Perceptions of literature:  
a comparison of students’ and educators’ views

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Abstract

This paper reports on an investigation into the perceptions of literature among students of Italian language at the Australian National University. While debate on the role of literature in second-language curricula has been under way for a long time, there has been little attention to students’ perspectives on this question. There is a need for qualitative studies, focused on learners, to explore the relationship between literature, language and students. The theoretical framework for the study presented in this paper is based on some key concepts of phenomenography, especially the role of awareness (Marton & Booth 1997) as a fundamental factor in bringing about change in students’ learning outcomes. The aims of the study, conducted in 1998 and 1999, were: first, to gather students’ perceptions of literature; second, to compare them with educators’ views; and third, to work towards a pedagogy of “awareness and change”, as defined by Marton and Booth. In the conclusion to the paper I propose a view of literature in the L2 context that integrates both students’ and educators’ perspectives, and outline implications for classroom practice.

1 Introduction

Despite a renewed interest in including literature in second-language (L2) curricula in recent years, students’ perceptions of literature in this context, and its impact on them, have rarely been investigated or considered in a systematic way. Only a few current studies have explored the role of literature in the L2 curriculum from the students’ perspectives. For example, Kranz (1995, cited in Edmondson 1997) compared the effects of pedagogic strategies in relation to first language and L2 literature, through students’ answers to a questionnaire distributed in German schools and universities. Maxim (1997) carried out an experimental study in the United States on grammar learning and the development of cultural awareness, comparing the outcomes of reading literary texts with those of conventional grammar lessons and textbook reading. Edmondson (1996, cited in Edmondson 1997) analysed responses by students in Hamburg to a questionnaire on positive and negative influences on their language learning, which included such items as rock music and literature.

Educators, as Edmondson (1997) points out, tend to base their arguments for the inclusion or exclusion of literature mainly on assumptions. According to him, most of those who advocate the inclusion of literature in the L2 curriculum do so without providing any empirical evidence that work with literary texts develops students’ language competence. After reviewing the major arguments he identifies in existing publications on the subject, he questions whether literature should have a special place, or any place at all, in courses aimed at improving L2 skills and proficiency.
As Edmondson says, the debate about L2 literature is by no means settled and the issue is worth exploring more systematically. Interestingly, educators seem to focus on whether or not literature should be included in language and culture curricula, rather than how it can be integrated for the benefit of students. If we are to not just facilitate, but maximise, students’ learning, then it is essential that we delve into students’ aims for studying languages, their perceptions of literature and their approach to learning. For example, is the aim of most students who study languages in 2000 to be able to read literature in that language? Do students’ views of literature and language learning conform to those of educators and theorists? What are the consequences for language learning and teaching if they do not?

If the main reason for learning foreign languages in the 1960s and 1970s was, perhaps, the study of the literary canon in the target language, under the influence of formalism and structuralism the emphasis then shifted to linguistics, and consequently to language for communication. As a result, in some departments, especially in the area of English as a second language, the study of literature nearly disappeared (Brumfit 1981; Kramsch 1985; Widdowson 1983). In the foreign language departments where it did persist, Long (1986) lamented the existence of a “gulf” and an “unfortunate split” between language and literature.

The teaching of literature became even more divorced from language teaching with the advent of the communicative approach (Liddicoat & Crozet 2000). This was probably the result of an official rejection of the old paradigm – of teaching language for literature – leading to an attempt to teach both, but separately and with different goals. Language was to be taught for immediate communication purposes, with a syllabus based on texts considered useful for developing day-to-day communication strategies. The study of literature, on the other hand, in courses often conducted in English, continued along traditional lines, the aim being to acquire knowledge of the canon. A new paradigm involving the integration of language and culture, with culture including literature, emerged in the late 1980s and has developed throughout the 1990s. An overview of the various approaches to teaching L2 literature is given by Gilroy and Parkinson (1996).

