etc.?)
- When you read the excerpts in the Grammar book, did you realize they were from literary texts? Was the experience of reading them different from that of reading the short stories? Why?

Feeling questions

- How do you feel about literature being included in your unit?
- Do you feel that the book chosen is at the right level? Why?
- Are the short stories challenging as far as language and cultural content?
- How do you feel about the last 4 weeks, in terms of your learning experience of Italian (literature, language and culture)?

Closing

We have covered all the topics I wanted to discuss with you today. Would you like to add anything? Or have you got any questions? Now that we have covered your general attitudes, perceptions and experience of literature and your reactions to the texts read in the last 4 weeks and your journal entries?

Thank you for your involvement, your contribution is crucial to my research programme.

CIAO. A PRESTO!

APPENDIX D

Materials related to Study 2 (2000)

Ital 2006 Italian Studies - Continuing 2 **Sem. 2, 2000**

S. Benni (1994): "I tre racconti del viaggiatore" Laboratorio di lettura, scrittura, produzione orale; Riflessione metalinguistica e letteraria

Criteri per la valutazione

Esercizio 1:
Forma in uso (=30%) 1. Coesione e coerenza (si capisce il testo?) 2. Uso di lessico appropriato 2. Sintassi e morfologia. 3. Ortografia
Contenuto (=70%) 1. Capacità analitiche: cogliere gli elementi essenziali del testo (a livello sintattico, stilistico, e sul piano dei significati) e poi collegarli tra di loro per fare ipotesi sullo svolgimento del racconto, basandosi sempre sul testo per spiegare le proprie idee / ipotesi. 2. Competenza letteraria: capacità di capire subito il 'genere' a cui appartiene il racconto per poi riuscire a immaginarne lo svolgimento. 3. Abilità di 'creare' un testo 'nuovo'; senza riuscire a cogliere tutti gli elementi del testo, ma alcuni, ci si immagina uno svolgimento molto diverso, che, anche se non conforme a certi elementi e indizi presenti nei primi due paragrafi, riesce ugualmente ad inventare uno svolgimento e a spiegare I motivi della propria ipotesi; 4. Capacità di riflettere sulle proprie strategie di lettura.

Esercizio 2:
Forma in uso (=40%) 1. Coesione e coerenza (si capisce il testo?) 2. Uso di lessico appropriato 2. Sintassi e morfologia. 3. Ortografia
Contenuto (=60%) 1. Capacità analitiche: cogliere gli elementi essenziali del testo (a livello sintattico, stilistico, e sul piano dei significati) e poi collegarli tra di loro. 2. Capacità di collegare conoscenze già acquisite e altre nuove e di usarle per riuscire meglio a leggere il testo. 4. Capacità di riflettere sulle proprie strategie di lettura.

Esercizio 3:
Forma in uso (=50%) 1. Coesione e coerenza (si capisce il testo?) 2. Uso di lessico appropriato 2. Sintassi e morfologia. 3. Ortografia
Contenuto (=50%) 1. Capacità analitiche: cogliere gli elementi essenziali del testo (a livello sintattico, stilistico, e sul piano dei significati) e poi collegarli tra di loro. 2. Capacità di collegare conoscenze già acquisite e altre nuove e di usarle per riuscire meglio a leggere il testo. 5. Capacità di imitare tecniche narrative, stilistiche per 'creare' un testo. 4. Capacità di riflettere sulle proprie strategie di lettura.

"La casa bella (Primo racconto del viaggiatore)" (Benni, 1994)

Vivevo nella valle più bella, e la mia era la casa più bella, tutta impellicciata d'edera, in mezzo al bosco di castagni più bello del mondo. Avevamo il gallo più bello della zona, sembrava un leone dipinto, e quando la mattina cantava spaccava i sogni col martello.

Avevamo un pollaio con galline niente affatto stupide che facevano le uova migliori della zona e mucche dagli occhi dolci come odalische, e maiali così grossi e rosei che veniva voglia cavalcarli. Tutto intorno avevamo vigne, alberi da frutto e un orto dove l'insalata brillava come smeraldo e le carote sbucavano dal suolo spontaneamente, con una capriola. Il forno dove cuocevamo il pane spargeva un odore che metteva di buon umore tutta la valle e fermava i coltelli degli assassini, non c'erano piccoli o grandi delitti, nella valle, finché durava quell'odore. E infine le nostre castagne erano bellissime, e quando i ricci cadevano e rimbalzavano al suolo, e ne uscivano i frutti, lucidi come perle, veniva voglia di dire all'albero: bravo!

