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The “Novel-Textbook”: Using a Novel as the Main Teaching Material in the Adult GFL Classroom

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Much research in the field of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT) demonstrates that using literature as a teaching material in the Foreign Language (FL) classroom can contribute significantly to learning the target language. In particular, in the field of teaching Greek as a Foreign Language (GFL), the importance of using literature as a supplementary teaching material in the Greek language classroom and the practical considerations involved have been the focus of a number of papers in the last few years. The present paper wishes to suggest that the literary text and, in particular, the novel can also be used as an alternative to the traditional GFL textbook and, thus, form the central focus of instruction in a GFL course. It also suggests that the benefits of using literature in the GFL classroom can be fully exploited and extended when a “novel-textbook”¹ is used as the main teaching material.

Introduction

During the last fifteen years, there has been a considerable increase in the number and variety of GFL materials available to GFL teachers and learners. Materials are considered to play a very important role in the FL classroom. As Richards (2001:251) notes:

Teaching materials are a key component in most language programs. Whether the teacher uses a textbook, institutionally-prepared materials, or his or her own materials, instructional materials generally serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that occurs in the classroom.

Tomlinson (2001:66) defines “materials” as “anything that can be used to facilitate the learning of a language. They can be linguistic, visual, auditory or kinaesthetic, and

¹ In the present paper, the term “novel-textbook” has been used to refer to the selected novel together with its accompanying materials prepared by the teacher/researcher and used as the alternative *textbook package* in a GFL course.

they can be presented in print, through live performance or display, or on a cassette, CD-ROM, DVD, or the internet”.

Additionally, Ellis and Johnson (1994) stress that the choice of materials: a) determines what kind of language the learners will learn, b) affects the way by which the learners will learn, and c) affects the factors of relevance and motivation in the FL classroom.

In FLT, the most commonly used material is considered to be the *FL textbook*. This type of material is produced by a commercial publisher, a Ministry of Education or a large institution (McGrath, 2013) and is normally accompanied by teacher’s notes, a student workbook, audio, video and computer-based material, and tests, forming what is known as the *textbook package* (McGrath, 2013).

Hutchinson and Torres (1994:315) note that “[t]he textbook is an almost universal element of teaching. No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook”. Textbooks influence to a large extent what teachers will teach and what learners will learn as they provide “the core materials for a course” (Tomlinson, 1998:ix) and also serve as a framework and a guide for conducting the lessons (Abdel Wahab, 2013).

Literature as textbook?

Research on the relationship between the FL teaching materials employed and the learning outcome achieved demonstrates that using literature as a teaching material in the FL classroom can contribute significantly to learning the target language. As McRae states, “[t]he language/literature interface is probably the richest vein of learning potential for learners at all levels of language...” (1996:23). In the relevant literature some of the most common arguments in favour of employing literary texts in the FL classroom are: a) literature provides valuable authentic input for language learning (Collie & Slater, 1987); b) it creates authentic conditions for the learners to learn and practice the target language (Ghosn, 2002); c) it assists learners in the development of all language skills as it allows for extensive reading, writing, listening (e.g. books on tape) and speaking (e.g. oral presentations, discussions, role-plays) (Gareis, Allard & Saindon, 2009; Lazar, 1993; Povey, 1972); d) it increases learners’ motivation and stimulates their imagination by providing narrative, “plot, character development, the context of settings, suspense, conflict, and resolution...” (Gareis, Allard & Saindon, 2009:145); e) it fosters personal involvement as learners participate emotionally in the process of learning the target language and relate what they read to the real world (Collie & Slater, 1987; Duff & Maley, 1990), providing a more involving source for pedagogic activities (Lazar, 1993); f) it “actively promotes a process of interpretation ... and negotiation of its meanings” (Carter & McRae, 1996:12) assisting learners to develop particular sense-making procedures for interpreting language use in any discourse context (Widdowson, 1984); g) it bridges the cultural gap as it increases the learners’ insight into the society of the target language (Collie & Slater, 1987; Gareis, Allard & Saindon, 2009).

In the field of GFL teaching, the importance of using literature as a supplementary teaching material in the GFL/GSL classroom and the practical considerations involved have been the focus of a number of papers in the last few years (see Sapiridou & Fotiadou, 2000; Apostolidou, Paschalidis & Hondolidou, 2002; Natsina, 2006; Lukashvili, 2009; Agathos, Giannakou, Dimopoulou, Roubis & Tsotsorou, 2011; Agathos, Tsotsorou, Giannakou, Dimopoulou, Roubis & Montzoli, 2011; Kokkinidou, 2011; Agathos, Giannakou, Dimopoulou, Montzoli, Roubis & Tsotsorou, 2012; Kokkinidou, 2012; Villar Lecumberri, 2012, 2013; Roubis, 2015).