So, in recent years the study of literature, mainly as culture, has attracted renewed attention. Many of those writing on this subject strongly recommend the integration of literary texts into the L2 curriculum (Lazar 1993; Bowler & Parminter 1993; Cook 1994; Shanahan 1997) or advocate a content-focused curriculum that includes literature (Kramsch 1993; Liddicoat et al. 1997; Liddicoat & Crozet 2000). However, there are also those who, like Edmondson (1997), have questioned the special status that literature often has. Edmondson begins his critique by referring to ‘autobiographies’ of students enrolling in applied linguistics at Hamburg University after having studied two languages at high school. Most of these students claimed that rock music had had a positive influence on their language learning, while only six mentioned literature, only one of whom termed it a positive influence. Since Edmondson does not provide information about the German secondary school curriculum, it is very difficult to establish the reasons for the students’ responses. It is certainly not possible to generalise these perceptions to the Australian tertiary student population. Nonetheless, the implications warrant attention.
There is a demand from both sides of the debate – from those for and those against L2 literature studies – for more systematic studies into the effects of literature on learning. In this paper I report on my own research aimed at clarifying the role of L2 literature, which is centred on an analysis of perceptions of literature among students in tertiary Italian classes at the Australian National University.

The next section of this paper introduces the eclectic theoretical orientation of my study. This is followed by a description of the methodology of the investigation into students’ perceptions of literature and presentation of the results. I then compare the students’ perceptions with those of educators gathered from academic texts. There are obvious implications for teaching and learning if students’ views differ substantially from those of educators. In conclusion I propose a conception of literature in the L2 context that integrates both students’ and educators’ perspectives, and outline implications for classroom practice.

2 Theoretical framework

From Aristotle to Eco, philosophers, poets and, more recently, literary theorists and language educators, have pondered the meaning of literature. As noted above, language educators have also been debating the role of literature in second-language learning for over a century, and their interest shows no sign of abating, given that the title of a special session at the Convention of the Modern Language Association in 2000 was “Should literature be included in language programs?”. Rather than focusing on the views of educators, literary theorists and literati, however, this paper addresses students’ perceptions of the role of literature, the investigation of which is long overdue.

The theoretical framework for the study discussed in this paper is based on some key concepts of phenomenography, especially the role of awareness (Marton & Booth 1997) as a fundamental factor in bringing about change in students’ learning outcomes. Several studies have shown that students’ perceptions of learning and of the topic studied influence their learning approaches (Marton, Beaty & Dall’Alba 1993; Marton & Säljö 1984; Trigwell & Prosser 1996), which, in turn, influence their learning outcomes (Prosser & Trigwell 1999). An awareness of students’ perceptions can empower the teacher, not only to incorporate their views into the syllabus, but also to engage in a dialectic relationship with them. The premise of my project is that an investigation into students’ perceptions of literature can serve as the basis both for selecting texts and for discussion in class that allows different points of view to be aired and the ways they may affect learning to be explored. Through this process, the students too can be empowered, because their contributions become part of the syllabus and are understood to enrich the learning environment. In this framework the object of learning is inseparable from the act of learning, as the perceptions serve as a catalyst for discussion and further expansion of students’ and teachers’ understanding of the learning process.

3 Methodology

My investigation into perceptions of literature was conducted among students of Italian at the Australian National University over the three-year period 1998-2000. Our
language programme comprises four year levels, called Introductory, Continuing, Intermediate and Advanced, with one subject offered in each semester at each level. This paper concerns the 1998 and 1999 phases of the project, involving students in the Intermediate level, who had either completed two years at university or year 12 at school or had substantial previous experience of Italian (through an exchange programme, for example). The experience of 2000 is reported elsewhere (Carroli 2001b)\(^1\).

In 1998 I began this study in the context of my intention to introduce a literature component into the language subjects for that year. Prior to 1998 we had offered separate subjects on Italian literature, but these had often attracted low enrolments – probably because they were not compulsory in an Italian major – which meant that in some years they had been cancelled. My decision to integrate a literature component into the language subjects was influenced by various factors: recommendations to this effect in the debate referred to above; reflections on my own experience as a student of language and literature as well as a language educator; and requests on the part of some students.

