

Negotiating the challenges of reading literature: Teachers reporting on their practice

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Scholars examining the role of literature in language teaching have, over the years, pointed out the paucity of empirical research in this field. Carter (2007: 11) suggests that one of the ‘challenges for future work at the interfaces of pedagogy, language and literature’ is the need ‘to address the absence of empirical classroom-based research and to begin to ensure that very proper concerns with pedagogic process are better rooted in verifiable evidence of classroom practice’. Paran (2008) points out that the need for additional research has been highlighted both by supporters of using literature in language teaching (see, for example, Shanahan 1997) and by its critics (see Edmondson 1997). He goes on to observe that much of the empirical research extant is in tertiary settings, with little of it conducted in secondary settings, which is where most language teaching in the world is carried out.

The situation has not changed considerably in the decade since Carter (2007) and Paran (2008). Although recently there have been a number of publications of empirical studies into the way literature plays out in the foreign or second language (L2) classroom and with L2 learners and teachers (Jones and Carter 2011, Nguyen 2014, the chapters in Part II of Teranishi, Saito and Wales 2015, Thoms 2014), including secondary school settings (Bloemer, Jansen and van de Grift 2016, Bloemert, Paran, Jansen and van de Grift 2017, Mourão 2014), such studies are in fact still infrequent. Paesani (2011), in a paper examining the language/literature interface in foreign language (FL) teaching in the US, highlights that ‘very little of the existing scholarship on language-literature pedagogy is empirical in nature; most published articles provide examples of pedagogical and curricular best practices and policy statements’ (2011: 164-165). And although Hall (2015) surveys the main areas in which literature in language teaching developed between 2005 and 2015, many of the developments seem to have actually been in teaching and resources, rather than research.

Indeed, in a systematic review of studies of stylistics in language teaching, Fogal (2015) was able to find only thirteen empirical studies since 1997.

Our chapter is therefore intended as a contribution to empirical research in this area, based on the research project, ‘The Effectiveness of Literature on Acquisition of Language Skills and Intercultural Understanding in the High School Context’ (Duncan and Paran, 2017)¹. This project looked at the use of literature in language teaching in the frame of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB DP), a school leaving/university preparation programme designed for secondary school students aged between 16 and 19 and delivered worldwide. As part of the programme, students are required to take both a Language A, which is defined by the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme Subject Brief as the student’s ‘best language’ (IB DP SB 2014: np), which focuses on literary study, and a Language B, characterised as an ‘additional language’. Language B courses are ‘designed for students who possess a degree of knowledge and experience in the target language’ (IB DP SB 2014: np). They are available at either Standard or Higher Level, which differ in that students taking a Language B at Higher Level are required to read at least two literary texts. The two texts are assessed by a creative assignment, in which students have to write a creative piece based on one of the two literary texts, as well as append an explanation and a rationale for their own creative output. This study was commissioned by the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) and involved a mixed-methods research design. Crucially, although we include possible implications for practice in our discussion section, this study did not seek to produce recommendations for best practice: rather, we aimed to develop a more nuanced, empirically-based understanding of how literary texts are actually used with IB DP Language B students.

The Study

One element in our study was a 118 item online questionnaire, completed by 264 respondents from across the globe, teaching 17 different languages. The second element consisted of case

studies of three IB schools, two private and one state school, located in three different European countries (because we identify the educational context, we do not identify the countries in order not to compromise anonymity). In two of these schools the teaching language was English, and in the third the teaching language was French. The data for the case studies was generated through school visits consisting of lesson observations, student focus groups (including qualitative questionnaires), and semi-structured interviews with teachers. In this chapter we report on the findings from the teacher interviews in the three case studies.

To date, only few studies have looked at teachers' views of using literature in language teaching. Harlow and Muyskens (1994), a survey of fifty-four teachers of Spanish and French in US universities, only touched on literature tangentially, showing that it was ranked very low (11th) in the list of goals for language teaching. Gilroy (1995) and Carter and Jones (2011), two small scale studies investigating the views of English language teachers in the UK Higher Education sector, both document overall positive views of literature as a resource in language teaching.