The present paper contends that the literary text and, in particular, the novel can be used as an alternative to the traditional GFL textbook and, thus, form the central focus of instruction in a GFL course. It suggests that the benefits of using literature in the GFL classroom can be fully exploited and extended when a “novel-textbook” is used as the main teaching material. The above suggestions are based on the findings of a research project which sought to investigate the extent to which adult upper-intermediate/B2² GFL learners would find a “novel-textbook” appropriate for the development of their language skills in Greek. An overview of this particular project is presented later in the paper.

The novel as a teaching material within Communicative Language Teaching

The term *novel* refers to “an invented prose narrative of considerable length and a certain complexity that deals imaginatively with human experience, usually through a connected sequence of events involving a group of persons in a specific setting” (Burgess, 2016, para. 1). The novel belongs to the genre of *fiction* which is “the art or craft of contriving, through the written word, representations of human life that instruct or divert or both” (Burgess, 2016, para. 2).

As the learners’ primary reason for being in the FL classroom is to improve their skills in the target language, it follows that for a novel to be used as a teaching material it should facilitate, at least to some degree, the development of *communicative competence* which is the generally accepted goal in FLT. Communicative competence includes both *knowledge* of language and *ability* for effective and appropriate use (Peterwagner, 2005). To this end, since the 1970s FLT methods and approaches have mainly been based on principles derived from *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)* which mainly views language as communication and, thus, places emphasis on communicative activities.

In such a context, the question that arises is, “Can a novel be used as the main teaching material within CLT?” At first, a novel may not seem appropriate to form the central focus of instruction in the FL classroom as it does not include any grammar

² It corresponds to level B2 of the official levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

charts, vocabulary and grammar exercises, writing, listening or speaking activities. Moreover, it does not cater to specific proficiency levels and offers a reduced predictability of language structures (Gareis, Allard & Saindon, 2009). However, these “disadvantages” are counterbalanced by a number of benefits offered by a carefully selected and appropriately used unabridged novel.

In particular, as communicative competence involves a number of *competences*³ which go beyond the sole acquisition of the structure and vocabulary of a language, a novel can be used as an effective teaching material in the FL classroom, facilitating the development of communicative competence for the following reasons:

First of all, literary texts are authentic texts, and as such, they have “the capacity to draw language learners into the communicative world of the target language community” (Little, 1997:225). This kind of texts are highly valued by CLT as they are considered to promote communicative competence (Kelly, Kelly, Offner & Vorland, 2002; Nuttall, 1996; Kim, 2000).

Moreover, the very nature of reading a literary text is *a communicative act*. According to Carter and Long (1991:16), reading involves us in:

1. Sharing in the world the writer has created. This occurs as a result of the imaginative leaps we make in order to fit the created world with the world we know.
2. Relating the experience of the text to experiences we ourselves have undergone or can imagine ourselves undergoing. This occurs as a result of an active shuttling back and forth between the “fictional” world and the “real” world.
3. Interpreting what the texts might mean. The literary representation of experience is not a direct one; it is frequently indirect. This forces the reader to make connections, to read between the lines, to seek for explanations and meanings. In literary texts, such meanings are rarely stated directly.

In a discussion about the general principles of CLT, Brumfit (1985:5) stresses that “we have to learn the process of negotiation if we are to be able to communicate effectively”. In a similar discussion, Larsen-Freeman (1986:128) points out that “being able to figure out the speaker’s or writer’s intention is part of being communicatively competent”. Thus, we see that the negotiation of meaning lies at the heart of CLT and is considered to promote communicative competence. Literary texts are ideal for developing interpretative abilities since they are inherently more dialogic (Kramsch, 1993) and require the active involvement of the learner in deciphering their meaning.

Additionally, in the process of this “dialogic negotiation of meaning” (Kramsch, 1993:131), learners are provided with many opportunities for communicative

³ The most commonly referred model of communicative competence has been that of Canale and Swain (1980), further elaborated by Canale (1983), developed to serve both instructional and assessment purposes. It includes the following components: *grammatical competence*, *sociolinguistic competence*, *discourse competence* and *strategic competence*.

interaction through group activities, which are highly favoured by CLT. The ambiguities and indeterminacies of literary texts (Carter & Walker, 1989) provide many opportunities for genuine interaction (Duff & Maley, 1990). “Prediction, creating a scenario, debating topics on or around a text ... all seem to develop naturally out of a literature text...” (Long, cited in Alam, 2007:377). Also, its non-triviality and personal relevance (Maley, 1989) provide an even stronger motivator for the students’ engagement in communicative interaction.

