ON LITERATURE AND THE SECRET ART OF (IM)POSSIBLE WORLDS:
TEACHING LITERATURE THROUGH LANGUAGE

A Dissertation in Spanish

by

Maria-del-Carmen Yanez-Prieto

© 2008 Maria-del-Carmen Yanez-Prieto

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December 2008
The dissertation of Maria-del-Carmen Yanez-Prieto was reviewed and approved* by the following:

James P. Lantolf  
Greer Professor of Language Acquisition and Applied Linguistics  
Dissertation Advisor  
Chair of Committee

John Lipski  
Edwin Erle Sparks Professor of Spanish & Linguistics

Guadalupe Martí-Peña  
Assistant Professor of Spanish-American Literature

Steven L. Thorne  
Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics

Ronald Carter  
Professor of Modern English Language at the University of Nottingham  
Special Member

Henry Gerfen  
Associate Professor of Linguistics and Spanish Linguistics  
Head of the Department of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

An increasing amount of Applied Linguistics research calls for the integration of language and literature in foreign language education in reaction to the typical separation of these two disciplines in the traditional curriculum. The present classroom-based empirical study illustrates through the description of a literature-through-language course for third-year students of Spanish how literature and language can be organically integrated in foreign language education. The proposed pedagogy suggests the creation of a problem in the literary text that students have to solve by rewriting, reconstructing or transforming the work through mediating tools in the form of linguistic concepts. This study also examines the impact of literature-through-language instruction on students’ discourse proficiency, as well as their attitudes towards language, language learning, and literature. Data was obtained from students’ portfolios, compositions, and interviews. The method of data analysis was historical or genetic. The analysis shows how traditional empirical rules initially hampered students’ creativity and their understanding of how (literary) texts evoke meaning in implicit ways. In contrast, as the literature-through-language course progressed, students’ written production and reflections revealed their increasing efforts to compose meaning through lexicogrammatical and textual choices (rather than explicitly in the propositional content) in their compositions as a result of the recontextualization of conceptual knowledge appropriated in reconstructing activities with literary texts. Finally, learners’ comments seem to indicate a reconceptualization of language as a creative tool for personal meaning rather than as a set of constraining rules. Students also commented on the relevance of a literary treatment of language for foreign language learning.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................................................................................... xi

LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................. xiii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ................................................................................................. xiv

Chapter 1  Literature, the Secret Sharer ........................................................................... 1

1.1 State of Purpose ........................................................................................................ 1
1.2 The history of the separation .................................................................................. 8
1.3 Main lines of investigation in language-based literature instruction .................. 14
   1.3.1 The frameworks: Sociocultural Theory and Systemic-Functional Linguistics ........................................................................................................... 14
   1.3.2 Mind literature: brains, tropes, and something called reality ....................... 19
   1.3.3 Applying the theories: literature as discourse .................................................. 21
1.4 The present study and organization of the dissertation ............................................ 24

Chapter 2  A reflection on current praxis of language and literature and the underlying views .............................................................................................................. 27

2.1 A torn curriculum: more schisms underlying the division between language and literature instruction ................................................................. 27
   2.1.1 Meaning versus form ....................................................................................... 27
   2.1.2 Authentic versus non-authentic language use ................................................... 38
   2.1.3 When practice doesn’t make perfect: the separation of tools and results in the curriculum ................................................................. 43
   2.1.4 The oral versus the written ............................................................................. 48
2.2 Literature and everyday language use: Beauty and Beast? ................................... 50
   2.2.1 Creativity in expected places .......................................................................... 52
   2.2.2 Creativity in your backyard: the unbearable literariness of the human being ........................................................................................................... 61
   2.2.3 Literature that is not so literary ...................................................................... 85

Chapter 3  In search of lost definitions ............................................................................. 96

3.1 Discourse: breaking the bread of meaning, sharing our minds and worlds with others ................................................................................................................. 97
3.2 Searching for meaning: authors, readers, texts and contexts ............................ 104
   3.2.1 Meanings in the author’s world .................................................................... 104
   3.2.2 Meanings in texts .......................................................................................... 104
   3.2.3 Meanings in Readers ..................................................................................... 109
   3.2.4 Meanings in larger contexts .......................................................................... 112
3.3 On literature ............................................................................................................. 114
3.3.1 Literature: converting the water of life into wine that refreshes the world................................................................. 115
  3.3.1.1 Fight and flight: catharsis in Lorca’s “Cogida y muerte.”........ 119
3.3.2 Literature: subjunctive lives in “as-if” worlds...................... 123
3.3.3 Literature and the metamorphosis of mind........................... 126
3.3.4 Some considerations of mind-disruption, readers and the concept of literature ........................................................................ 127
3.4 Defining literature ........................................................................ 141
3.5 Why do we need literature in the foreign language curriculum? .... 148

Chapter 4 Teaching literature through language (I): the theory ........ 153

  4.1 Introduction: the democratization of the literary experience ....... 153
  4.2 Towards an alternative and integrative pedagogy of literature as discourse ................................................................. 156
  4.3 Teaching literature through language from a Sociocultural perspective ...... 161
    4.3.1 Sense and sensibility to context: the process and the activity principles .................................................................. 163
    4.3.2 Giving language the tool treatment: the inferencing and the contrast principles .......................................................... 171
    4.3.2.1 Acting with language in the study course ......................... 178
    4.3.3 Solving problems in the ZPD: the familiar to the unfamiliar principle and the contrast principle .................................... 192
    4.3.4 Making personal sense and the continuum principle............. 198
    4.3.5 Prospective education and the critical principle ................. 204
    4.3.6 The place of content .......................................................... 209

Chapter 5 Teaching literature through language (II): the practice ...... 212

  5.1 Introduction: The Twilight of the Idols and Gods .................... 212
  5.2 Creating a discourse-based course. .......................................... 215
    5.2.1 The text bank .................................................................... 216
  5.3 The teaching units ..................................................................... 220
    5.3.1 Continuidad de los parques by Julio Cortázar ...................... 221
    5.3.2 La cogida y la muerte by Federico García Lorca ................. 251
  5.4 Conclusion ................................................................................. 274

Chapter 6 Data sources and method of analysis ............................ 276

  6.1 Linguistic proficiency ............................................................... 277
    6.1.1 Focus of analysis .......................................................... 285
  6.2 Attitude ..................................................................................... 288
  6.3 Approaches to research and data analysis ............................... 293
    6.3.1 Method of data analysis .................................................. 298
  6.4 The courses and data sources .................................................. 301
    6.4.1 The portfolio .................................................................... 302
    6.4.2 Compositions, composition interviews and composition logs .. 304
    6.4.3 The literary interviews .................................................... 308
  6.5 Abbreviations ........................................................................... 312
Chapter 7  Data analysis: notions and histories of text ........................................ 314
7.1 ‘(In)complete sentences’ and literary texts ...................................................... 315
7.2 Last and least: texts in the traditional foreign-language curriculum .......... 325
   7.2.1 If frames could talk...Too much information and too little interest ..... 342
   7.2.1.1 Worlds between lines: the advantage of literary texts in the language classroom .......................................................... 352
    7.2.2 Talent, empirical knowledge, and mainstream formal knowledge of language: understanding literature? ............................................. 356
   7.2.2.1 You can say that again! Repetition in (foreign) language instruction ........................................................................ 360
7.3 Conclusion ....................................................................................................... 367
Chapter 8  Data analysis: the impact of LTL pedagogy on notions of text and genre ............................................................................................................... 370
8.1 Discovering discourse: constructing (im)possible worlds in text .............. 371
8.2 Connecting personal significance, formal instruction and writing ability ...... 380
8.3 Texts and the particulars ................................................................................ 396
   8.3.1 Learned attention and learners’ compositions ...................................... 404
   8.3.2 Beyond the LTL course ............................................................................ 418
8.4 Conclusion ....................................................................................................... 420
Chapter 9  Data analysis: from rule-based knowledge to emerging aspect ........ 423
9.1 An aspect of history without a history of aspect ............................................. 424
   9.1.1 The ‘uses’ of the preterit in conventional foreign language instruction .......................................................... 425
   9.1.2 The ‘uses’ of the imperfect in conventional foreign language instruction ........................................................................ 431
9.2 Rule-based instruction: bridging the gap or burning one’s bridges? .......... 438
   9.2.1 Mind the gap: traditional histories, the LTL course, and uncertain futures ........................................................................ 440
   9.2.2 The linguistic authority of conventional textbooks ............................ 455
   9.2.3 Empirical rules: instructions to kill a rose ............................................ 460
9.3 The emergence of aspect in the LTL course ................................................ 463
   9.3.1 In Cortázar’s image: creative imitation with aspect ............................. 466
   9.3.2 Aspect beyond the LTL course ............................................................... 480
   9.3.3 Aspect a semester later ............................................................................. 484
9.4 Conclusion ....................................................................................................... 488
Chapter 10 Data analysis: students’ attitudes towards LTL pedagogy and to literature .......................................................................................................... 491
10.1 Attitude towards the LTL pedagogy ............................................................... 491
   10.1.1 Students’ reactions to text-based pedagogy ....................................... 492
   10.1.2 Learning on the literary cline ............................................................... 498
   10.1.3 Linguistic explanations ......................................................................... 501
   10.1.4 Resisting the LTL pedagogy ............................................................... 505
10.2 Attitudes towards literature and content courses .......................................................... 519
   10.2.1 Losing their religion: identity, language, and literary exegesis ................................. 520
   10.2.2 Changing attitude towards literature ........................................................................... 529
10.3 Looking at content courses differently ........................................................................... 539
10.4 Conclusions ....................................................................................................................... 545