The main aim of our own study was to explore the factors that teachers take into account when choosing literary texts for use in their classrooms; the ways in which teachers use literary texts and the types of activities they employ; and the views of teachers and learners on the impact of literary texts on language learning. For this chapter we took a fresh look at the data from our teacher interviews to understand the way in which teachers negotiated the challenges of reading literary texts.

In a combination of group and individual interviews, we interviewed twelve teachers at School A; fourteen teachers at School B; and nine teachers at School C. The thirty-two teachers we interviewed taught a variety of languages: English, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin, Russian and Spanish. Although obviously our interviewees cannot be taken to represent the wider population of Language B teachers on IB programmes, they did represent the range of languages represented in the responses to our questionnaire (where

English, French, Mandarin, Spanish and German were the most widely taught languages). However, it is important to remember that there was a strong self-selection element in this study, as the teachers who teach Literature B Higher Level are likely to be *a-priori* more enthusiastic about literature and teaching literature (as was the case with our questionnaire respondents, who responded with means of above five on a six-point likert scale when asked about the importance of literature in their own lives and the importance of enjoying literature).

Interviews lasted between twenty and forty minutes. Our interviewees mostly spoke English with a high degree of fluency and accuracy, and most of the interviews were held in English. Two interviews were conducted in French, and one in Spanish. Some of the individual interviews included reflection by the teacher on a lesson we had observed, and in some cases incorporated an element of stimulated recall (Gass and Mackey 2000). Our semi-structured interview schedule consisted of a number of specific questions (e.g. 'Tell me about your favourite or most successful lesson which involved literature') as well as a list of general points, such as vocabulary, length of text, and so forth, which we raised as and when appropriate. This flexibility allowed us to probe areas of interest to our study while improvising and moving with teachers' particular interests and preoccupations.

The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interview transcripts were then analysed through a process of data immersion, listening and reading repeatedly (Becker 1996), followed by inductive thematic coding (Braun and Clarke 2006), supported by Nvivo software.

We now turn to a presentation of the main findings of our interviews regarding the ways in which teachers negotiated the challenges of reading and studying literature in their Language B classrooms. We first explore how the teachers in our study conceptualised the challenges of reading literature and then present the ways in which they used text choice, organisation of reading and reading aloud to negotiate these challenges.

The challenges

The teachers we interviewed identified clear challenges in reading literary texts with their secondary school language B students, particularly around ‘difficulty’. Teachers felt that many literary texts are ‘too difficult’ (B3J)² either conceptually or in terms of language – the breadth and depth of vocabulary as well as language structures. They also expressed their sense of the challenge posed by limited class time, feeling that literature can be ‘too time consuming’, taking time which they may need to prioritise for other work, such as ‘revising grammar’ (A6G). A number of teachers also felt that a challenge is presented by their learners’ expectations or experiences of reading in a foreign language, which have created a fear of unfamiliar vocabulary. This necessitates ‘changing their reading habits’ so students grasp that they may not always ‘need to understand every word’ (B8FS).

In terms of language, one teacher emphasised the potential ‘scary’-ness of authentic texts for those used to reading highly graded, controlled texts (B10FS). A different type of fear was expressed in several teachers’ sense that a key challenge is the reputation of canonical literature, or rather what we would call Literature with ‘a capital L’ (McRae 1991: vii), which for many teachers is characterised by conceptual and linguistic difficulty and (arguably) admired precisely for a lack of accessibility. For this reason, one teacher explained, some students see literature as ‘too big, too “I can’t access that”’ (A8G).

One teacher discussed a challenge which was not raised by other teachers, but is nevertheless worth pointing out here, in order to highlight the multiplicity of challenges perceived. This teacher (A2G) felt that discussion around literary texts may get students so animated that they move into their mother-tongues or more familiar languages (such as the school’s teaching language) to discuss the topic, rather than speaking in the target language. This point highlights the complexity of analysing the potential challenges posed by literary texts, as every aspect of challenge literature presents is also an opportunity, if negotiated well, as we will explore below.