Moreover, the context of events created by the literary text provides learners with contextualised communicative situations which enable them “to transcend the artificial classroom situation” (Littlewood, 1986:179) and develop their language skills through meaningful language use for real communication purposes. This is consistent with CLT principles which state that true communication is meaningful and that “the grammar and vocabulary that the students learn follow from the function, situational context, and the roles of the interlocutors” (Larsen-Freeman, 1986:128).

Furthermore, a literary text and, in particular, a novel may exemplify degrees of formality, different levels of diction and illustrate a number of different dialects or registers of the target language in context, providing learners with sociolinguistic and pragmatic information (McKay, 2001). Sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence refer to the learners’ ability to interpret and use the language appropriately. The development of such an ability is an important part of communicative competence (Larsen-Freeman, 1986).

Another important concept within CLT is learner autonomy. According to Brumfit (1986) “reading is the most autonomous and individualisable ability in language work, and literature is a rich and widely appealing source of material for reading” (p. 185). Sinclair (1996) also believes that literature provides an ideal context for the development of learner autonomy since it “implies a focus on the individual reader by demanding that reader’s response and personal interaction with the text” (p. 141).

Candlin (1996:xiv) believes that cultural competence is an important part of “communicative capacity”. In Halliday’s words (cited in Carter & McRae, 1996:xiv), “every act is not only linguistic; a use of the potential of the language system, but it is also social and cultural, an expression of who we are and what we give value to”. In this cultural exploration, we need “the mediating power of imaginative texts” (Candlin, 1996:xiv). Literary texts can transform an FL lesson into a complete cultural experience as they embody culture, identities, and ideologies (Kokkinidou, 2011). Additionally, through personal response, learners are enabled to use the target language for their own purposes and not to adopt the native speakers’ ideologies and philosophies (Brumfit, 1985). Finding one’s own voice in the foreign world is highly valued by CLT (Brumfit, 1985).

Finally, with communicative competence being the goal of FL learning, anxiety has often been noticed among many language learners (Brandl, 2008). The potential of the novel to engage learners in co-operative learning through discussion and self-expression in a learner-centred environment where the emphasis is on the enjoyment

of reading and exploring a literary text (Zafeiriadou, n.d.) can keep anxiety levels low. Additionally, such processes can provide the basis for more learner-centred and process-based pedagogical approaches which are highly valued by CLT (Jacobs & Farrell, 2003, cited in Richards, 2006). In such a context, the development of communicative language skills can be significantly facilitated.

From the novel to the “novel-textbook”: Some issues to consider

Selecting the appropriate novel

As McKay (1982:531) points out, “[t]he key to success in using literature in the [FL] class seems to me to rest in the literary works selected”. Indeed, in order for a literary text to be used effectively for language teaching purposes, it should, above all, be carefully selected.

A review of the literature regarding the selection criteria for literary texts to be used in the FL classroom (Brumfit, 1986; Carter, 1986; Carter & Long, 1991; Carter & McRae, 1996; Collie & Slater, 1987; Duff & Maley, 1990; Gareis, Allard & Saindon, 2009; Kramsch, 1993; Lazar, 1993; Lukashvili, 2009; Maley, 2001; McRae, 1991; Nation, 2001; Roubis, 2015; Villar Lecumberri, 2012) can be summarised into the following questions/groups of questions:

- Will the text be a complete work or an extract?
- Is the text appropriate for the course objectives?
- Will its length be satisfactorily handled in the classroom time allocated?
- Is the content of the text interesting to the class and able to stimulate personal involvement? Will the students identify with its theme? Will they find it enjoyable to read this text?
- Is the text appropriate for the students’ age and their cognitive and emotional level?
- Is the text appropriate for the students’ proficiency level? Is its difficulty level slightly above their current level of proficiency? Does it contain language which is marked for period, region or social class? How much of its language will they be able to infer?
- Does the text have any problematic content (e.g. offensive language, sexual innuendo, etc.)?
- How much and what kind of background information will students need in order for the text to be intelligible?
- Does the text require much cultural background knowledge? Will the students be able to make the cultural assumptions necessary in order to make sense of

the literary work? Does it contain clear or unclear cultural allusions? Does the target language culture reflected in text correspond to reality or is it part of the writer’s artistic distortion?

- What are the specific literary qualities of the text? Do the students have any previous literary/aesthetic experience? Will they be able to respond to the literariness of the text and make sense of the literary meanings behind the text? Does their native language have similar conventions to those in the target language for reading and interpreting literature?
- Can the text be exploited for language learning purposes? What kinds of tasks and activities can be devised for the particular text? Are there resources available that would help with the exploitation of the text (e.g. a recording of a play or poem, a film of a novel, etc.)?