Chapter 11 Implications and venues for future research .......................................................... 548
   11.1 Recent research on the cline of literariness ..................................................................... 549
   11.2 Exploring the pedagogical continuities between language and literature ..................... 553
   11.3 The potential contributions of the present study .......................................................... 565
   11.4 Conclusions and implications of the present study for foreign language instruction and future LTL research ................................................................................................. 579
   11.5 Suggestions and venues for future research ................................................................. 583
   11.6 Conclusion: Foreign Language Departments, reveal the secret art of (im)possible worlds! ................................................................................................................................. 590

Bibliography .............................................................................................................................. 594

Appendix A Chart of the Spanish article and other determiners .................................................. 630
Appendix B Graphic representation of tense and aspect perspective ........................................... 631
Appendix C Tentative chart of tense and aspect based on Bull (1960) ........................................ 641
Appendix D Content exercise based on Lorca’s *Cogida y muerte* ............................................ 642
Appendix E Literature-through-language provisional syllabus .................................................. 643
Appendix F Alice’s syllabus ......................................................................................................... 659
Appendix G Students’ models of sentence .................................................................................. 660
   G.1 Scheherazade’s model of sentence (presents some erroneous information in relation to the notion of clauses) ................................................................. 660
   G.2 Ulysses’ model of sentence ............................................................................................... 661
Appendix H Students’ models of punctuation ............................................................................ 662
   H.1 Gulliver’s model of punctuation ...................................................................................... 662
   H.2 Ophelia’s model of punctuation ....................................................................................... 663
Appendix I Students’ drawings of Cortázar’s *Continuidad de los parques* ......................... 664
   I.1 Drawings representing the first half of the story (man reading in studio and disengaging from reality) ................................................................................................................. 664
      I.1.1 Alice’s drawings (items are captioned as “the studio,” “a window,” “the train,” “book;” at the tops reads “I’m not an artist”) ................................................................. 664
      I.1.2 Juliet’s drawings ......................................................................................................... 665
Appendix J  Students´ predictions on Cortázar´s story ......................................................... 677

J.1 Predictions about what is going to happen after the man in the story gets absorbed in the reading ......................................................... 677
  J.1.1 Dulcinea´s prediction ................................................................................. 677
  J.1.2 Lara´s prediction ...................................................................................... 677
  J.1.3 Darcy´s prediction ................................................................................... 677
  J.1.4 Emma´s prediction .................................................................................. 678
  J.1.5 Juliet´s prediction .................................................................................... 678
  J.1.6 Ulysses´ prediction ................................................................................... 678
  J.1.7 Dorothea´s prediction .............................................................................. 679
  J.1.8 Jane´s prediction .................................................................................... 679
  J.1.9 Alice´s prediction ................................................................................... 679
  J.1.10 Ophelia´s prediction .............................................................................. 680
  J.1.11 Scheherazade´s prediction .................................................................... 680

J.2 Predictions about what the lovers discuss in the log cabin (each group had a representative that had to post the group´s prediction) ................. 681
  J.2.1 Alice, Emma, Dulcinea and Lara´s prediction ........................................... 681
  J.2.2 Ulysses´ group´s prediction ..................................................................... 681
  J.2.3 Dorothea´s group´s prediction ................................................................. 681
  J.2.4 Swann´s group´s prediction ................................................................... 682

Appendix K  Soap opera transcript ................................................................................. 683

Appendix L  Models of Lakoff's oral narrative scheme ..................................................... 686
  L.1 Ophelia´s model ......................................................................................... 686
  L.2 Juliet´s model ............................................................................................. 687
  L.3 Scheherazade´s model ................................................................................ 688
  L.4 Darcy´s model ........................................................................................... 689

Appendix M  Students´ comments on Cortázar´s story .................................................... 690

M.1 Dulcinea´s interpretation ...................................................................................... 690
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix N</th>
<th>Students’ everyday metaphors collected 1/15-1/20</th>
<th>696</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N.1</td>
<td>Dulcinea’s metaphors</td>
<td>696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.2</td>
<td>Darcy’s metaphors</td>
<td>696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.3</td>
<td>Ophelia’s metaphors</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.4</td>
<td>Ulysses and Alice’s metaphors</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.5</td>
<td>Ulysses’ metaphors</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.6</td>
<td>Dorothea’s metaphors</td>
<td>698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.7</td>
<td>Juliet’s metaphors</td>
<td>698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.8</td>
<td>Gulliver’s metaphors</td>
<td>698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.9</td>
<td>Jane’s metaphors</td>
<td>699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.10</td>
<td>Scheherazade’s metaphors</td>
<td>699</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Appendix O | Examples of everyday literary figures in horoscopes | 700 |

| Appendix P | Literariness in non-literary texts | 701 |

| Appendix Q | Chart for creating literary figures to describe a bull | 703 |

| Appendix R | Example of literary figures derived from the chart in Appendix Q | 704 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix S</th>
<th>Students’ comments on Lorca’s <em>Cogida y muerte</em></th>
<th>705</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S.1</td>
<td>Lara’s interpretation</td>
<td>705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.2</td>
<td>Alice’s interpretation</td>
<td>706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.3</td>
<td>Dulcinea’s interpretation</td>
<td>706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.4</td>
<td>Ulysses’ interpretation</td>
<td>707</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Appendix T | Questionnaire on students’ previous L2 learning histories | 708 |

| Appendix U | Informed consent form | 710 |

| Appendix V | Addendum to informed consent form | 713 |

| Appendix W | Composition grading criteria | 716 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix X</th>
<th>Composition log (LOG) questions</th>
<th>718</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X.1</td>
<td>Composition 1 log (LOG1) questions</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.2</td>
<td>Composition 2 log (LOG2) questions</td>
<td>719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.3</td>
<td>Composition 3 log (LOG3) questions</td>
<td>720</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Y  Sample literature-through-performance exercises formulated for
Sergio Vodanovic’s Delantal blanco............................................................ 722

Appendix Z  Traditional composition criteria ................................................ 736
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: The parabolic explanation of the conditional in Appendix A, based on Turner (1996). ................................................................. 185

Figure 4.2: The aspectual meanings of preterit. ........................................................... 188

Figure 4.3: The aspectual meaning of imperfect ........................................................ 190

Figure 5.1: Group of jumbled fragments from Cortázar's Continuidad de los parques. .......................................................... 229

Figure 5.2A: Two exercises asking the student to compare two versions of the same sentence in which word order had been altered. ......................... 238

Figure 5.2B: Comparing different clause orders ......................................................... 239

Figure 5.3A: Piece of news: headline in the present and text body in the past ...... 242

Figure 5.3B: Joke: shift from past tense to present after the background .......... 243

Figure 5.3C: Email message from department colleague (people’s names have been substituted by letters): anecdote narrated from a future perspective, orientation in the past tense with shift to present tense in the complicating events ................................................................. 244

Figure 5.4: Transcript of TV news reporting the meeting between the right-wing and the Basque Nationalist Party ................................................. 250

Figure 5.5: Literary and non-literary examples of literary figures ......................... 256

Figure 5.6: Literary figures in sayings and fixed expressions .............................. 258

Figure 5.7: Everyday metaphors ............................................................................. 260

Figure 5.8: Fragments of ‘non-literary-sounding’ literary texts .......................... 262

Figure 5.9A: semantic map blueprint for metaphor “BULLFIGHTING IS ART.” .... 265

Figure 5.9B: semantic map blueprint for metaphor “BULLFIGHTING IS TORTURE” ................................................................. 266

Figure 5.10: Alice’s analysis of the characteristics and associations of target terms in the text through lexical chain (4/27) ........................................... 270

Figure 5.11: Fragment of cloze text procedure ....................................................... 272

Figure 7.1: Ulysses’ graphic analysis of a complex sentence in Cortázar activity .... 321
Figure 11.1: Graphic chart for determining the lexical aspect of a predicate .......... 587
LIST OF TABLES

Table 6.1: From conventional learners’ foreign-language histories to a developmental telos.......................................................... 300

Table 7.1: Genres of compositions as defined by participants. ......................... 340

Table 7.2: Linguistic resources to enhance meaning, creativity and interest in composition 1. .............................................................. 350

Table 8.1: Lexicogrammatical and textual resources used by participants throughout the course......................................................... 406
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the first place, I want to thank every member of the committee for their very insightful, useful comments and suggestions, for their encouragement, and for having borne with this extremely long project and dissertation while I was in another continent. All of them were great, but I want to give special thanks to Jim Lantolf for several reasons. Firstly, for having introduced me to Sociocultural Theory: without such a fascinating framework, there won’t be a dissertation, and my interests (language, culture, literature, pedagogy…) would have no direction right now. In addition, I want to thank Jim for suggesting this topic to me. Curiously enough, despite my lifelong romance with literature and art, it had never occurred to me that I could write my thesis on this wonderful topic. Thanks to his help, encouragement, guidance, comments … to his mediation, I have been able to write a dissertation on the most interesting topic in the world, and this project has become a reality.