Negotiating challenges through text choice

The main way in which our interviewees negotiated the challenge of reading literature was through their choice of which texts to read. Since the IB DP curriculum does not list any specific texts for study, teachers are free to choose whichever text they thought would suit their learners and would lend itself well to the assessment (in this respect there was a strong washback effect (Alderson and Wall 1991) noticeable in our interviews). In some cases teachers would change their choice from year to year, though in other cases we found that teachers in different schools had all chosen the same pieces. Teachers searched for texts on particularly engaging topics, texts they were passionate about themselves, texts that they felt students, or particular groups of students would relate to or enjoy. They chose shorter texts, texts written in 'less difficult' language, texts they felt students may already be partially familiar with, texts that had been made into films or were currently being performed in the theatre. Teachers also allowed students to choose their own texts.

Importantly, teachers made choices related to the nature of the challenge they perceived reading literature to pose. Some teachers felt that for some of their groups, literature presented a challenge primarily because of the lower or limited language level of the students; the teachers therefore made choices driven by the desire to make literature as accessible as possible. Others felt that literature was a challenge primarily because literature was not attractive to their students (because of past experience or perceptions of conceptual difficulty or density) and so made choices driven by the desire to make literature as appealing as possible.

One teacher (C9FE) highlighted the distinction between these two priorities, speaking of his (stronger) English class and his (weaker) French class: 'So for English I adapted it more to the contents and that the work would trigger their interests and for French I adapted it to their level and how the work would enhance their linguistic skills [...] bearing in mind they have only been speaking French for a year or a year and a half'. This teacher thus

conceptualises the challenge and the solution as two poles: accessibility on the one hand and appeal on the other. In the sections below, we explore teacher choices as related to these two poles.

Text choice: accessibility

Teachers chose texts that they felt would be more accessible (frequently using this term) for their students. They spoke of texts of shorter length, lower linguistic difficulty, potential familiarity and more relatable. Several teachers noted the importance of finding texts that are ‘not too long or fairly approachable linguistically’ (C9FE) as part of the search for something that students ‘are not going to find too overwhelming’ (B8FS). Teacher B8FS highlights the decision-making process in such cases, speaking about *Une femme* (Ernaux 1987), which was the first book she would read with her class: ‘that’s why with the first book, it’s only about 100 pages and the style of writing [...] is quite straight-forward in terms of tense, but it’s quite interesting [...] because it’s all about whether, how you can get to the truth’ (B8FS). Crucially, this teacher notes the inseparability of accessibility and appeal: there is no point in something being accessible if it does not also appeal. Similarly, another teacher spoke about her preference for short stories ‘that could be appealing to them and not too difficult to read’ (A5S). She went on to note that shorter texts are also a way to try something out and get a better sense of student preferences, suggesting that more accessible texts can help you discover what students find more or less appealing.

Attention to length and linguistic difficulty, however, was not the only way that teachers felt they could choose accessible texts. A teacher of German (C5G) explained that he chose to read the Brothers Grimm’s fairy tales because of ‘the length, the cultural importance, the general – all students will know lots of the stories already so maybe then – at some point in their life they have loved them so they have some sort of connection to them already, and as well quite interesting’. Another German teacher (B1G) argued that she chose *Der Vorleser* (Schlink 1995) not primarily because of its length (or the existence of a film version, though

this was also a factor; see below) but because the teenage narrator makes the text easier for young people to relate to: ‘the narrator is a fifteen year old and it’s quite nice for students who have never been faced with literature before to deal with something they find reasonably accessible, so that seemed to be quite an obvious choice’. A teacher of Spanish (A5S) also felt that texts which are about young people were more accessible to her secondary school students.