Literary competence in the FL classroom

In the discussion above, we saw that one of the questions that should be addressed when selecting a literary work to be used for FLT purposes refers to the literary qualities of the text and the students’ ability to respond to the literariness of the text. This raises the issue of the place of *literary competence* in the FL classroom.

Understanding a literary work involves much more than simply understanding the meanings of the utterances in it. It is a process of meaning-creation which involves the reader’s engagement and response. Throughout this process, the reader draws implicitly on certain conventions about how a particular literary text is to be read and understood (Lazar, 1993). This ability “to perform adequately in response to ‘literature’” (Brumfit, 1989:26) has been called *literary competence* (Culler, 1975). It involves skills such as being able to recognise literary genres and forms, follow the plot, recognise certain themes and the narrator’s particular point of view, recognise and decode figures of speech, produce a personal response to the text, use literary terminology to analyse and interpret the text, and so on. Thus, as Brumfit (1989:27) points out:

Literary competence, then, involves a recognition that language can be used in a deliberately irresponsible way to create metaphorical meanings that illuminate our self-awareness. It involves a reasonably sophisticated knowledge of the particular kind of language employed in a given text, and an awareness of particular literary styles and conventions.

Of course, a certain level of language competence is required before a text is read. As Brumfit and Carter (1986:29) emphasise, “[t]here is a level of linguistic ... competence below which it is pointless trying to respond to works of literature”. Thus, language competence and literary competence depend on each other (Agathos, Gianakou, Dimopoulou, Montzoli, Roubis & Tsotsorou, 2012) and, to some extent, they cannot be easily separated.

Although itemising the skills that make up literary competence per se is no easy task, it is important for teachers to identify at least some of them in order to be able to have clearer goals when planning a particular course, its materials, and the procedures and techniques that will be used by the students for dealing with the literary work (Lazar, 1993).

In the FL classroom, literary competence may include anything from recognising and appreciating different literary genres to simply being able to follow the plot of a short story. The students' ability to respond to the literariness of the text depends, to a large extent, on the degree of exposure to L1 literature. The teaching of literary competence in the language classroom depends on the purpose for which literature is used (Lazar, 1993). If the primary aim of the course is the *study of literature* (Maley, 1989), then developing the literary competence of the students is crucial. On the other hand, if literature is used as a *resource* for the development of language skills (Maley, 1989), teaching literary competence will not be the primary aim of the course. Even in such cases, however, the development of, at least, a minimum degree of literary competence will be necessary for text comprehension as some conventions may not be directly accessible to the learner (Brumfit & Carter, 1986). Students should not be expected to develop literary competence without being given the appropriate activities which will help them do so (Lazar, 1993).

According to Carter and Long (1991), whatever the purpose for which literature is used, the most important ability of the reader of literature is to be able to access it on an experiential level, i.e. "to be able to identify and identify *with* the experiences, thoughts and situations which are depicted in the text" (pp. 5–6). In the FL classroom, this kind of literary competence can be fostered by literary texts which are motivating and develop in the reader "a desire to read, to read on, to read more and to read more into (i.e. interpret) the particular text" (Carter & Long, 1991:6).

Preparing the accompanying materials

As Block (1991:216) points out,

materials development is simply one more element within the larger concept of teachers taking responsibility of what happens in their classes. If we are to be reflective practitioners in the field of [FLT], we need to consider all aspects of our teaching. I believe that preparing our own materials is one of those aspects.

After a particular novel has been carefully selected, the teacher needs to prepare the materials that will accompany the literary work. This is very important in order for the benefits of using a novel in the FL classroom to be fully exploited, especially when the selected novel forms the central focus of instruction. These teacher-prepared materials are devised and/or selected by the teacher in order to help learners overcome any difficulties they might encounter and to take advantage of all the educational and linguistic opportunities provided by the novel.

They can include authentic print materials, authentic recordings, teacher-developed materials, internet sources, games, real objects, and representations. These resources, when linked to the selected novel, are helpful as supporting materials to enhance students’ experience of the text.

Selecting an approach to the teaching of literature

Apart from selecting the appropriate literary text, another key factor for the successful implementation of literature in the FL classroom is the actual approach to the teaching of literature that will be employed. A number of pedagogical approaches to the teaching of literature have been developed based on the three main models for literature teaching, namely, the Cultural Model, the Language Model and the Personal Growth Model, proposed by Carter and Long (1991). Although these models should not be considered as mutually exclusive, each does represent different methodologies and classroom practices (Carter & Long, 1991).