In the second place, I want to thank Professor Carter for having paved the way for people who work on the pedagogical continuities between common language and literature with his groundbreaking, inspiring work, and also for his willingness to participate in this project. I also want to thank Professor Lipski for assigning me a 300W Spanish section, which was fundamental to conduct the LTL study, and for having believed in the necessity of this project. In addition, I want to show my appreciation to Professor Thorne for his insight and his contagious enthusiasm and optimism. Last but not least, I want to thank Professor Martí-Peña for having agreed to participate in this study with such a short notice, and for having provided an invaluable perspective.

In the third place, I would like to thank all my friends and colleagues. They have been my inspiration, especially Antonio Jiménez Jiménez, Virginia Fernández Vallejo,
Virginia Nanclares, Leticia Ortega, Silvia Álvarez Olarra, April Jacobs, Natalia Navarro, Eduardo Negueruela, Yvonne Gavela, Beatriz Centeno Cortés, Jason Roberson, Ed Williams, Matt Poehner, Marilia Mendes Ferreira… In particular, I want to thank Alex Borys (Alico) for always being there as a very good friend with helpful words and deeds, and loads of encouragement.

En último lugar, pero no por ello menos importante, le doy gracias a mi familia por el apoyo incondicional que me ha prestado en esta fase de mi vida. Vosotros me habéis conducido a este momento de muchas maneras… con cada cuento, con cada historia, con cada libro… Por vosotros, todo ha sido posible y todo tiene sentido y coherencia. Y, por ello, sin duda, estáis entre las líneas de esta disertación.
To my family, especially to my brother, Ángel Yáñez Prieto, to my mother, Mari Carmen Prieto Padilla, and to the loving memory of my father, Ángel Yáñez Molina.

[T]he function of literature as art is to open us to dilemmas, to the hypothetical, to the range of possible worlds that a text can refer to. I have used the term “subjunctivize,” to render the world less fixed, less banal, more susceptible to recreation. Literature subjunctivizes, makes strange, renders the obvious less so, the unknowable less so as well, matters of value open to reason and intuition. Literature, in this spirit, is an instrument of freedom, lightness, imagination, and yes, reason. It is our only hope against the long gray night.

(Bruner. 1986. Actual Minds, Possible Worlds, p. 159)

Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our greatest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? ... It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Chapter 1

Literature, the Secret Sharer

Antes de leer el Ulises:
- Lea la Odisea de Homero.
- Repase la Biblia.
- Hágase con unas nociones de griego y latín.
- ... y si puede también de inglés y de gaélico.
- Ármese de paciencia: para llegar adentro necesitará leer... al menos 300 páginas!


1.1 State of Purpose

This dissertation responds to urgent calls for the fusion of literature and language instruction in Foreign Language Departments. These calls come, on the one hand, from the experts who have been discussing the status of literature in language teaching from a theoretical standpoint from as early as the 19th century to the present. On the other hand, more pressing for this much needed fusion than the experts’ calls are the material repercussions of this division in the life of foreign language departments, as they are experienced by both learners and faculties in the literature and language tracks. An extensive body of research captures many of these accounts, and brings much insight into a wide array of typical problems, ranging from the status of literature in the

1 Before reading the Ulysses: Read *Odysseus* by Homer. Go over the Bible. Get some notions of Classic Greek and Latin ... And, if you can, some notions of English and Gaelic too. Be patient: in order to really get into the plot, you will need to read ... at least 300 pages! (A guide to lose the fear to Joyce’s *Ulysses, Cadena Ser*, June 17th, 2004).
curriculum, and its separation from language, to the students’ negative attitudes and
estrangement, the decreasing enrolment numbers in literature courses, and learners’
poor linguistic proficiency and analytical skills, *inter alia* (Widdowson, 1975; Hoffmann
and James, 1986; Cipolla, 1987; Barnett, 1991; Widdowson, 1992; Davies, Gorell, Kline,
and Hsieh, 1992; Bernardt 1995; Carter 1997; J. A. McCarthy, 1998; Byrnes, 1998;
Kadish, 1999; Kern, 2000, 2002; Mantero, 2002; Pfeiffer, 2002).

Although the tribulations analyzed from theoretical standpoints and reported by
the faculties directly involved in the separation are the same, the approaches and
reactions to the problems vastly differ. A typical reaction of literature instructors towards
students’ poor linguistic proficiency is to turn to the previous language-centered courses
that should have served as a “preparation” or “the foundation” for this new literary
curricular chapter. The underlying belief is then that the students’ linguistic development
should be almost complete by the time they undertake the literary enterprise (Carter,
1997; Byrnes and Kord, 2002, p. 37). Linguistic proficiency becomes a prerequisite for
literature, and literature, in turn, becomes a content-based subject revolving around
“loftier” matters than language: writers, works, periods, and the opinion of experts
(Bernhardt, 1995). Thus, class time is spent on advancing lectures, on posing and
responding to questions with pre-established answers, on scrutinizing information about
the author and even on how his/her work should be evaluated, on summarizing the plot,
on the deconstruction of passages, and, eventually, on guided follow-up discussions
meant to “enable” the learner to find the meaning of the literary text, which is the a priori
meaning invoked by expert exegesis and not by the interaction between the learner and
the literary work (Kramsch, 1985; Harper, 1988; Widdowson, 1992; Cook, 1994; Carter,
1997; Parkinson and Thomas, 2000; Mantero, 2002; Schultz, 2002, p. 11; Byrnes and
Kord, 2002, p. 37).). But, habitually, when literature instructors are open to various
interpretations and encourage the learners to find their own meaning, the gap between
the students' linguistic level and the language of the literary text is still too wide, and
more often than not students venture interpretations that are textually and linguistically
difficult to validate. Then, content is used as a “guide” or “model” to “orient” students to
more appropriate exegesis, as linguistic skills are supposed to continue blossoming from
exposure to language from the readings, and from classroom interactions, and as a
result of the learners’ work on their own in literature courses. In addition, the so much
hoped-for analytical skills that will promote students to the next level are expected to
emerge as a byproduct of the assimilation of content (Mantero, 2002, p. 55). On the
other hand, the language-conscious literature professor may address language issues in
the classroom, but this frequently comes in the form of vocabulary and grammatical
repairs, usually at sentence level, to ensure the students’ comprehension of the meaning
of the words and sentences in the reading. However, more often than not, this
“understanding” of the text does not result yet in critical interpretation and original
discussion. Byrnes and Kord (2002) discuss quantity versus quality in terms of how
literature instructors seem more concerned with what the student says rather than how
s/he says it. In that way, it is not unusual for the students and the instructor to revert to
the L1 when broaching “the abstract or interpretive/ analytical domain” to stay in a zone
of comfort for the student (p. 38).

These diverse manifestations of the problem are an indication that the curricular
separation between language and literature is just the first of a series of dichotomies that
are not benefiting foreign language teaching at any level of the curriculum. The
separation of cognition and language, which is central to the bifurcation between
language and literature, underlies other bifurcations such as the critical and the
analytical versus the creative, and language versus content, which is a common
scenario in the standard foreign language curricula. If literature instruction is dominated by a traditional emphasis on content arranged by centuries, historical or philosophical periods, literary movements, and writers' bios, and literary theories, language instruction is characterized by the atomization of language into linguistic units at sentence level that revolve around “a planned sequence of grammatical structures that are exemplified in sample sentences for intensive practice” (Kern, 2000, p. 18). In this hierarchy of difficulty, literature texts would appear in the last positions of these rankings and would be only suitable for advanced learners, if included at all (Byrnes and Kord, 2002, p. 37; Richards and Rodgers, 2001, pp. 10, 58). In addition, the mastery of a language is still conceived of as the segregated mastery of the so-called “skills” (with the usual division between the textual and the oral). Other oppositions such as the division between form and meaning, “input” and “output,” are especially prevalent in mainstream approaches to language teaching. These conventional pedagogies are derived from “standard theories of language development that feature the individual as a generic and autonomous knower using individualistic and inaccessible cognitive processes” (Donato, 2000, p. 28).