Anche i funghi erano sexy, gli scoiattoli avevano code superbe, le talpe scavavano tane di geometrica precisione, gli alveari delle nostre api erano cattedrali, il miele era squisito, e anche mio padre era bello, aveva una faccia come la corteccia del castagno, i baffi a coda di volpe e mi picchiava solo nei giorni festivi. Fumava una pipa bellissima, fatta da lui in puro kaiser, riproducente un nudo della mamma, che era stata la donna più bella della valle e aveva fatto una bellissima morte, era scivolata in granaio ed era annegata nelle mele rosse, in un mare di mele profumate.

Vivevo come già detto nella valle più bella, e la mia era la casa più bella e qui comincia il brutto. Perché passarono dei signori e vedendo quanto era bella, dissero: questo è proprio il posto che cerchiamo, fecero fotografie, presero misure e dopo una settimana comprarono valle, terreno, casa, animali e vegetali. Perché gli serviva per fare pubblicità a non so cosa, un'assicurazione sulla vita forse o biscotti o un candidato o acqua minerale, qualcosa che aveva bisogno di uno scenario come quello.

E misero macchine da ripresa dappertutto, e vollero rendere tutto ancora più bello. Pettinarono il gallo, aggiunsero dei soli artificiali, misero dei campanacci d'argento alle mucche e una scritta "forno" sul forno, come se non si capisse.

E noi? Noi non eravamo abbastanza belli, infatti al nostro posto misero degli attori. Mio papà lo faceva un attore abbronzato con delle mani che non dico non aveva mai provato a zappare,

ma neanche a lavarsele da solo. Mia mamma la faceva una ragazzona tutta curve, alla quale avevano detto di camminare sempre con un filo di paglia in bocca e di chiamare le galline "vieni Nerina vieni Bianchina" che le galline scappavano come se fosse una faina travestita. Io invece, dissero, potevo andare bene, ero abbastanza bello, mi misero solo degli zoccoli che dio bono, avete mai provato ad andare sui sassi con gli zoccoli, ma i signori dissero che, per quelli che mi avrebbero visto in televisione, era bello.

Allora mio papà si mise a piangere perché lo volevano mandare via, voleva fare qualcosa anche lui. Fu fortunato: avevano messo uno spaventapasseri nuovo in mezzo al campo (lo aveva disegnato un famoso sarto). Aveva una camicia a scacchi e dei pantaloni azzurri appena un po' stracciati e un cappello di paglia, sfrangiato ad arte. Ma era così bello e così poco spaventevole che i passeri scendevano giù a guardarlo, e invece mio padre, vestito com'era, andava benissimo per spaventare i passeri, e così fece lo spaventapasseri dello spaventapasseri: c'era lo spaventapasseri firmato in mezzo al campo, ma quello che teneva lontano i passeri era mio padre dieci metri più in là.

Io dovevo lucidare le mele sugli alberi e convincere le mucche a non farne troppa e tenere buoni i maiali, e inoltre dovevo far star zitto il gallo perché tutti dormivano fino alle nove e mezzo.

Ma una notte, che c'era un gran luna vera, e i grilli cantavano, e le mucche muggivano perché nessuno le mungeva, e mio padre stava là immobile nel campo fumando la pipa, io vidi la mia casa circondata da tutti quei fari e quelle macchine da presa e vidi due col fucile che andavano a caccia delle civette perché disturbavano, e uno che stava mettendo una luce finta dentro il forno del pane, e arrivò una macchina blu e scese un uomo e appena lo vidi in faccia capii che casa mia non sarebbe più stata il più bel posto del paese.

Raccolsi le mie poche robe, salutai mio padre che mi diede la sua benedizione, salutai il gallo che se ne stava triste in un angolo, con le piume cotonate, chiusi gli occhi e mi misi a correre alla cieca, giù per la cavedagna, seguendo gli odori, finché giunsi all'albero di melograno là dove passava la corriera di mezzanotte.

Beato te, che vivi in un dormitorio di periferia, o in un vicolo fatiscente, o all'incrocio delle vie più trafficate della città, perché la tua casa non ti verrà mai rubata.

Students' evaluations at the end of the cyclic process

A1: Durante gli esercizi scrittura il mio punto di vista di 'la casa bella' non ha cambiato molto. I significati de metafore hanno diventato più chiaro e allora il mio punto di vista anche ha diventato più chiaro. Se abbiamo letto tutto il testo prima penso che non avrei trovato i metafore come avevo. Perché l'inizio era una descrizione espansiva ho cercato ai metafore. Ho imparato le nuove strategie per leggere in italiano, e adesso è più facile leggere. Ho svillupato un metodo di leggere più chiaro. [During the writing tasks my point of view of "The beautiful home" has not changed a lot. The meanings of the metaphors have become clearer therefore also my point of view has become clearer. If we had read the whole text before I think I would not have found the metaphors as I did. Because the beginning was an extended description, I searched for metaphors. I learnt new strategies for reading in Italian, and now it is easier to read. I have developed a clearer method of reading.]