The Cultural Model

This is the traditional model of literature study. It views literature as a body of accumulated human wisdom within a culture able to express the most significant thoughts and ideas which are of universal value (Carter & Long, 1991). Students are encouraged to understand and appreciate different cultures and ideologies and to perceive *the tradition* within the heritage endowed in the literature of such cultures (Carter & Long, 1991). Thus, literature teaching within this model concentrates on the social, political, historical and literary context of a text (Lazar, 1993) without much attention being given to individual works. Learning occurs through reading set texts which are treated as products about which students obtain information from the teacher (Carter & Long, 1991). This model, therefore, represents a more teacher-centred, transmissive pedagogic orientation.

The Language Model

In this model, literature teaching is viewed as the opportunity for students to come into contact with the creative uses of the language which, in the case of literature, are more subtle and varied (Carter & Long, 1991). Language is viewed as the *literary medium* which students are encouraged to investigate in a methodical and systematic way in order to be able to interpret the relations between linguistic forms and literary meaning (Carter & Long, 1991). Such an orientation is normally associated with language-based pedagogic approaches which are learner-centred and employ activities used in language teaching.

The Personal Growth Model

This model views literature teaching as a means for promoting the students’ personal development. For this reason, it encourages them to engage with the reading

of literary texts by motivating them to relate the themes and issues depicted in the texts to their own personal experiences, feelings, and opinions (Carter & Long, 1991). Personal growth is achieved as students learn to appreciate and evaluate literary texts as complex cultural artefacts through which they gain a better understanding of themselves within their society and culture as well as of the people around them (Carter & Long, 1991). To this end, the teacher aims to impart an enjoyment and love of literature that goes beyond the classroom by choosing material which is appropriate to students' interests and stimulates personal involvement (Lazar, 1993), and by making "the reading of literature a memorable, individual and collective experience..." (Carter & Long, 1991:3). This model is thus associated with approaches which foster individual responses to texts, using learner-centred and process-based methodologies.

Integrating "cultural", "linguistic" and "personal growth" approaches

In the last few years, a great number of scholars point out that the implementation of independent approaches to the teaching of literature in the FL classroom does not seem to be beneficial to students (Lima, 2005; Van, 2009). Thus, there has been a considerable move towards combining different approaches to the teaching of literature within the FLT context. In particular, there has been "a clear shift from the solely linguistic analysis to a deeper concern with fostering inter-cultural awareness, appreciating learners' interpretations and responses to texts, and developing the ability to see 'with different eyes' (Oster, 1989:85)" (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014:255).

Such an approach to the use of literature in the FL classroom has been called the *Integrated Approach* as it attempts to integrate elements from "cultural", "linguistic" and "personal growth" approaches in order to enhance the effectiveness of literature as a tool for the development of communicative competence. Moreover, the use of literary texts in such an integrated way can make the learning experience much more enjoyable, stimulating and motivating (Lazar, 1993; Savidou, 2004).

The novel as GFL textbook: An overview of the research project⁴

As was mentioned earlier, the discussion made in the present paper has also been based on a research project which was carried out in an attempt to investigate whether adult upper-intermediate/B2 GFL learners would find a novel appropriate for the development of their language skills in Greek. In particular, the project attempted to investigate the feasibility and effectiveness of using a "novel-textbook" as the main teaching material in the GFL classroom based on the learners' opinions.

⁴ The research project was entitled, "The Novel as Textbook: Using Literature as a Teaching Material to Teach Greek as a Foreign Language to Adults".

With the above aim in mind, the following overarching research question was formed: “Will a ‘novel-textbook’ be found appropriate by adult GFL learners for the development of their language skills in Greek?” In order to answer this question, a quantitative research design was employed. In particular, a quasi-experimental one group pretest-posttest design that allowed the researcher to make inferences on the effect of the intervention was found to be particularly suitable for this project. In this case, the intervention took the form of an upper-intermediate/B2 GFL course employing a “novel-textbook” as its main material of instruction.

Data was obtained from: a) a numerical rating scale questionnaire on the participants’ opinions (pre-intervention and post-intervention) about using a “novel-textbook” as the main teaching material to learn Greek, and b) a Likert scale course materials evaluation questionnaire.

The twelve adult volunteers who took part in the study received fifty-one hours of instruction at the Dutch Association in Athens, Greece.

The Greek novel used as an alternative to the traditional GFL textbook was *Η Μοναξιά των Συνόρων* (The Loneliness of the Borders) by Glykeria Grekou (2013) (Figure 1) which deals with the highly topical issue of refugees, immigrants and multiculturalism. It belongs to the genre of Young Adult Literature (YAL) and was chosen as it met the selection criteria discussed earlier in this paper.