The focus of my study in 1998 was, therefore, students’ attitudes to studying literature as part of their Italian programme. I administered a questionnaire, shown in the Appendix, before the start of the Intermediate level subject in semester 1. Through a combination of open and closed questions, the questionnaire sought information on the students’ backgrounds and attitudes towards literature. The responses showed clearly that the students’ language and cultural backgrounds were extremely varied, as were their ages. For these reasons I decided to adopt a selection of short texts of various kinds for the subject. The students’ definitions of enjoyable literature were also diverse, so I held a workshop entitled “What is literature?” over a two-week period at the start of the semester, in order to explore issues of literary language, literature and literary texts.

At the start of semester 1 in 1999 I surveyed the next cohort of students, using a slightly modified questionnaire. This time I expanded the study by also collecting data on students’ experiences of the chosen texts during the semester, through journals that I asked the students to keep, interviews I conducted with them and notes I took on my observations of discussion in class.

In 1998 the selection of texts included some from Leggere & oltre: testi autentici per stranieri. Livello intermedio (Falcinelli & Servadio 1989), such as Dino Buzzati’s short story “Il medico ideale”, Else Morante’s incipit of L’isola di Arturo and a poem by Sandro Penna entitled “La vita…è ricordarsi di un risveglio”. We also read contemporary texts by young authors, including a short story by Silvia Ballestra called “Cari, ci siete o no?” from her collection Gli orsi and extracts from the novels Jack Frusciante è uscito dal gruppo by Enrico Brizzi and Due di due by Andrea De Carlo.

For 1999 I again adopted a selection of texts, this time from the collection Incontri attuali (Italiano & Marchegiani Jones 1991). 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”.

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\(^1\) Carroli, Piera (2001b).
In all, the data gathered in 1998 and 1999 consisted of:
- thirty-nine questionnaires (from twenty-seven students in 1998 and twelve in 1999)
- twelve hours of recorded interviews
- sixty student journal entries
- my written observations.

I analysed this data in two ways. In the first stage, which is the main topic of this paper, my aim was to identify the most common perceptions of enjoyable literature across the student body. In the second stage I examined the perceptions of each individual student in relation to her/his reading processes and learning outcomes. The results of that analysis are discussed separately (Carroli 2000).

For the first type of analysis, I chose to address the students’ perceptions of ‘enjoyable literature’, rather than the more general ‘literature’, as I considered the former a more readily understood term. I was also influenced by Barthes (1973) and Eco (1985) on the importance of enjoyment in reading. My analysis was centred on the students’ answers to a specific question: “Provide your own definition of ‘enjoyable literature’” in the questionnaire. As I was seeking to construct a descriptive and analytical interpretation of students’ perceptions and not a causal explanation, I adopted an approach based on phenomenography theories. That is, I derived a set of categories for classifying the perceptions – called ‘orientations’ or ‘orientation axes’ – from my observation of the data, rather than trying to fit the data into predetermined categories. I made use of existing models for analysing students’ perceptions of learning and teachers’ perceptions of teaching used in Australia and Sweden (Dall’Alba 1991; Martin and Ramsden 1993). Only after having established that the students’ definitions of enjoyable literature in 1999 could be classified using the same orientations as those of 1998 did I collapse all thirty-nine into a single sample. As well as classifying each perception that I identified within a student’s definition, I labelled the definition itself as either ‘complex’ – if it entailed more than two perceptions – or ‘focused’.

4 Results

In their responses to the questionnaire, in their interviews and diaries, and also in class, the students expressed a range of views on literature in general and on how and why literature is enjoyable. They overwhelmingly defined literature in terms of either novels or poetry, which coincided with their preferred type of text. Only three students included other types of texts in their definitions: one referred to magazines and two said “anything in print”.

From the analysis of the thirty-nine definitions given in the questionnaire responses, I identified twelve distinct perceptions of enjoyable literature, which I labelled “literature as…”

- a trigger for reflection
- a source of stimulation
- a source of personal development
- a source of knowledge of the language
- a source of knowledge of the world
I then grouped these twelve perceptions under seven main orientations, which I named, for brevity:

- reflection, stimulation and personal development
- knowledge
- aesthetic pleasure
- entertainment
- affect
- L2
- anything in print.