Text Choice: Appeal

The teachers above stressed that texts with a teenage narrator or teenage characters make it easier for their teenage students to ‘get it’ which also potentially makes the texts more appealing. Certainly one of the key ways that teachers in our study tried to manage or negotiate the challenges posed by literature was through choosing texts that they felt would appeal to their students, that is texts they felt students would enjoy, be interested in or motivated by. Several Spanish teachers, for example, chose *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (Lorca 1945) because they felt the topic would appeal: ‘it’s about women and it’s about wives, so they have a lot to say’ (A5S). A teacher of French (A7F) explained that he also chooses text types that he feels will appeal to his students, not just topics: for example, if a group expresses an interest in the theatre, he will choose a play. Teachers also reported making choices by considering the overall experience across a year or two of study, and so chose texts that would appeal in contrast to each other or meet a wider range of student preferences, for example choosing contrasting genres or time periods.

Rather than trying to anticipate what students would find appealing, some teachers encouraged their students to have an input in text choice, allowing students to select texts they find more appealing and getting students more motivated in the process. A5S explained: ‘I presented five or six books to them and I explained what kind of books they were, what were the main themes, the main topics, and we had a class discussion about what kind of topics they would like to cover. I also told them about how difficult the books were to study.’ She

goes on to remember another time when ‘I offered them two possibilities of books. And the girls by themselves chose one and the boys chose the García Márquez one [...] They had to explain one to each other, I mean the girls to the boys and the boys to the girls, what was going on in their books and why they were feeling that this book was much more interesting than the other.’ A French teacher (A7F) noted that giving students a choice of text is ‘a lot more work but I find the class works so much better when they have some sort of decision to make, when they are involved in the process of choosing a book, it makes a massive difference’.

One issue that was raised by the majority of teachers was the theme or the topic of the text. This too played a part in creating appeal: A7F noted that choosing books that match topics students are already studying, such as stereotypes, also potentially increases accessibility and appeal.

Text choice: Ways into texts

In addition to choosing texts which they felt were accessible and appealing to their students (and allowing students to make their own choices), we found that teachers chose some texts because they had identified ways into these texts that would make them either more appealing or more accessible. Several teachers noted the importance of choosing texts that the teacher loves and knows well. They felt that teachers must love the literature they are teaching in order to make the text more appealing to their students, ‘they’ve got to be convinced by your passion and your enjoyment’ (B9I); ‘I could talk about it [*The Master and Margarita*, (Bulgakov 1947)] as something I enjoyed, and that would help as well to enthuse students’ (B6R). Just as important, though, was the idea of knowing the text very well in order to make the text more accessible to their students: Teacher B8FS commented that she thought that ‘it’s always important to have something that the teacher themselves is (*sic*) very confident with and familiar with and knows very well’ (B8FS) and is therefore better placed to identify

'ways in' to the reading of challenging texts. In this way, teacher 'passion' and teacher knowledge of or confidence with a text becomes a valuable tool for negotiating challenge.

Finally, several teachers argued that the availability of a film of the literary work provides an important tool for both accessibility and appeal. A German teacher (B1G) who chose *Der Vorleser* (Schlink 1995) summed this up: 'and then you've got the film for support, in terms of just quickly understanding what happens, it's a short cut in a way, if you want, they watch it and then they are au fait with the storyline such as it is and they can then access the text'.

Text choice: An interplay of factors

Overall, then, our data provides a picture of teachers choosing texts in ways that they feel will work against the potential difficulties of literature, both linguistic and motivational. We see teachers choosing texts that they feel will be more accessible or more appealing, involving students in the choice of texts and teachers choosing texts because of the tools presented by their own existing knowledge or passions, and existing film versions. But this is still a complex picture, where every teacher interviewed expressed multiple motivations for their choices, weighing up accessibility with appeal and student choice of text with practicalities like availability of materials and teacher preparedness. It is also a picture where decisions were made based on teacher assessments of the nature of a group and its particular challenges and preferences.

Negotiating challenges through the organisation of reading

Teachers also negotiated challenges through the way they organised the reading of the literary texts. While, as previously, many practices were common to different teachers, there were also some notable differences in what teachers presented as the ideal way to organise the reading in order to support student understanding and wider language development.