Figure 1: The selected novel

The approach

The present study suggested that an Integrated Approach to the teaching of literature in the FL classroom within the general framework of Communicative Language

Teaching would be beneficial to learners. This means that, although the primary pedagogic goal of employing a novel in a GFL course is the teaching of language, not literature, the literary text is not treated just like any text. The particular study views the reading of literature as primarily an *experience* and thus “any use of literature in any kind of teaching must presuppose some elements of literary response on the part of the reader” (Brumfit, 1989:24); otherwise, the text will not be literary to the learner and much of the purpose in employing literature in the FL classroom will be lost. With this view in mind, the present approach attempts to integrate the focus on language with a focus on the students’ experience. In other words, within the general framework of CLT, the literary text is approached as a cultural artefact (the Cultural Model), it is used as a focus for the development of language skills (the Language Model), and it is also used as a means of promoting personal growth (the Personal Growth Model).

Thus, the materials, procedures and activities employed aim at developing the students’ communicative competence in the Greek language within the context of the selected novel by:

- Enabling students to derive the benefits of communicative and other activities designed around the literary text for language development.
- Maintaining students’ interest and involvement by using a variety of student-centred activities and seeking to develop responses to the text.
- Encouraging students to interact with the text.
- Encouraging students to interact with their fellow students and the teacher about the text.
- Encouraging a more aesthetic⁵ rather than efferent approach to the reading of the text.
- Allowing the exploration of the text by the students and encouraging them to develop their own responses to it.
- Encouraging the reading of literature as a source of pleasure and a stimulus for personal development.
- Encouraging the reading of literature as a means for the development of cultural and intercultural competence.

⁵ In *efferent* reading the reader focuses on acquiring information, thus, being concerned with the outcome of the reading event or, as McKay (1986:194) puts it, “with what [he/she] will carry away”. In *aesthetic* reading, on the other hand, the reader is primarily concerned with the experiences emerging during the reading event. In other words, “the reader’s attention is centred directly on what [he/she] is living through during [his/her] relationship with that particular text” (Rosenblatt, 1978/1994:25). In this process, the reader relates his or her own experiences to the text and “often fantasizes as to what he or she would do in a similar situation” (McKay, 1986:197).

- Providing, when necessary, the historical, cultural or literary background in order to facilitate the students’ understanding of the text and make its reading more “complete”.

In such a context, the orientation of the particular pedagogic approach is more process-based, student-centred and transformative, rather than transmissive, as students are encouraged to work collaboratively and to “integrate new knowledge so that it becomes a part of themselves allowing them to make connections and use the new knowledge to deepen their understanding of themselves and their world” (Gini-Newman, 2010:1–2).

The components

The “novel-textbook” of this study consisted of: a) an authentic text, the Greek unabridged novel *H Μοναξιά των Συνορίων* (The Loneliness of the Borders) by Glykeria Grekou (2013), and b) a number of teacher-prepared materials selected or devised by the teacher/researcher to accompany the novel. In particular, the following types of materials were employed:

1. A recording of the novel (devised by the teacher).
2. Grammar handouts containing theory and practice exercises (devised by the teacher).
3. Exercises and Activities on grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, speaking and listening (devised by the teacher).
4. Revision exercises (devised by the teacher).
5. On-line, newspaper and magazine articles related to the story and used as writing/speaking prompts.
6. Handouts containing information about the Greek poets and writers mentioned in the story (devised by the teacher).
7. Audios with the songs mentioned in the story.
8. Pictures related to the story and used as speaking prompts.
9. YouTube videos related to the content of the story.

The syllabus

In the GFL course of the research project, the novel was mainly used as a focus for the development of language skills. However, since the reading of literature was primarily viewed as an *experience*, the course syllabus included both linguistic objectives and objectives which focused on the students’ experience with the text.

In particular, in relation to the four language skills, the B2 communicative *can-do* statements of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR),

which provide teachers with orientation points, formed the basis for the preparation of the course exercises and activities.

In selecting the specific grammatical forms and vocabulary to be taught in the GFL course of the study, the teacher/researcher examined the content of a number of upper-intermediate GFL textbooks and chose some of the most frequently taught items. However, most of the vocabulary included in the syllabus was selected in relation to the novel's themes and content.

Finally, the syllabus objectives which focused on the students' experience with the text included, among others, allowing the exploration of the text by the students and encouraging them to develop their own responses to it, encouraging the reading of literature as a source of pleasure and a stimulus for personal development, encouraging the reading of literature as a means for the development of cultural competence and intercultural tolerance.

With the above objectives in mind, a particular lesson structure was developed, and particular types of activities were employed.

Lesson structure

Each lesson was mainly structured in the following way:

1. Homework check, focusing on vocabulary and reading comprehension.
2. Discussion of plot, encouraging personal response.
3. Focus on a particular grammar item through the text.
4. Group and pair work practising the specific grammar item through speaking and/or writing.
5. Activities encouraging the deployment of the fifth skill, *thinking* (McRae, 1996), focusing more on aesthetic reading and practising target grammar and/or vocabulary through speaking and/or writing.
6. Discussion of students' questions and/or problems.
7. Assignment of next week's homework.
8. Class dismissed.