A classic example of this type of methodology in foreign language instruction is the one charted by Lee and Van Patten based on Krashen’s Natural Approach, which underscores the role of linguistic input for the creation of a developing system (2003, pp. 154-165, 173-181), and which stresses “communication” understood as the “negotiation of meaning,” the suppression of the L1 and the omission of explicit grammar instruction. Such emphasis on input is analogous to the idea that exposure to literary texts suffices for the continuation of linguistic development in advanced courses. Another attribute of mainstream weak versions of Communicative Language Teaching that have been lately popularized is the contemplation of knowledge as a pre-requisite for communication, which situates the communicative activity in the free production stage of the
presentation, practice and production sequence (PPP), versus a stronger view of CLT in which knowledge is posited as an outcome of communicative activity (Sullivan, 2000, pp. 118-117). This idea of linguistic knowledge as a requirement for communication exudes the same principle that underlies the idea that linguistic proficiency should be a pre-requisite for the study of the complex world of discourse in literary texts. As literature instructors continue assigning this groundwork role to previous language courses, language instructors and students that perceive literature as a type of discourse that is far removed from “real-life” language hope that fewer (if any) literature courses were offered in the program to thus continue recycling linguistic topics of which students never seem to obtain a full understanding in language courses. This is not to say that a specific methodology, such as any of the weak versions of CLT, is at fault for the bifurcation between language and literature, but these reverberating echoes at different curricular moments clearly point to the existence of an ontological and epistemological misconception that will be discussed in the next section.

While the schism between language and literature is fairly detrimental to what should be a harmonious co-existence of and collaboration between language and literature faculties (Mantero, 2002, p. 116; Kern, 2002, p. 22; Pfeiffer, 2002, p. 1; Bernardt, 1995; Barnett, 1991), the full impact of this schism is felt by the learner, who is demanded a type of thinking that is not easily attainable in the standard foreign curriculum. Thus, a long-established cementation of procedures and principles hinders the detection of a number of contradictions lying at the core of current practices: if focus on dualistic conceptualization of meaning that allows its separation from form is privileged in lower-division language courses, and focus on form becomes a synonym for relentless intolerance of error production in intermediate and upper-division language courses, how can it be expected that learners will develop the linguistic skills that are
indispensable for discerning the mimetic, symbiotic interplay of form and meaning that is constitutive of literary discourse? Along the same lines, how can it be expected that learners will be able to tackle discourse when linguistic instruction focuses on the sentence? Thirdly, how can it be expected that students will be able to recognize the craft with which others do things with language, when our curriculum inhibits learners’ own exploration and creativity on the altar of “authentic,” “real-life” communication in basic courses, and of accuracy in later stages? More importantly, there is no real raison d’être for continuing to perpetuate this division between language and literature in our programs (other than convention), when there is sufficient evidence that learning a language does not stop where the literary courses start, and when language instruction based on abstract linguistic inventories still continue yielding typical linguistic plateaus that are unsatisfactory to both faculties.

More explorations that integrate language and literature teaching are needed. The fact that typically no teacher training is offered to future literature instructors whereas teacher training for language instructors is ubiquitous is further evidence of how each discipline is perceived as having different objects of study (Muyskens, 1983; Bretz and Persin, 1987; Barnett, 1991; DeJean, 1998; Pfeiffer, 2002; Bernhardt, 2002). However, there are remarkable exceptions to conventional curricula; some of them enjoy institutional recognition, others emerge from more discreet and often anonymous efforts in different programs. The Department of German in Georgetown University is the most prominent example with Heidi Byrnes and Hiram H. Maxim as the coordinators of a unique college-level project entitled “Developing Multiple Literacies,” in which language, literature, history and culture are fused throughout the four-year undergraduate genre-based curriculum. Impacted by Heidi Byrnes’ work, other authors talk of similar advances, such as Schultz on the French Intermediate Program at University of
California at Berkeley (see Scott & Tucker, 2002). Claire Woods at the University of South Australia presents us with a course based on creative interventions to literary texts along the lines of Rob Pope’s work. This course is presented in Woods (2001) as containing all the components needed in a curriculum that would link the creative and the critical. Similarly, an initiative in Great Britain called the Language in the National Curriculum (LINC) project is an in-service teacher education project to make genre-based materials accessible to teachers, and to disseminate a vision of language that is socially situated and embedded in a culture and its institutions, more in accordance with the new National Curriculum. The present dissertation considers both a theoretical model and an empirical study based on that model for overcoming the present dilemma. The model will be fleshed out in detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

As to the empirical aspect of this dissertation, a study was carried out through implementation of a course on Spanish advanced grammar and composition taught by the researcher at The Pennsylvania State University. The course normally serves as a bridge course between intermediate language instruction and literature and more advanced language courses, and is compulsory for all Spanish majors. Although most of the research literature has paid attention to foreign language instruction (especially, English, French and German as a second languages), as well as literature instruction in English as L1, more empirical investigation is needed on the teaching of foreign literatures through language, especially in large departments with multiple sections, where there is a tendency to have standardized syllabi. Therefore, my purpose in this study is both to propose a general solution based on the already existing literature, and to concretize ways in which language-based literature instruction in a foreign language can happen. The research questions that this investigation addresses are the following:
1. How can literature be taught through language? By teaching literature through language, I mean moving beyond solving problems of vocabulary or grammatical structures for the analysis of literary texts. Teaching literature through language is about teaching literature as language-in-use, or discourse, in a way that the schisms discussed above are dissolved.

2. How does a type of instruction based on the teaching of literature through language or as discourse impact the students’ linguistic development and awareness of language?

3. How does language-based literature instruction affect the students’ attitudes towards literature and language learning?

In the next epigraph, I will discuss the history of the divide between language and literature that has affected language departments. In the second place, I will lay out the main lines of investigation in the field of language-based literature instruction. Third, I will provide an overview of the dissertation by chapter.

1.2 The history of the separation

All our science, measured against reality, is primitive and childlike--and yet it is the most precious thing we have.

(Albert Einstein)

The study of language and literature was not always separated: on the contrary, it went hand in hand for many centuries. The reason to study classic languages in former times was to be able to read the canonical works of the great Latin and Greek authors through a grammar-translation “approach” to language teaching (Schultz, 2002, p. 5).
This continued as a tradition for other languages and literatures until the first signs of the Reform Movement inspired by language teaching specialists and linguists in the 19th century (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, pp. 3-7). However, the study of literary texts in the grammar-translation tradition was surface learning based on a word-level and sentence-level analysis and on the translation of texts, which were dealt with as finished, closed, untouchable products.

Kramsch and Kramsch (2000) bring much insight into how various domestic and international affairs throughout different periods of the 20th century in America molded the current separation between language and literature instruction. As these authors claim, before World War I the study of languages was a way of gaining access to the literary cannon and was associated with the “aesthetic education of the few” (Kramsch and Kramsch, 2000, p. 568). However, by the end of the war, with the democratization of American life, the development of reading skills for “the large mass of poorly educated children of immigrants” was a much bigger concern (p. 554). The Coleman Report in 1929, which argued that teaching reading was the most effective way of approaching foreign language instruction, consequently placed great emphasis on literacy no longer coupled with literature. This switch to reading as a goal in and of itself in mass education marked the downfall of the supremacy of literature in language studies, which was associated with the educated elite. Thus, from the different approaches to reading (reading through translation, through speaking, and through strategies), reading through translation did not gain much support, and the Direct Method replaced a Grammar-Translation tradition (p. 560). From 1929 to 1945, literature, as it became supplementary reading material, served the purpose of moral and social education, and helped fight against US isolationism (p. 560).
Between 1945 and 1957, literature was contemplated as content and entertainment. The success of the Audiolingual Method, based on the behaviorist principle that learning is the result habit formation and reinforcement, responded to another change of focus in language studies, this time from reading to speaking, which left literature for the advanced levels and “the rising influence of linguistics on the acquisition of foreign languages at the lower levels” (Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000, p. 563). On the other side of the Atlantic, this switch in focus from the written to the spoken, in an attempt to emulate the child’s language learning processes, had taken place in some countries of Northern Europe in the 19th century as a result of increased opportunities for communication among Europeans (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, pp. 7, 9). Curiously enough, the tendencies that were associated in the 20th century and even nowadays with innovative, cutting-edge (versus traditional, conservative) foreign language pedagogies had already emerged as early as the 1880s during the Reform Movement in Europe. The study and analysis of the sound system received a strong infusion of scientific rigor in 1886 with the creation of the International Phonetic Association (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 9). The linguists of the Reform Movement (an attempt to revitalize the discipline linguistics and improve the teaching of modern languages), such as Henry Sweet in English, Wilhelm Viëtor in Germany, and Paul Passy in France, placed greater more emphasis on speech over the written word as the primary form of language (ibid.), and established the foundation for the Natural and the Direct Methods. These two methods became widely known in the United States thanks to language academies opened in some parts of the country and classroom textbooks published at the end of the 19th century.