Table 1 gives some examples of the comments made by students in expressing the perceptions I grouped under each orientation.

Most students’ definitions contained at least two or three comments, relating to various aspects of literature or the experience of reading and, usually, different perceptions and orientations. Some were highly focused; that is, they dealt with a single aspect, such as theme, reflection during and after reading, genre or purpose of text. The most complex, on the other hand, covered nine aspects, from type of text to style, method, content, and the reader’s response.

The definitions referring to only one aspect are not necessarily less meaningful than the more complex: all views are equally important in pedagogical terms. It is just that sometimes a student is exclusively focused on one particular aspect or purpose of literature. This does not necessarily have any negative implications for how students approach texts, although a strong attachment to one genre or theme may influence their reactions, and consequently their approach, to texts that do not fit that preferred genre and theme.

Some comments took the form of caveats to the enjoyment of literary texts, related to length and level of language difficulty. The students concerned were evidently concentrating on problems specific to L2 literature, instead of providing their view of enjoyable literature in general.

The classification of some comments was particularly dependent on interpretation. For example, where one student referred to “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. In general, I saw observations about expanding one’s horizons as a ‘reflection, stimulation and personal development’ orientation when they referred to the individual’s feelings of growth and as a ‘knowledge’ orientation when referred specifically to 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 the ‘aesthetic pleasure’ orientation.

**Table 1**  Examples of students’ comments expressing each orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Students’ comments expressing orientation (quoted verbatim from questionnaires)</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| reflection, stimulation and personal development | • makes you ask questions  
• makes us reflect on issues  
• stimulates your mind  
• expands your horizons  
• a new insight into an ordinary thing |
| knowledge (ethical, didactic, social, lexical, of the canon) | • uplifting and edifying and teaches you something  
• something with a moral  
• literature that concentrates on social issues  
• literature which is a good example of a period, style or theme  
• literature that teaches new vocabulary |
| aesthetic pleasure | • attractive to read due to pleasing use of words and expressions  
• aesthetically pleasing  
• when you can appreciate the form and beauty of the language |
| entertainment | • makes you not want to put it down until you have finished it  
• attention catching stories  
• wise and witty writing  
• transports you into another world |
| affect | • if you can relate to characters and experience a reaction e.g. laugh or cry |
| L2 | • 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 |
| anything in print | • I like to read anything and everything  
• current issues in magazine or newspaper form are interesting especially |

In 1998 the orientation detected most frequently in the student’ definitions was ‘entertainment’, while in 1999 ‘reflection, stimulation and personal development’ prevailed, followed very closely by ‘knowledge’ about the world, Italian culture and language. Of the fourteen ‘entertainment’-oriented comments expressed in 1998, six were about the command of a reader’s attention: the students used expressions such as “grab my attention” and “draw me in”. For these students, therefore, enjoyment of a text was mainly defined in terms of reader dependency. However, the ‘entertainment’ orientation was also often accompanied by views classified under ‘reflection, stimulation and personal development’ or ‘knowledge’ (of the world and culture).
Overall, then, these students preferred literature that combined entertainment with the opportunity for reflection or to acquire knowledge.

Table 2 shows the numbers of students expressing each orientation in 1998 and 1999. As noted, most students expressed more than one orientation; there were twelve students in 1999 and twenty-seven in 1999.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Number of students expressing orientation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflection, stimulation and personal development</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge (ethical, didactic, social, lexical, of the canon)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aesthetic pleasure</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entertainment</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>affect</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anything in print</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Number of students expressing each orientation

Among the cohort of 1998, which had expressed a strong ‘entertainment’ orientation, the most widely enjoyed text was Buzzati’s short story, because it was comical. The majority of these students found the young Italian authors, especially Brizzi, difficult to comprehend, because their writing contained cultural and linguistic references specific to Italian youth and some use of regional Italian.