Types of activities

As shown in Figure 2 below, the activities employed were of four types. Types 1 and 3 put the emphasis on explaining and/or practising specific vocabulary and grammar items found in the text. Thus, the focus was primarily placed on language. On the other hand, types 2 and 4 placed the main focus on students' experience with the text as they encouraged the expression of their personal response to it and the deployment of the fifth skill, *thinking* (McRae, 1996). Moreover, most of the activities, drawing on CLT, focused on meaningful communication, mainly through group and pair work, and on the "dialogic negotiation of meaning" (Kramsch, 1993:131) which provided learners with many opportunities for communicative interaction.

<p>TYPE 1 Objective: Check understanding of vocabulary Main skill: Vocabulary</p> <p>TYPE 2 Group work: Information gathering/Opinion sharing Objective: Check understanding of plot, encourage personal response Main skill: Reading comprehension</p> <p>TYPE 3 Group work/Pair work: Opinion sharing/Information gathering/Role Play Objective: The teaching or revision of a specific grammar item Main skill: Grammar</p> <p>TYPE 4 Group work/Pair work: Opinion sharing/Information gathering Objective: The deployment of the fifth skill, <i>thinking</i> (McRae, 1996), personal response Main skill: Integration of skills</p>

Figure 2: Types of activities employed

Outcomes

The data from the Pre-Post Intervention Questionnaire concerning the use of the “novel-textbook” indicated that attending a GFL course which employed a “novel-textbook” as its main material of instruction caused a significant difference between the students’ pre-intervention and post-intervention responses. In particular, the median of the students’ post-intervention ratings was higher than the median of their pre-intervention ratings (see Figure 3).

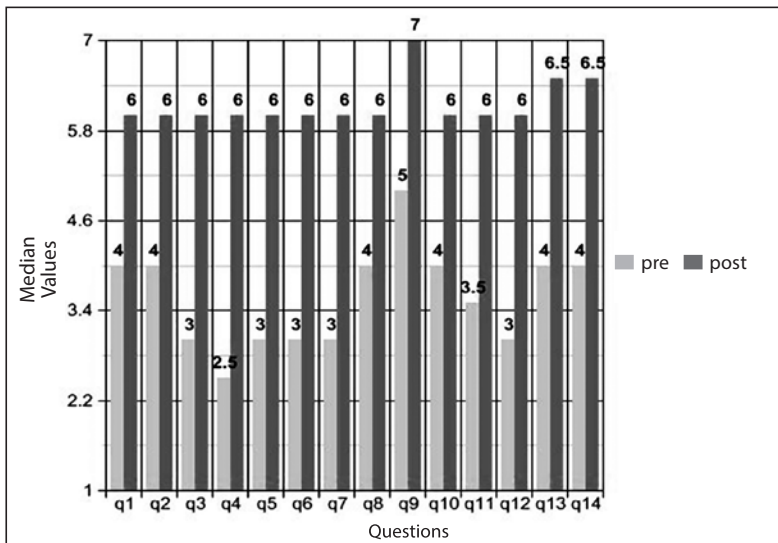


Figure 3: Pre- and Post-Intervention median of the students’ ratings

The data from the Course Materials Evaluation Questionnaire indicated that, overall, the “novel-textbook” received a positive evaluation by the majority of students (see Figure 4).

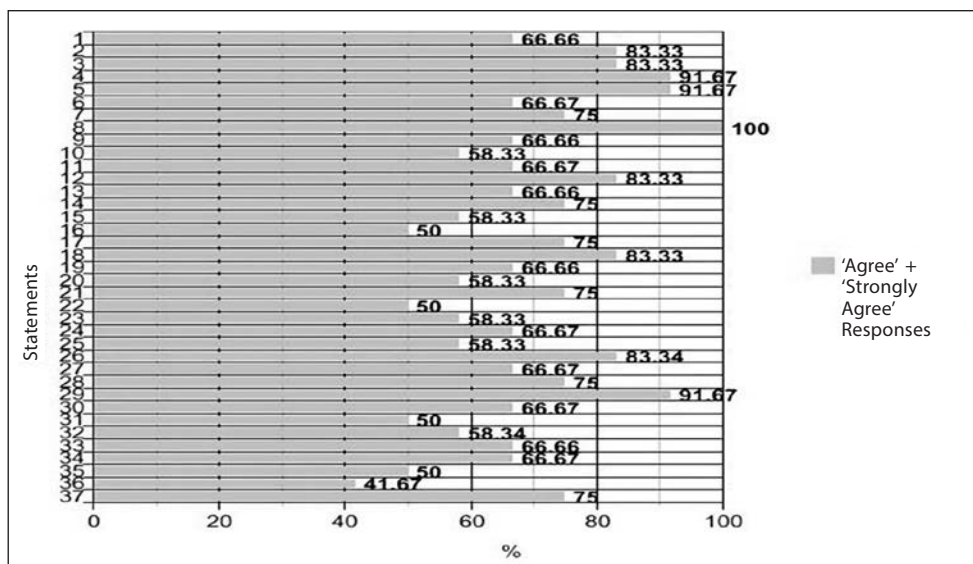


Figure 4: The combined percentages of “Agree” and “Strongly Agree” students’ responses