What began in the 19th century as a reaction to the grammar-translation tradition, continued in the 20th century with the advent of the oral proficiency movement and
communicative methodologies, which discarded literature for an emphasis on speaking skills in “real-life” practical situations (Schultz, 1995, p. 3). The ideas underlying such discrimination are, first, that the language of literature texts is governed by completely different principles from the language used in “real-life practical situations,” and, secondly, that written language is not part of “communication.” The grounds for refuting both ideas are considered later in the present chapter, and in Chapters 2 and 3. This issue of creating a natural setting in the classroom also ties into the question of what constitutes “authenticity” in language learning/teaching, which is extensively discussed by Van Lier (1996) and Guy Cook (2000). The issue of “authentic” language use in the classroom also ties into Vygotsky’s (1987) discussion of the development of scientific concepts in the school setting, which will be also dealt with in the next two chapters.

Between the two World Wars literature was placed on a second tier in language teaching in the United States; then in the period during 1957 through 1979 and the Cold War, according to Kramsch and Kramsch (2000), literature was valued as humanist practice, but was not an educational priority in a world at the mercy of the arms race (p. 565). This disengagement from the “practical” world was consolidated by the creation of the National Defense Act (1958) and the organization of language teachers under the umbrella of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) created in 1966. Learning languages was useful for defense, and despite the fact that generations of literature professors and students continued to be trained during this period, the literature pedagogues could not persuade language teachers and those in charge of national security of the importance of literature for “thinking historically, mythically, and with a refined awareness of the resources of language to express eternal truths” (p. 565). Later on, in 1979, the Presidential Commission, established by then President Carter, emphasized the importance of foreign languages for national security,
which stressed the preoccupation in the United States with the concept of "communicative competence" (p. 567).

According to Kramsch and Kramsch, what we can observe in the periods described above are changes that have not only affected literature, but also "liberal humanistic education, the relative value of nomothetic (experimental, positivistic) versus hermeneutic (interpretive) forms of knowledge, and the tectonic shifts in the disciplines" (p. 568). With the rise of the social sciences and the linguistic turn in the humanities, language study became associated with the social sciences, which "has kept language study insulated from the post-structuralist trends in literature and from the larger epistemological debates surrounding postmodernism that were paradoxically brought about by the linguistic turn in the humanities" (p. 568; Berman, 1994). Pachler and Allford (2000, p. 237), and Allford and Pachler (1998, pp. 2-3) discuss how the second-class status of literature in the modern foreign language curriculum is partly attributable to the utilitarian view of languages, which generates departments with great numbers and "real" specific pragmatic needs. As the authors point out, in the last fifteen or so years, the turn has been towards language courses with a vocational or applied orientation serving the demands of the labor market. Again, what underlies this argument is the idea that the language in literary texts is not "real," that by studying literature it is not possible to be proficient in the everyday use of the language, and that the study of language can be separated not only from the study of literary texts, but also from the study of other content areas.

In relation to the separation between language and cognition that has been pointed to throughout this whole introduction, Christie (1985) discusses how there have been tendencies, especially in societies that form part of the so-called Western world, to disassociate language and experience, and to consider language as something neutral,
when language is actually not only part of experience, “but intimately involved in the manner in which we construct and organise experience” (p. v). Byrnes and Kord (2002, pp. 35-43) also analyze what they identify as “a long-standing tradition in the Western thought” of separating language and knowledge. From Platonism to Rationalism to Kant’s Transcendental Idealism, knowledge seemed to have existence of its own in a pre-existing realm. The human being attempted to have access to “reality,” which implied an estrangement between human beings and the world in which they lived. Thus, the epistemological and ontological antimony was served. According to Byrnes and Kord, this separation has been manifest in philosophies and practices of language, and has consequently molded pedagogies and educational practices. Chomskian linguistics was very well suited to “twentieth century interpretations of the nature of scientific inquiry” (p.39), and continued to promote “objectivist and value-neutral metaphors for understanding language as a system” (p. 39), a system that, in this model, was independent of culture, knowledge, and the human experience. In this view, language is viewed as a decontextualized entity, “rather neutral, merely serving to ‘carry’ the fruits of experience,” “a kind of ‘conduit’, subservient to experience” (Christie, 1985, p. v).

Likewise, nowadays there are prevailing tendencies to teach language in such an abstract way that it could even be thought, from standard teaching practices and textbooks, that language has an existence in itself outside of the context of its production, detached from the institutions of the culture where it emerges, separated from the meanings and functions intended by speakers, independent of texts, genres, and discourses. Christie, discussing how “theoretically ill-founded” myths about language have affected language teaching, states that “[t]he most serious and confusing of these myths are those which would suggest we can dissociate language from
meaning –form from function, or form from ‘content’. In that way, teaching a language becomes teaching language rules (Christie, 1985, p. v).

In regard to the above-mentioned disassociations, the following section lays the theoretical foundation for this study. By using these theoretical venues, I propose a way out of the dichotomies that have been pointed to so far: reality, knowledge and language; the literal, the literary and culture; mind, language and institutions.

1.3 Main lines of investigation in language-based literature instruction

This dissertation is grounded in two main theoretical frameworks: Sociocultural Theory, a theory of mind that arose in the former Soviet Union, and Systemic-Functional linguistics, a theory of language developed in the British-Australian tradition. This dissertation also draws from research in cognitive science and cognitive linguistics (e.g. Gibbs, 1994; Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 1999; Langacker, 1990, 2005; and Turner, 1996). Last but not least, it is informed by the findings of a group of researchers who have specifically addressed the issue of the fusion of language and literature instruction in a considerable number of theoretical works and curricular projects (e.g. Byrnes, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008; Carter, 1997; Carter and Long, 1991; Carter and Long, 1987; Carter and McRae, 1996; Carter and Nash, 1990; McCarthy and Carter, 1994; Pope, 1995, 2002; and Simpson, 1997).

1.3.1 The frameworks: Sociocultural Theory and Systemic-Functional Linguistics

Vygotsky, the father of Sociocultural Theory, constructed a sociohistorical approach to psychology as a reaction to the split between Wundt’s mentalistic theory
and Pavlovian reflexology (Cole and Scribner, 1978, p. 5). In this way, Vygotsky proposed a solution to the dichotomies in psychology between the mental and the phenomenological by seeking a unified, “comprehensible approach that would make possible description and explanation of higher psychological functions in terms of acceptable natural science” [emphasis in the original] (Cole and Scribner, 1978, p. 5). The Russian psychologist argued that our uniquely human cognition results from our interactions within the social milieu, thus founding his explanation of consciousness “in socially meaningful activity” (Dixon-Krauss, 1996, p. 9). Fifty years later, Vygotsky’s theory of human development has major applications for the solution of practical problems, and especially in the area of education (Dixon-Krauss, 1996; Leontiev and Luria, 1968), and cognitive psychology (John-Steiner and Souberman, 1978, p. 133).

One notion in Sociocultural Theory is the concept of semiotic mediation. Vygotsky argued that the human mind does not have direct contact with the material world, but is mediated by socially constructed signs and tools. These signs and tools, such as music, art, numbers and language, are passed and modified from one generation to the next within cultures. One of the most important symbolic tools is language, which mediates man’s activity in the world (Lantolf, 2000, pp. 1, 2). Humans appropriate these culturally constructed artifacts or tools as they engage in activity; therefore, as a child learns a language, s/he also appropriates the culture in which these tools and artifacts have been generated and transformed over generations: “Human mental functioning is related to the cultural, institutional, and historical settings in which human action is mediated by tools made available through participation in these societal contexts” (Donato, 2000, pp. 27-28, drawing on Wertsch, Tulviste, Hagstrom, 1993, and Wertsch, 1998).
On the other hand, the main exponent of Systemic-Functional linguistics is Halliday. This framework originated with the work of Bronislaw Malinowski, an anthropologist, who built a theory of the context of situation and context of culture as he observed and tried to explain the activities of the speakers of Kiriwinian from Trobriand Islands (Halliday, 1985b, p. 5-7). Malinowski’s notion of the cultural background of language was taken by Firth (1950), who created a concept of the context that could be incorporated into a general linguistic theory (Halliday, 1985b, p. 8). Dell Hymes (1967) expanded Firth’s description of context in his work in the ethnography of communication (Halliday, 1985b, p. 9).

With this notion of language going beyond “what is said and written” to the contexts where texts unfold (Halliday, 1985b, p. 5), Systemic-Functional also overcomes this divide between language and the cultural context. This framework conceives of language as a culturally embedded form of meaning making, or, in Halliday’s words, a “social semiotic” (Halliday, 1978) through which humans build reality or experience (Christie, 1985, p. vii).