It cannot be assumed, however, that Italian literary texts are always culturally more distant from our students than texts written by Australian authors. As Hasan points out, cultural distance is relative (1996:34). 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. 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, in fact, Maraini’s short story in particular elicited diverse and heated reactions from the 1999 cohort. Most students, male and female, being unaware of the quite common practice among Italian men of having a double life (especially in the 1960s when the text was written and divorce was not yet legal), condemned the female protagonist because she had two families. In their first reading, they focused on the literal rather than the metaphorical level and missed Maraini’s ironic criticism of this particular practice. The metaphorical level emerged in class, through a comparison of different students’ views and my mediation as teacher.

The relationships between the students’ perceptions and their learning outcomes is discussed in detail in a separate paper (Carroli 2000). In brief, the analysis of the data
collected during the semester from interviews and journals, as well as the questionnaires, showed that the students’ perceptions and attitudes towards the subject matter did affect their learning outcomes. Students who perceived newspaper articles as literature reacted quite negatively to the study of poetry. Negative attitudes towards literary texts in general were usually motivated by fear that they would be too difficult for the students’ level of language and cultural knowledge. Another major concern expressed by the students was that literary texts might be too boring. These views were linked to very uneven learning outcomes. On the positive side, there was a relationship between complex perceptions of literature, a holistic approach to learning language and literature, and optimal learning outcomes.

6 A comparison of perceptions

Awareness on the part of teachers and students of the meanings of the term literature, in both the Australian and Italian contexts, is a necessary prerequisite to avoid misunderstandings and inappropriate planning. There seem to be cultural differences between Italian and Australian perceptions of literature. Until very recently, literature retained a privileged position in the education system in Italy, where the humanistic tradition has resisted the advances of rationalism. For this reason, teachers educated in Italy are likely to have a different view of literature from students in Australia. These different perceptions of literature need to be discussed with students in an effort to understand the different cultural positions and the background to these.

In Italian dictionaries the first definition given under the entry letteratura refers to prose and poetic production and the second to the set of publications on a particular subject. Most Australian dictionaries also define literature firstly as form-focused texts. For some Australian students, however, the word is understood in the sense of the colloquial meaning it has assumed recently; that is, as anything in print. When asked whether reading about the topic of the short story “L’altra famiglia” in a newspaper article instead would have been a different experience, some students were perplexed and one replied: “Ah, are we taking the newspaper article as literature or are we not?”.

Although, most of the students equated literature with fiction, for some it meant any type of written text, as illustrated in these comments: “enjoyable literature for me is a story, fiction or non-fiction”: “personal stories…”; “current issues in magazines or newspaper form are interesting especially”.

Colombo (1996), an Italian-as-L2 educator living and working 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 conception is clearly distant from a view of literature as a product of culture. However, perceptions of literature are by no means homogeneous in Italy. Luperini (1998), a critic and theorist, presents a view of literature as language, culture and ideology, especially in his chapter entitled “La classe come comunità ermeneutica”. On the selection of literary texts for a syllabus, he criticises the postmodern tendency to include entertaining texts or works from outside the canon. However, he does make some concessions; for example, he suggests that very popular novels such as Brizzi’s Jack Frusciante è uscito dal gruppo, which he describes as “un romanzetto”, might be included in order to encourage students to read more difficult texts (1998:45-53). Eco (1985), on the other hand, stresses the importance of divertissement in reading.
In contrast to Luperini’s view, only two of the students in my survey equated enjoyable literature to the canon. My view – which it appears coincides with that of most of my students’ – is that the value of literary texts extends far beyond their aesthetic qualities or qualification for inclusion in the canon. However, I do agree with Luperini that, in a world that overemphasises the present and neglects the past and the future, it is necessary to place texts in their historical and cultural context. But we need to be aware that the notion of literary canon establishes a hierarchy that distinguishes between high and low culture and between high and low literature. In the eyes of the students, the hierarchy can seem to define an insurmountable distance between them and the text, perceived to be far above what they understand as culture.