The ideal of ‘read it all together’

Two teachers explained that they preferred to read the whole of the literary text together in class time, and a third suggested that she would like to if time allowed. Yet another, teacher A9G, made a distinction between plays and novels: she would read most of a play in class, but organise the reading differently for novels (see below). Teacher A1E explained: ‘in the past I told you I used to make them read the text at home because I didn’t want to waste class time’; however, she found that students did not actually do the reading, and so ‘it’s the first time that I’m doing it like that. It feels like you are cheating – you’re being paid to teach and yet you’re reading a text. But, to be honest, if I have to compare the way I used to do it and the way we’re doing it this time, I think this time is much more effective’. This teacher went on to clarify that this way, she knows that the students have actually read the whole text. In the same way, teacher C8S also aims to read the entire literary text together in class, ‘because I want to make sure that they understood everything. Or they can ask me questions’. She reads aloud, gets students to read aloud and asks students to read silently together in class time. In both cases, what these teachers prioritized was ensuring that their students read all of the text, often by reading aloud together; in other cases it seemed that teachers were using reading aloud as a form of scaffolding: teachers used the advantages of the shared process of reading aloud, in the same physical space, where questions could be asked and where intonation and body language would clarify meaning and aid comprehension. For all of these teachers, reading the literary text in class usually meant reading it aloud.

The ideal of ‘read at home and spend class time doing activities with it together’

A different ideal was expressed by teacher C5G, who aimed for students to do the reading at home so they could devote their time together in class to activities, presentations and other work around the text. This teacher’s argument was not just that class time is better spent on what students cannot do alone at home (talk around the text), but also that reading together, particularly aloud, ‘doesn’t work’; with one particular class he felt ‘half of the class just

wandering or sniggering away'. He also felt that 'reading is an individual experience rather,' to be done at the student's own pace, elsewhere. What Teacher C5G wants to be shared, then, is not the reading but the work on what has been read.

Other teachers, too, seemed to aim for students to read most of the text at home, with class time spent on activities which develop, foster and encourage an understanding of what was read, including the understanding of words and phrases; the understanding of plot and characters; and understandings of larger themes. These activities include discussions, debates, student presentations, creation of mind-maps around characters, describing of scenes, themes and characters and sharing student writing based on the texts, such as reviews or blogs. Teachers would read, or ask students to read, short extracts in class but mainly used class time to support the understanding of text already read at home.

Reading at home and in class: 'It's a balancing act'

Many teachers, unsurprisingly, aimed for a mixture, organising the reading so that some was done together in class and some done at home, and ensuring that their time together was spent both reading together (silent and aloud) and discussing or exploring what was read. Teacher A7F provided a rationale for this, based on the idea of variety: 'At home, in the classroom, reading silently, reading aloud. We just vary because if you were doing the same thing all the time it would be boring'.

Teacher B1G described the nature of the balance she is looking for:

To some extent, it's a question of getting the balance right between getting them to read enough, and also in enough detail. [...] It's good to get them to do reading outside class and then to come back and go over bits that they've read so they have time to see things, so we'll take key moments from the text [...] we'll look at those in particular over the course of the term rather than just going over rigorously chapter by chapter [...] I'd give them each a chapter to read for

homework and they are then responsible for giving the others a summary of what happens and the others take notes.

Some teachers felt that this balance shifted as they progressed through a text, with more reading together earlier in the process, and less later.

Using film as an organisational factor

The use of film also emerged as a factor in how teachers organised reading to negotiate the challenges of using literature. Two teachers of Russian (B6R and B5R) discussed how they had used a film of the story *The Lady and the Little Dog* (Chekhov 1899), chosen because ‘every single scene is in the film’ (B6R). Teacher B5R said that ‘we didn’t literally read [...] the whole thing, I’d pick paragraphs and they’d read at home but the film filled in all the gaps’ (B5R). Likewise, a teacher of Italian (B9I) explained that to read the novel *Il giorno della civetta* (Sciascia 1961) they started reading it together, stopping to talk through vocabulary, themes and history, but in a few weeks when they are all more ‘into’ the book, and when she can see ‘that they are doing fine’, she will get them to do more of the reading at home, using the film for support:

We will read it, we will read it, we will read it and then [...] if I’m running short of time, I might gain some time in the middle with [the film]. You have to read the beginning and you have to read the end, but if you need to gain some time it’s there [the film].