Knowledge is transmitted in social contexts, through relationships, like those of parent and child, or teacher and pupil, or classmates, that are defined in the value systems and ideology of the culture. And the words that are exchanged in these contexts get their meaning from activities in which they are embedded, which again are social activities with social agencies and goals.

Halliday (1985b, p. 5)

Therefore, under the Functional framework, social activity is viewed “as meaning we negotiate through texts” (Martin and Rose, 2003, p. 1). Texts might be oral or written, a word, a traffic sign or a novel, but, in any case, a text is “a unified whole” (Halliday and

---

2 In Systemic-Functional linguistics the distinction between context of situation and context of culture continues, but has received criticism from other systemic-functional linguists, such as Van Dijk, who has criticized the lack of mental interface between the social use of language and text. Therefore, according to Van Dijk contexts should not be defined as social situations but as mental representations or models constructed by interlocutors that participate in that situation (Van Dijk, 1999).
Hassan, 1976, p. 1) that is “bigger than clauses and smaller than a culture” (Martin and Rose, 2003, p. 3). Therefore, instead of viewing language as an autonomous syntactical and morphological structural system, in Systemic-Functional linguistics, “language is interpreted as a system of meanings, accompanied by forms through which the meanings can be realized” (Halliday, 1985a, p. xiv). Therefore, rather than having “norms” in a language, in systemic theory we have “meaning as choice, by which language, or any other semiotic system, is interpreted as networks of interlocking options” (Halliday, 1985a, p. xiv), where the forms of a language are “a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves” (Halliday, 1985a, p. xiv). This makes text a semantic unit, not a grammatical one, with meanings being realized through wordings (Halliday, 1985a, p. xvii).

Conceptualizing language as socially situated use and as mediating tool means that language is “a way of knowing and a way of being that is historical in origin and directly related to social action” (Byrnes and Kord, 2002, p. 40), which has immediate implications for the present study. First, the separation of knowledge and language, and language and culture is built on a fallacy, since, being a member of a community of practice and having the ‘knowledge’ to function in this community entails being literate in the discourses and genres through and by which that knowledge is constructed and mediated in that community (Kramsch, 2002; Byrnes and Kord, 2002; Wells, 1999; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Bourdieu, 1991). Secondly, language instruction should focus not on the code and the sentence, as has traditionally been the case, but on communication and the text (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Breen and Candlin, 1980; Kern, 2002, p. 19), as “social contexts are realized as texts which are realized as sequences of clauses” (Martin and Rose, 2003, p. 5). Or alternatively, our instructional focus should be on discourse: ‘text plus the social and cognitive processes involved in its realization as an
expressive communicative act’ (Kern, 2002, p. 19). Therefore, literature presents us with the opportunity of studying discourse (i.e. language in use, which is a “unified whole,” and historically and socially situated), which in turn entails that the study of literature requires the inclusion of, not only the text and the creator of the text, but also the reader. Third, in order to be able to interpret a literary text, the learner has to be presented with a theory of the wordings through which meanings are constructed in a text. However, and taking another construct from Sociocultural Theory, that of activity, this meaning making process has to be an activity-based and process-oriented “authoring” experience (Kozulin, 1998, pp. 141, 145, 151; Daniels, 2001, p. 126). For Kozulin (1998) literature is a psychological tool and, thus, he claims that knowledge, as in literary creative processes, should be an ‘authoring’ experience rather than a ‘reproductive’ experience (Kozulin, 1998, p. 151), which is in tune with Carter’s activity and process principles. According to Kozulin, then, the ‘authoring’ creative processes are necessary to educate learners in the ‘unknown future’ and should also be applied to the sciences. This ‘authoring’ principle underlines also language-mediated inquiry-based instruction (Wells, 1999). In connection with Kozulin’s idea of the ‘unknown future’, G. Cook talks of literature as ‘adult play’, that allows us to “try out – to play with- new and unreal worlds” (1997, p. 240). Bruner, also fusing the creative and the cognitive, speaks of literature as an instrument of both freedom and reason (Bruner, 1986, p. 159). The experience of ‘authoring’ is in line with Vygotsky’s view of the aesthetic experience as labor and as constructive experience, rather than as mere perception, for just enjoyment, which may lead to mere passive esthetic experiences (Vygotsky, 1997 [1926], pp. 241-271). Chapters 2 and 4 will further discuss the previous constructs of Sociocultural Theory, and other topics such as play, literacy, concept formation, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and art in more detail.
1.3.2 Mind literature: brains, tropes, and something called reality.

Kozulin (1998) proposes a literary model for sociocultural psychology on the grounds that internalized literary modalities serve as mediators of human experience (p. 130). This notion of literature as a psychological tool also relates to Bruner’s idea of narratives as mediators of human experience (Daniels, 2001, p. 25-26, 101-102, 125-127). This concept of the mind as mediated by literary modalities is in accordance with a third line of investigation that helps to support the argument that literature and language cannot be distinguished by purely formal features. If the mind itself is essentially literary and is mediated by literary modalities, the literal and the ‘objective’ cannot be assigned to common language, and the figurative and the ‘subjective’ to only certain discourses, such as those ascribed to literature.

Along the same lines, Raymond Gibbs and Mark Turner advocate the role of ‘poetic imagination’ in cognitive science. Turner argues that the principles of the mind are literary, i.e. we think through stories, projections, parables and metaphors, with story being the most basic principle of our mind. Turner (1996) explores parable as ‘the root of the human mind –of thinking, knowing, acting, creating, and plausibly even of speaking’ (p. i). In this light, a reassessment of “authentic” language use is in order. Current pedagogical practices use the concept of authentic language to sustain arguments in favor of so-called “meaning-focused” practices, to neglect literary discourse in the lower levels of instruction and consequently to sever any connection between literature and language and between the learner and the world.

Agreeing with Turner, Gibbs also argues that human cognition is shaped by poetic processes such as metaphor, metonymy, irony, and other tropes, which are not "distortions of literal mental thought but constitute basic schemes by which people
conceptualize their experience and the external world” (Gibbs, 1994, p. 1). Central to this vision of the mind is Lakoff and Johnson’s work on metaphor. According to these authors, we conceptualize our experience of the world through a system of culturally elaborated metaphors. Therefore, metaphor is not a question of exceptional language – the human conceptual system is metaphorical (1980, p.3). In this way, the role of metaphor as mediating tools for learners in instructional settings has been studied by numerous investigators (Cameron, 2002, 2003; Mayer, 1993; Petrie and Oshlag, 1993; Green, 1993; Sticht, 1993).

Metaphor is one of our most important tools for trying to comprehend partially what cannot be comprehended totally: our feelings, aesthetic experiences, moral practices, and spiritual awareness... Truth is relative to understanding, which means that there are no absolute objective truths about the world. This does not mean that there are no truths; it means that truth is relative to our conceptual system, which is grounded in, and constantly tested by, our experiences and those of other members of our culture in our daily interactions with other people and with our physical and cultural environments (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p.193).

The issue of the figurative qualities of the mind will be expanded in Chapter 2.

This conceptualization of the mind and language overcomes the mind-world dualism that has plagued the social sciences for centuries, and in particular psychologically based theories of human development. With an understanding of the literary as encompassing much more than what we traditionally assume as the domain of literary texts, the next line of investigation concretizes a role for literature in foreign language programs.
1.3.3 Applying the theories: literature as discourse

There is a group of investigators from Great Britain (Carter, Long, Walter Nash, McRae, Simpson, Brumfit, Candlin, Cook), the United States (Byrnes, Maxim, Pfeiffer, Kramsch, Scott, Tucker, Barnes-Carol, Berhnardt) and Australia (Pope, Woods, Paltridge) who consider that stylistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, cultural studies, and literary criticism and theory should play complementary roles in the study of literature. These authors have criticized the traditional literature classroom, with its focus on content and expert exegesis, and divorced from a systematic, discursive view of language. The crux of the arguments made by these authors for the fusion of literature and language teaching is that creativity is an inherent characteristic of language, including both literature and everyday language. Therefore, there are no specific formal features that distinguish literary discourse from common language; both should be placed on the same continuum (Brumfit & Carter, 1986; Carter, 2004; Carter, 1997; Carter and McRae, 1996; Carter and Nash, 1990; Fowler, 1986; Simpson, 1991; Widdowson, 1975, 1992).