In my questionnaire, 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. When asked in class to clarify what ‘Italian culture’ meant in their view, most students laughed and said “food”, before proceeding to list cinema, sport, architecture, art and literature. Their understanding of culture and literature seems therefore anthropological, along the lines indicated by Kramsch (1993). For them, there is no separation between culture and its products or artifacts, but rather an interactive relationship. Choices of texts for language subjects should take into consideration this situation and place other perceived elements of culture on an equal footing with the literary canon. The value of a text in the L2 teaching context should be determined on the basis of not only aesthetic parameters but cultural, cross-cultural and ethical considerations (Carroli & Maurer 2002; Maurer, Carroli & Hillman 2000).

7 Open conclusions

In conclusion, I wish to advocate the notions of literature as an intercultural space, inseparable from language, and the class as a learning community. The place of literature can become a negotiated one, an intercultural space where low and high culture, canon and popular literature, student culture and teacher culture meet in an analysis and discussion of written discourse and the development of new meanings. There are no perfectly suitable texts for L2 learning, especially given the diverse student population in Australia. A teachers’ awareness of students’ perceptions of literature should be fundamental in selecting texts and pedagogical practices aimed at facilitating optimal interaction with literature and best learning outcomes. Other considerations such as cultural distance are also important, especially as the students are reading texts in a language other than their own. It is necessary to develop a pedagogy based on three elements: the learners’ reflection on and analysis of the texts; their development of a critical awareness of their individual reading strategies and interpretations of the texts; comparison and discussion of these in class with other learners and, subsequently, with the teacher (see also Carroli 2001a, 2001b). In this way, the class can become a small hermeneutic community.
References


Appendix:

SURVEY OF ITALIAN STUDENTS' LANGUAGE BACKGROUND, REASONS FOR STUDYING ITALIAN AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

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 group: □ 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

- Relevant to other university studies

e. Useful for current/future employment

- Useful for current/future employment

f. Intending to travel to Italy

- Intending to travel to Italy

g. Family/friends are Italian speakers

- Family/friends are Italian speakers

h. Other (please specify)

- Other (please specify)

ATTITUDES TOWARDS LITERATURE

Please tick the box that corresponds most closely to your perception of literature:

1. Strongly Agree | Slightly Agree | Slightly Disagree | Strongly Disagree

1. I read literature (eg. poetry, novels, short stories, plays) for enjoyment:

a. in my own language

- in my own language

b. in Italian;

- in Italian;

c. in languages other than my own or Italian.

- in languages other than my own or Italian.

2. I believe reading literature improves my language skills:

a. in Italian;

- in Italian;

b. in languages other than my own or Italian.

- 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;

- in Italian;

b. in languages other than my own or Italian.

- in languages other than my own or Italian.

4. Literature should be included at all levels of the undergraduate language degree.

- 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.

- Literature should be included only at the higher levels (3rd and 4th year) of the undergraduate degree.
6. Please indicate your favorite 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’:


8. Any comments you may wish to add on the possible role/roles of literature in language learning:


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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1 The 2000 study addressed students’ approaches to reading in relation to learning outcomes and was conducted among students in second semester of the Continuing level, who had completed one year of study at university or gained the equivalent experience at school or elsewhere.

2 Marton (1992, cited in Prosser and Trigwell 1999:121) defines phenomenography 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. These differing experiences, understandings etc., are characterised in terms of categories of description, logically related to each other, and forming hierarchies in relation to given criteria. Such an ordered set of categories of description is called the outcome space of the phenomenon…”.

3 See, for example, Zingarelli, N. 1993, Vocabolario della lingua italiana, 11th printing (Milan: Loescher):
1. L’insieme della produzione prosasistica e poetica di una determinata civiltà, spec. con riferimento a valori estetici: -- latina, italiana. 2. Complesso di pubblicazioni relative a uno specifico argomento: -- giuridica, dantesca.

4 See, for example, The Macquarie Dictionary 1995.

5 This questionnaire was developed by Piera Carroli in conjunction with the Centre for Educational Development and Academic Methods (CEDAM) at the Australian national University, Canberra.