The use of a film, therefore, is not only a potential tool for scaffolding understanding, as noted above, but also a tool in organising the reading, or ‘getting through’ the text itself.

Negotiating challenges through reading aloud

An important factor in how teachers organised their reading was the use, or not, of reading aloud. Many teachers spoke of reading aloud as one of the tools at their disposal as teachers,

with one teacher (A1E) noting that although she feels that reading aloud is something generally disapproved of, or disapproved of in teacher education circles, it was something she has come round to because her students ‘insist on it [...] they are fighting over who gets to read,’ and so feels ‘maybe there needs to come a rethinking about this whole reading aloud’. Teachers spoke of using reading aloud to develop students’ reading automaticity and pronunciation skills but also emphasised reading aloud as a way to create a shared experience supporting the reading of literature ‘on a basic level, have we all read it properly, can I say that they’ve all read it properly?’ (B9I). Only one teacher (C5G) argued that reading aloud was not useful, both because students’ attention would wander and because he saw silent reading as more natural (see above). These uses of reading aloud were presented as consisting of three inter-related aspects: reading aloud to scaffold understanding, reading aloud as a tool for close reading or reflection, and reading aloud as literary experience, as we discuss below.

Supporting understanding

Teachers certainly used reading aloud as a way to scaffold or support understanding, of words, plot, character and themes, through creating a shared experience of everyone hearing the same words at the same time, stopping to talk together about those words, asking and answering questions:

I know that people say that if you read aloud you don’t remember what you’ve read but I have actually not found that to be true and it means that I know I can go through vocabulary with them when it comes up [...] lots of people [colleagues] do it so they can check pronunciation, understanding as they go along (A1E).

Teacher A8G describes how students read aloud ‘to each other, to the whole group, without pressuring’; the class would then ‘discuss what we just read, what is happening there [...] to give them a kind of global experience [...] trying to recap

what happened in the last bit that we read maybe a page, two pages, three pages’.

Teacher C8S echoes this: ‘I like reading it aloud. And there are some bits I read them myself so they listen. I think it’s also very important that they listen sometimes – they pay more attention [...] I want to make sure that they understand everything. Or they can ask me questions. Or there are doubts about something’. This use of reading aloud for concentrated, collective development of understanding is apparent in several teachers’ increased use of reading aloud to start off a book and create a shared initial understanding: ‘at the beginning definitely [we read aloud]. Because we need to get a sense of what the book is about, the language, the structure, so we do a lot of explaining’ (A7F).

Reading aloud for close reading or reflection

Teacher A9G also explained that her classes only read the beginnings of novels aloud and then the reading is done by students at home alone, although they do sometimes ‘just take little passages and reflect on them’. Teacher C9FE reads aloud ‘for specific parts [...] particularly meaningful parts of books. Reading aloud would be one of the activities to identify, to study main passages, so to speak, of importance of the works.’ An Italian teacher (B9I) notes that her class read particular ‘extracts’ aloud to capture ‘what happens, what is he getting at, the writer, what is he trying to convey here, what is the purpose of this section of the book [...], the overarching thing I wanted them to take away, the one main thing’. Here, the desired shared experience is not the working through the whole text, but a shared experience of a particular passage, a focussed close reading.

Reading aloud as literary experience

Several teachers identified reading aloud as something they would do only or mainly with drama or poetry. Teacher A1E spoke about reading *An Inspector Calls* (Priestley 1947):

... they loved reading, they're fighting over who gets to read which part [...] I think actually reading aloud gives them a sense of security so that even kids who are very very shy feel that they can participate and join in and have a voice but don't need to worry about what they're going to say (A1E).