According to the viewpoint of the aforementioned authors, the goal of instructional programs should be to make learners aware of the consequences for meaning that different linguistic choices enact. In order to create that type of awareness, it is not enough to present learners with whole texts, which we then decompose for commentary and analysis. In order for an approach to literature to lead to conscious awareness of how meaning is constructed through language in texts (which would fuse both linguistic and analytical skills), it is necessary to implement a pedagogy that is activity-based and process-oriented, which implies that students experience the process of constructing a (literary) text through language. This entails that reconstruction
precedes analysis, and that language precedes content (Carter, 1997). “Reconstruction” is creative, language-based activity that allows learners to manipulate texts that are presented to them either incomplete or altered in some other way. However, the end of “reconstruction” is not “getting the right answer” by recreating the original work, but to understand how texts mean by exploring different versions and possibilities. Reconstruction allows learners to have a personal authoring experience with literature by affording the exploration of linguistic choices and their effects in discourse. In contrast, analysis refers to practices such as close reading, and commentary, which depart from the complete, untouchable original text. This experience with the literary work is usually the only one that is afforded to the learner in the traditional literature classroom. Less than creative, deconstruction may turn into a merely reproductive experience if the student, unable to create his/her own meaning in the text, resorts to expert exegesis. Even if analysis does have a role and a place in literature instruction, the argument that is made here, however, is that it should follow reconstruction.

In a process-oriented methodology, the important thing is not the knowledge, but the knowing; not the meaning, but the meaning-making; not the interpretation, but the interpreting. An activity-based, process-oriented pedagogy of literature can happen with the exploration of formal choices and meaning consequences only when the literary text is left unfinished, malleable to the learner, who will then enjoy sufficient room for linguistic exploration and creativity. In the “authoring” experience of reconstructing, manipulating, transforming, performing, the learner becomes aware of the consequences of different linguistic choices, first made by him/her, and, then, made by others (Carter, 1997; Carter and McRae, 1996; Carter and Long, 1991; Carter, Walker and Brumfit, 1989; Brumfit and Carter, 1986; Widdowson, 1975, 1992). Carter (1997) claims that learners become more aware of textual features when they have to choose
among choices to complete a text, when they have to guess what will happen next based on what appeared earlier on, when they have to compare a text to another, or when they have to transform it into a different type of text, genre or register. Some examples of these activities (cloze procedure, contrasting similar or divergent texts, transforming one type of text into another, predicting what happens next, ranking, guided rewriting, ordering jumbled texts, lexical chains, jigsaw reading, matching, creating elastic sentences, producing or acting a text out, etc) can be found in the works of Carter, Goddard, Reah, Sanger, and Bowring, 2001; Carter, 1997; McCarthy and Carter, 1994; Carter and Long, 1987, 1991. Chapter 5 will illustrate these activities in teaching units.

This “challenging and changing” of the text is what Pope (1995, p. 1) calls “textual intervention.” The author proposes microchanges, where intervention entails changes at word level, word order or at the level of syntax. There are also macrochanges, which are interventions at the level of text and genre. They could be exercises such as writing a parody of a specific text, or converting a story into a play, or into a film script. Some of the most important textual interventions are re-centering, re-genreing; creating a parallel text, an alternative text, a counter-text; exercises in paraphrase, imitation, parody, adaptation, hybridization, and collage. Pope also proposes interventional follow-ups or assessments such as Vive Voce (read aloud or perform), collaborative Vive Voce, poster presentation, and folio. Chapters 4 and 5 will illustrate and expand on the language-based activities and approaches to the teaching of literature that have been mentioned above as an answer to the first research question.

Byrnes and Maxim have published numerous papers on the undergraduate curriculum implemented in the German Department of Georgetown University. This curriculum fuses literature, language, history and content areas. Although most content-
course, advanced-composition, and literature professors would insist that they teach language in their courses too, that contention emerges most of the time from an additive perception of (abstract, sentence-level, decontextualized) language, (facts-oriented) culture and (product-based) content, instead of an understanding of the dialectical relationship between language, knowledge and culture. The uniqueness of the “Developing Multiple Literacies” project lies in the fusion of content and language instruction throughout the entire undergraduate curriculum through task-based, genre-derived pedagogies, which are, thus, rooted in socially situated language use, or discourse. The underlying principle is that learning a language involves becoming literate in the written and oral genres that make participation in a culture possible, which dissolves the predominant false dualism that is established between language and cognition in the vast majority of foreign language programs.

1.4 The present study and organization of the dissertation

In responding to the three research questions posed above, the present study is divided into a theoretical and an empirical component. The next three chapters cast a theoretical light on the issue of the current segregation of literature and language in some frequently employed versions of the foreign language curriculum.

Chapter 2 describes the problem of the separation of literature and language teaching and learning across the curriculum and the nature of classroom interaction into more detail. This chapter also reveals how this schism is connected with other traditional schisms, such as the separation of meaning and form, content and language, the oral and the textual, authentic and non-authentic language uses. In addition, this chapter
reviews the formal characteristics associated with literature and everyday language, thus, laying the foundation for a redefinition of both concepts in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 reformulate the concepts of language and literature, and, consequently, the ways of teaching literature and language, as they present an alternative to the current sentence-based study of language (or total absence of any type of linguistic instruction) in literature courses. Chapter 3 presents new ways of defining language and of thinking about literary discourse, other than the traditional ones that underlie the bifurcation. The chapter draws from the venues presented in this chapter, as well as from other theories for a definition of literature.


Chapter 5 presents specific activity types and teaching units from the empirical study at The Pennsylvania State University, as well as alternatives to traditional content-regulated procedures of organizing literature instruction (e.g. according to authors, movements, history periods...). These language-based activities are derived from activity-based principles for teaching literature proposed by authors such as Carter (1997), Carter and Long (1987), Carter and McCarthy (1994), Carter, Goddard, Reah, Sanger and Bowring (2001), Byrnes (2006), Byrnes, Weger-Guntharp and Sprang (2006), Pope (1995, 2002), Widdowson (1975, 1992), Simpson (1997), Mc Rae (1996),
inter alia. The instructional units are designed for the teaching a short story and a poem. An additional instructional unit for teaching drama is presented in Appendix Y.

Chapter 6 begins the discussion of the empirical portion of the study. The chapter describes the literature-through-language course, in which a unified language-based literature course was implemented. The chapter also describes the design of the study, the materials, the assignments and instruction provided to the students, as well as the sources of data, and the data analysis methodology.

Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 analyze the data from the study. Chapters 7 and 8 analyze the history and the impact of the literature-through-language pedagogy on the students’ notion of text, including topics such as choice of genre, shared generic conventions, textual frames, schematic structure, repetition, and beliefs about (written) communication and literature. Chapter 9 focuses on the history and development of aspect. Although students’ attitudinal analysis is not separated from the linguistic analysis in Chapters 7, 8 and 9, Chapter 10 more specifically focuses on the dialectical relationship between students’ linguistic development or resistance to the literature-through-language pedagogy and their personalities, histories and attitudes towards language, language learning, and literature. The data sources for the analysis are compositions, composition interviews, composition learning logs, portfolio daily logs, portfolio weekly journals, literary interviews, as well as a set of follow-up interviews with some of the participants a semester after the study.

The final chapter, Chapter 11, discusses the conclusions, findings and implications of the study for the integration of second/foreign language and literature instruction against the most recent landscape of theoretical and empirical research in the field. The chapter also analyzes the limitations of the study and suggests possible venues for future research.
Chapter 2

A reflection on current praxis of language and literature and the underlying views

Chapter 1 analyzed how the schism between knowledge and language underlies the bifurcation between language and literature instruction in the traditional foreign language curriculum. This chapter reviews other dichotomies that lie at the core of this divide, such as the division between meaning and form, between authentic and non-authentic language use, sources or tools and results, and between the oral and the textual. The second section of this chapter is devoted to the most critical of these divides: the schism between literary language and everyday language on the grounds of formal features.

2.1 A torn curriculum: more schisms underlying the division between language and literature instruction

2.1.1 Meaning versus form

This [Composición Práctica] is an advanced-level composition text that adopts a practical, rather than literary, approach to composition. It focuses on the types of writing students would be expected to produce in their everyday personal, business, and academic communications - from simple notes to term papers - and is highly flexible, allowing professors to present units out of sequence. All the examples of prose writing are taken from actual records such as notes, ads, letters, memoranda, newspaper and magazine articles.

(Editorial review on Composición Práctica, a textbook by González, T. and Farrell; italics added)

A division between meaning and form in the curriculum contributes to the relegation of the study of literature to only the most advanced curricular stages where a
focus on form is pursued. We have seen in Chapter 1 how the division between meaning and form does not bear in a Systemic-Functional vision of language, which it is about “semantically driven grammar,” not a grammar capable of looking at “syntactic rules divorced from considerations of meaning and social purpose” (Christie, 1985, p. vii).

Thus,

Meaning is realized in language (in the form of text), which is thus shaped or patterned in response to the context of situation in which it is used. To study language then is to concentrate upon exploring how it is systematically patterned towards important social ends. The linguistic theory is itself also a social theory, for it proposes, firstly, that it is in the nature of human behaviour to build reality and/or experience through complex semiotic processes, and secondly, that the principal semiotic system available to humans is their language. In this sense, to study language is to explore some of the most important and pervasive of the processes by which human beings build their world.