A2: Sì, gli esercizi in classe sono stati utili, specialmente l'ultimo esercizio perché ho trovato che per il piu tempo scrivevamo il piu facile l'esercizio era. [Yes, the class exercises were useful, especially the last one because I found that the more I wrote the easier the exercise was.]

A4: *I found the first story quite difficult because I was not familiar with the style of writing and the vocab. However the next two stories were easier to read maybe because I was used to Benni's style of writing and I had improved the way I tackled the task. Reading slower, using the dictionary and trying to work things out from their context. I really enjoyed reading the three stories once I began to understand them. I like Benni's style of writing and the messages about life that he gives his readers. This task has definitely improved my confidence in approaching Italian literary tasks. I found that discussing the tasks with my peers helped in the development of my own ideas. I never would have thought that I would be able to get so much out of an Italian story. I think the choice of stories was really good and although the task was challenging, it was very rewarding.*

A4.1: *My first reaction when reading 'la casa bella' was that it was too difficult for me (for my ability), even though I knew most of the 'lessico', although my vocabulary and my dictionary were strained. However, after discussing the text in class (hearing other people's opinions) I could collate my own reflections and conclusion. The beginning of 'la casa bella' was quite slow, action wise, but there were a lot of hidden meanings which I didn't uncover my self.*

When we discussed as a group different methods and strategies used to read literature, I tried to adopt different people's ways, like finding key words. I found this very effective but I kept my initial strategies. As I continued reading the second and third texts, I noticed that I had become more confident, not referring to my dictionary and verb handbook half as much as I did the first time I read the text. I think this is because now I understand that there is no need for me to know the meaning of every single word, rather it's more important for me to understand the concept or idea of the sentence. If I were to reread the text after Piera's presentation, I'm positive that it would give me further insight into the meaning of the story because I would appreciate the story more, that is, it would be worth more. This is because Piera would give me her own views which may totally contradict my own and then I could draw my own conclusions, maybe dismiss my own original ideas or dismiss Piera's but at least I could compare and analyse every different view. I also noticed that with every time I re-read 'la casa bella', the more words and ideas I would pick up on. The meanings and concepts would become much clearer the more and more I read.

A4.2: Adesso dopo ho letto tutti questi racconti e ho scritto e ho pensato di loro, ho più confidenza a leggere e capire la lingua italiana. [Now, after having read all these tales and having written and thought about them, I am more confident in my reading and understanding of the Italian language.] *It has been valuable practice and experience, although annoying at times. I think it has definitely improved my understanding of Italian literature and improved the way I think when trying to understand what I am reading. My view of the text changed after each of the first few times I read them and discussing them in class or just with another person was a big help. Each time I read them the first couple of times I realized pieces I had missed and understood the text as a whole better. The vocabulary became easier when read in context and I sometimes used a dictionary. My strategy hasn't changed but developed more. The text obviously would have been easier if we had discussed them first but I don't think it would have helped as much to develop our skills in reading and understanding Italian literature.*

A5: *Question 2: I found the first exercise to be the most challenging. The reason being I have never been in the position where I have read a quarter of a story and then had to guess what is going to occur next. It was fairly obvious that something bad was going to happen, but the question was what? This exercise caused my imagination to run wild. For example, I was under the impression that the entire valley was under a spell, caused by the odor from the "forno" [oven]. Furthermore I started relating the story back to a science fiction programme I saw on TV, about monsters who ate people for not keeping their suburbs neat and tidy. I*

must admit, this exercise was fun to complete. The next exercise I found to be difficult and frustrating. I prefer to read stories and never want to bother with themes and messages that are hidden in the story. I use to believe that stories were purely for entertaining purposes and that's it. However, upon completing the exercise I was quite proud of my achievements of depicting themes and messages and scrutinizing over every last detail of the story. This turned out to be a valuable exercise because I got more out of just translating a story, I learnt to recognize themes and issues, something I had never done before. It was also interesting to discuss the story with the class. It made me feel confident with my analysis, because everybody tended to get the same general ideas. If I had read the whole story at once, in the first exercise, it would have affected the outcome of the experience. For example, it forced me to think creatively and analytically. Question 3: I feel that the work on the text was done in an effective way that forced us to scrutinize every last detail of the story. The reading, writing and reflection was set in a way that forced us to think creatively and analytically. I believe it did enhance my confidence to approaching Italian literary texts, because it was not just about understanding the language, it was also about depicting themes and messages. When I first read "la casa bella" I found it to be very daunting, however by the time I got to reading Benni's other works, I was not intimidated at all. In fact my approach was very confident, due to my experiences with 'la casa bella'. Furthermore, I began to understand Benni's style of writing. If I had read the story after the teacher's presentation in class, to be honest, I would not have given it much attention and effort. My attention span is extremely short, so if something is not challenging for me I tend not to bother with it.