Similarly, Teacher A9G described reading Ödön von Horváth's (1931) play *Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald* (*Tales from the Vienna Wood*):

... they very much enjoy reading it [...] [the characters] purport to be very nice people but the way they speak it turns – they show they're not. And they enjoy reading it. They enjoy each other – hearing how this person reads the character and how the other person...

In these examples, the reading aloud is a way of providing students with a more authentic experience of these plays, something potentially motivating as well as something that could scaffold understanding.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our study is different from the previous studies exploring teachers' views of literature in foreign language teaching (Gilroy 1995; Harlow and Muyskens 1994; Jones and Carter 2011) in a number of ways. One is that all three previous studies were conducted in tertiary settings. Another difference is that in the context we were researching literature was part of the curriculum, rather than an option that teachers could choose (though the actual pieces that they taught were not prescribed, as we pointed out above). Most importantly, we were able to explore teachers' views and practices in greater detail than these studies, though in this chapter we have focused only on one aspect of their teaching: the way they conceptualised challenges in their classroom and the way they dealt with these challenges.

Our interviewees very clearly saw the challenges they faced and were constantly engaged in addressing them. Indeed, in addition to negotiating the challenge inherent in the use of literary texts, they also needed to negotiate the challenge of teaching literary texts for an external assessment, an issue that concerned all of them and which they addressed in a variety of ways.

As we have shown, one of the most important ways of addressing challenges was choice of text. It is important to stress that this was possible because the educational system that the teachers were working in enabled them to be flexible in their choices. Thus the autonomy of teachers plays an important part in the way in which challenges were negotiated, and in the fact that each of our interviewees negotiated their own way through these challenges. The teacher's own 'curricular heritage' (Bloemert et al. 2016) was thus able to come into play and interact with other factors in the choice of texts as well as in the choice of activities for these texts (Duncan and Paran 2017).

The implications from our study can be viewed from both a policy angle and a practical angle. In terms of policy, the picture that emerged suggests that affording teachers the autonomy to choose the literary texts that they use and teach in the language classroom enables them to balance accessibility and appeal, tailoring their choice to the specific class that they are working with. Our interviewees were all extremely passionate about literature, often discussing a large number of long and short pieces that they were teaching, part of which was the possibility of choosing whichever piece they wanted (within the constraints of the assessment). Many of them discussed at length specific choices with specific classes, illustrating the care they took with these choices, which they viewed as crucial to success in the classroom. From a practical point of view, what came to the fore as important was the possibility of changing pedagogic approaches, balancing reading at home and in class, the different types of activity that teachers spoke about, and using reading aloud as a judicious tool for scaffolding learning. Perhaps most of all, the accounts we have gathered of teachers' uses of literature in foreign language teaching present the complex bundles of factors that

influence teachers' choices of texts and activities, exposing the in- and out-of-class deliberations/decisions which are part of teachers' daily struggles and yet all too often not shared. It is our hope, as we have noted, that these will provoke reflection and discussion among teachers and managers which will challenge and develop practice.

One element of our study that is not apparent here is the views of the learners, and the way in which the teachers' own passion transfers to the learner, and is in fact another important way in which the challenge is negotiated. We therefore end with a quote from one of the learners we interviewed, talking about reading *The Master and Margarita* (Bulgakov 1947). This summarises what we feel is the main reason for using literature in language teaching, and, indeed, shows how it is possible to overcome the challenges we have spoken about:

Author A: Should a teacher use literature as part of teaching a language?

Student: (...) it makes learning the language different. It changes the subject.

Author A: OK, how does it change the subject?

Student: Well, rather than talking about the weather you are talking about *Master and Margarita* in Russian, it's talking about whether God exists and Jesus and the devil being in Moscow. It's more interesting than the weather.

Notes

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² We identify each teacher according to their school (A, B, or C), an ordinal number within the school, and the language or languages they teach. Thus Teacher B3J taught in school B,

was the third teacher we interviewed there, and teaches Japanese; teacher B10 FS teaches in school B, was the tenth interviewee there, and teaches French and Spanish.

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