The examination of all the data gathered revealed that, overall, the adult GFL learners who participated in the study found that a “novel-textbook” was appropriate for the development of their language skills in Greek. In particular, the majority of students gave the “novel-textbook” a high rating in terms of: i) its content, ii) its exercises and activities, iii) its audio-visual materials, iv) the teaching of grammar and vocabulary, v) the teaching of the four language skills (i.e. reading, writing, speaking, listening), and vi) its overall effectiveness as the main teaching material of the GFL course. Moreover, these results were strengthened by the fact that the majority of students stated that they would attend a Greek language course where a “novel-textbook” is the main teaching material and that they would also recommend such a course to a friend. Additionally, through their responses, the majority of students also indicated that literature is an essential part of learning Greek as a foreign language and that, when accompanied by the appropriate materials, it can effectively form the central focus of instruction in the Greek language classroom. Finally, an analysis of the results also suggested that more attention should be paid to the preparation of the accompanying materials for the teaching of grammar, listening, and writing.

Implications

Language teaching research can inform FL pedagogy by serving as a resource in order for teachers to question their existing conceptions of how to teach and, thereby,

develop reflective practice (Lightbown, 1985, 2000). Thus, a number of implications for GFL pedagogy can be drawn from the present study:

- Although traditional GFL textbooks are invaluable resources for teaching Greek, they are not the only choice for a given course.
- Literature should be more often employed as a teaching material in adult GFL classes.
- Literature should be more often employed as the *core* teaching material in adult GFL classes.
- Literature should be employed in the GFL classroom with a clear pedagogic goal in mind in order for its benefits to be fully exploited.
- Selecting the appropriate literary text is of crucial importance. Thus, a number of criteria should be applied before the final selection is made.
- When accompanied by the appropriate materials, a novel can form the central focus of instruction in adult GFL courses.
- Using an unabridged novel rather than a series of extracts, especially when the novel is intended to form the central focus of instruction in the GFL classroom, seems to be more interesting, motivating and, thus, beneficial to adult GFL learners both in terms of language learning and the students’ experience with literature.
- Particular attention should be paid to the preparation of the materials that will accompany the novel, especially in relation to the teaching of grammar, listening and writing.
- The implementation of an Integrated Approach to the teaching of literature within the general framework of CLT seems to be beneficial to adult GFL learners. In particular, the integration of elements from “cultural”, “linguistic” and “personal growth” approaches seems to enhance the effectiveness of literature as a tool for the development of communicative competence as it combines a focus on language with a focus on the students’ experience with the literary text.
- In order for teachers to be able to fully exploit the benefits of literature in the GFL classroom, teacher training workshops focusing on the use of the literary text as the main teaching material and the preparation of appropriate accompanying materials would be extremely helpful.

Conclusion

The present paper made some suggestions based on relevant FLT/GFL literature review and the findings of a research project which investigated the opinions of adult upper-intermediate/B2 GFL learners concerning the feasibility and effectiveness of using a “novel-textbook” as the core material of instruction for the development

of their language skills in Greek. First of all, it suggested that the benefits of using literature in the adult GFL classroom can be fully exploited and extended when a “novel-textbook” is used as the main teaching material. Additionally, it proposed that a “novel-textbook” can be used as an instructional material within CLT, providing teachers with the opportunity to use it in a number of creative ways in order to enhance their learners’ language skills and create a stimulating learning environment. Furthermore, it discussed some issues that should be taken into consideration when a novel is to be used as an alternative to the traditional GFL textbook, namely the selection criteria, the preparation of the accompanying materials, and the approach to the teaching of literature that will be employed in a given GFL course. Finally, it suggested that an approach which integrates the focus on language with a focus on the students’ experience can enhance the effectiveness of literature as a tool for the development of communicative competence.

Concerning the findings of the particular research project, although they confirm to a large extent those of previous research on the use of literature as a teaching material in the FL/GFL classroom, they cannot be generalised to all GFL contexts due to the limited data collected. Thus, a deeper understanding of the use of an unabridged Greek novel as the main GFL teaching material and the issues involved could be gained through further extensive research.

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