B0: *I have found that the methods of reading these texts, by doing exercises on the themes, and ideas in them, have helped me appreciate the texts more than I usually would have, as I have gotten a greater understanding and a deeper insight into them. After reading the very first two paragraphs of "La casa bella" I had a very different view of how the rest of the story would unfold. Thinking about my reading strategies and various themes let me see things I usually would not have seen. I especially enjoyed the time in class spent on finding parallels between the stories written by Benni, and the Divine Comedy, as it allowed me a deeper reflection into the themes in Benni's stories.*

B1: Penso che la strategia di leggere l'inizio del testo e dopo tratare indovinare il resto era un esercizio interestante e utile. Usando questa strategia, è più facile vedere l'arte dell'autore. Gli autori usano l'inizio per provocare la curiosità o creare certi aspettative che dopo provano incorretti e sorprendenti. [I think that the strategy of reading the beginning of the text and then try guessing the rest was an interesting and useful exercise. By using this strategy it is easier to

see the art of the author. Authors use the beginning to provoke curiosity o create certain expectations that afterwards prove incorrect or surprising.]

B1.2: *Reflecting on the project I think the most beneficial aspect has been the writing exercises because I needed practice at this aspect especially.*

B2: *At the beginning of this assignment I approached the literature with apprehension as I had not studied any English literature for twenty years and my study of Italian literature was altogether nil [...] discussion in class were of great benefit to me. I felt more confident as the discussions went on and appreciated and considered the many varied ideas. It gave me a better insight into the texts. My views did not change overall, they just deepened and expanded.*

B2.1: Penso che la mia lettura e scrittura abbiano cambiato molto durante le tre settimane, e abbiano sviluppato dopo il tempo e riflessioni sui testi con la classe. All'inizio, la lettura centrava sul comprensione delle parole – abbiamo trovato i temi e gli imagini base. Penso che leggere in italiano per la prima volta è necessario comminciare come questo. Sento che gli esercizi che abbiamo fatto in classe erano molto utili, perché li abbiamo aiutarci di pensare al testo, agli idea, al struttura, ecc. Gli esercizi ci hanno ispirato di pensare a cose importanti. Penso che sia stato veramente utile leggere i tre racconti collegato perché i temi e i strutturi svillupavano con ogni racconto. Era più facile seguire i temi e i strutturi dell'unico autore. Anche la mia scrittura sull'italiano ha cambiato – forse non ha migliorato ma considero gli altre cose quando scrivo oggi. [I think that my reading and writing have changed a lot during the three weeks, and that they have developed after the time spent on reflection on the texts in class. In the beginning, reading was concentrated on word comprehension – we found the key themes and images. I think that when reading in Italian for the first time it is necessary to begin this way. I feel that the exercises we did in class were very useful, because they helped us to think about the text, the ideas, the structure, etc. The exercises inspired us to think about important things. I think that it was really useful to read three linked tales because the themes and the structures developed with each tale. It was easier to follow the themes and structures of one single author. My writing in Italian has also changed – perhaps it has not improved but I take into consideration the other things when I write today (now?).] *I feel that I have learned a lot through this experience about reading and writing in Italian due to an intensive focus upon such skills and regular discussion and reflection.*[1] [Thank you and happy holidays to you!].

B3: *Reading so many short stories in Italian has definitely developed my confidence in reading literary texts in Italian. I have progressed from translating the words I don't know then reading the stories to reading the story first then translating words I don't understand later. Now I read the story to develop a gist of the story in a literal sense. Then I use a dictionary to translate any words I don't understand. I then re-read the story a few more times to develop an understanding of the text and its themes and meanings instead of gist and literal interpretation. My change in approaching the texts was triggered by the different readings. I had to learn to be an efficient reader and not spend so long on translating every word. My new strategy of reading gives me a greater appreciation of the text and allows me to look beyond the literal meanings, instead looking for parallels and other insights into the text. In this way, my appreciation and understanding of the text would have been different if I had only read it once after the teacher's presentation. I needed time to read and re-read the story as with each reading I gained more insight into the text.*