(Christie, 1985, p. vii)

In this way, choices are not gratuitous.

The fact that a poster on the window of a local Christian store reads “Every fourth baby dies from abortion” and not “One in four pregnancies ends in abortion” involves a conscious choice of forms guided by the meanings that emerge from sociocultural context of the language user. In the first message, abortion is constructed as a disease or malady by the collocation with the verb phrase “dies from.” Among the possible words to name a creature at that stage of prenatal development such as “egg,” “fetus,” “embryo,” etc., the word “baby” was chosen (accompanied by pictures of four babies, one of which was blurred as if disappearing) with the consequence that then the creature is considered as a complete human being. Additionally, it is not only the term “baby” that bestows post-gestational qualities to the egg, embryo or fetus, but also the choice of the verb “dies,” which results in the implication that there was life already, probably, from the moment of conception. Intertextuality plays a major role in the construction of meaning in
this message as well; the statistical information ("Every fourth baby") and the
arrangement of the proposition ("Every fourth baby dies from") reminds us of vaccination
calendar advertisements and children’s health care ads: "Every fourth baby suffers from
allergic reactions to …," "Every fourth baby is the victim of parental negligence" … It
reminds us, too, of commercials asking for solidarity with the less privileged: “Every
fourth person in the world dies from illness that is curable or can be prevented,” etc. The
consequence for this chosen form that is reminiscent of other texts is that abortion is
seen as something that should be prevented. Abortion as constructed in this poster is
similar to a disease that needs to be eradicated. Conceptualized as a calamity that
befalls babies, abortion results from negligence, social apathy and inadequate
measures, just like other diseases. In this way, connections between culture, ideology,
form and meaning become relevant for the meaning-making process; for example, a
"paraphrased" proposition, such as “Three in four pregnancies are brought to term,”
could not replace the original message on the same poster without a radical change of
meaning. However, culture, ideologies, forms, and meanings seem to be severed and
compartmentalized throughout the different stages of the conventional foreign language
curriculum, rather than being dialectically interconnected as they actually are in human
communication.

Kern (2002), Kramsch (2000), J. A. McCarthy (1998), Bernhardt (1995), and
Barnett (1991), among others, have reported on the typical curricular gap between the
lower and the upper division courses at university level based on a separation between
focus on meaning and focus on form. According to Kern, because of the proficiency
movement originated in the 1980s, beginning and intermediate courses are typically
more concerned with more pragmatic aspects of language use by means of which the
students are supposed to be able to “communicate their everyday needs, thoughts, and
feelings in interpersonal contexts” (2002, p. 20). A strong focus on writing is usually reserved for intermediate and advanced courses, while the emphasis in the beginning courses is on oral communication and social interaction. In addition, at the beginning and intermediate levels, the class format allows for collaborative work and avoids comments on form to cater for to the language learner’s emotional wellbeing and self-image in the classroom.

After these learner-centered initial stages in the traditional curriculum, goals typically change abruptly in the upper-level courses and gravitate towards a more scholarly orientation that seeks “to sharpen learners’ analytic skills, to improve their ability to express their ideas formally, and to enrich their cultural and literary sensibilities” (Kern, 2002, p. 21). As far as language is concerned, if at the lower and intermediate levels methodologies tend to place more emphasis on what is said rather than on how it is said, at the upper-level instruction becomes more formal and turns the spotlight on the appropriateness of linguistic forms. Then, in literature-focused courses, students are usually abruptly faced with the need for self-editing and self-correction in oral presentations, and in papers, whereas in previous courses corrective feedback and focus on form had been not been so intense in order to make an emotionally supportive environment for the language learner. But at the level of content courses the type of linguistic feedback that the student typically receives is often remedial, not systematic; it usually focuses on vocabulary and sentential structures rather than on discourse strategies, and is more often driven by the association of linguistic proficiency to lack of errors resulting from a view of language as the knowledge of constraints rather than by the conceptualization of language as a rich resource of creative choices with consequences for meaning.

Leontiev (1981) otherwise held that a certain degree of “performative stress” is needed for motivated activity.
Van Lier (1996) talks about “periodic pendular swings” with regard to the question of emphasis on grammar or form (p. 209), and how, for example, most proponents of Communicative Language Teaching and Whole Language have been criticized for not paying adequate attention to form with the expectation that it will resolve itself with the use of language in a meaningful context (p. 209). The current prevalent emphasis on meaning may not only be the result of the changing linguistic needs of society in the increasing complexity of international communications that mistakenly defines literature as an “unpractical” and “life-unlike” type of discourse. This emphasis on meaning is also a reaction to more formal, literature-oriented language instruction, which is now associated with the reactionary and the traditional, as was explained in Chapter 1. Because of this, the emphasis on meaning over form is associated with methodologies that claim to focus on “communication” that emerged as a reaction to the Grammar-Translation tradition and the Audiolingual Method. Carter (1990) notes that language teachers that shy away from a focus on form, on grammar, usually assume that:

1. Teaching grammar or about grammar would necessarily involve a return to old-style grammar teaching with the imposition of rules regulating the individual’s creativity with language.

2. Learning about grammar does not lead to enhanced language competence and should not therefore be undertaken.

3. Only the more academically advanced students can discuss patterns of grammar explicitly. If we do this, we foster a kind of cultural elitism.

4. Issues of language must enter our consciousness in the way that our mother tongue is first acquired, implicitly, obliquely and unconsciously.

(Carter, 1990, p. 107)
Similarly, Cook (1997) criticizes the fact that meaning-focused methodologies are based on two premises that establish, as “an item of faith,” that “authentic” and “natural” language is best for language learning, and that “authentic/natural language is primarily practical and purposeful, focused upon meaning rather than on form” (1997, p. 224). The first question would be whether these methodologies are actually focusing on meaning if they are able to establish such a dichotomy. Long’s distinction between focus on form and focus on forms (1991, p. 45-46) is a useful one here. Focus on forms (not on form) involves teaching procedures directed at particular grammar and vocabulary items. On the other hand, focus on form, according to the author, refers to the allocation of attention to formal elements of language as needed in tasks with a prevailing focus on meaning. Despite the claims of current methodologies that their focus is on meaning, it would seem that standard syllabi based on textbooks containing lists of discreet grammatical items show that a focus on forms, using Long’s terminology, is still prevalent. In turn, focus on meaning seems to have been reified as a short-lived allowance for students’ inaccuracies in the early stages of the curriculum for the sake of fluency and an incentive for participation. Thus, meaning- overridden focus on form does not seem to be taking place in the standard foreign language classroom. Neither does focus on meaning, as the idea of lists of discreet formal items orchestrating the contents of the foreign language syllabus seems to be the rule rather than the exception.

A second question with regard to the premise that “natural” and “authentic” language better fosters acquisition is whether during “natural” and “authentic” language use there is actually an exclusive focus on meaning rather than on form at all times. Some of these self-declared meaning-focused methodologies have been inspired by Krashen’s Natural Approach, whose theories have been claimed to be compatible with the Communicative Language Teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 161). Krashen
makes a distinction between acquisition and learning, the former being “the unconscious
development of the target language system as a result of using the language for real
communication,” the “natural” way (Richards and Rodgers, 2001, p. 162). On the other
hand, “learning is the conscious representation of grammatical knowledge that has
resulted from instruction, and it cannot lead to acquisition” (Richards and Rodgers, 2001,
p. 162). The Monitor, a kind of “grammar police,” allows the edition of our grammar and
syntax under certain conditions (when especial attention is required and enough time is
given, focus is directed to form). Krashen has suggested that the system used during
“communicative interaction” is an acquired system, a system independent of the Monitor
(Lee and VanPatten, 2003, p. 131). Therefore, according to this model, acquisition
depends on cognitive processes that are beyond the learner’s control. However, SCT
proposes the opposite in that “one of the developmental outcomes of learning leading
development” is that “the child becomes able (as does the adult) to engage in
developmental activity volitionally and with conscious awareness rather than merely
spontaneously” (Newman and Holzman, 1993, p. 60).

In a study on private speech, self-directed or intrapersonal speech used as a tool
for thinking, for communication with the self, and for self-regulation of behavior (Diaz and
Berk, 1992), Lantolf and Yáñez (2003) found that a fourth-semester student focused on
the agreement and the use of prepositions with the reflexive passive and the true
passive structures in Spanish while the rest of the class was (at least, publicly) focusing
on other different aspects of the Spanish passive. The forms on which she focused, and
that she brought to her conscious awareness, including error-inducing
overgeneralizations, showed up in some of her “public” interventions during classroom
activities, which seems to contradict the idea that focus on form with conscious
awareness may not have a role in “authentic or natural.” With respect to the L1, which
would make a stronger case here with respect to “natural” language learning, children, whose language acquisition process has served as a model for naturalistic approaches to second language teaching, also focus on form and forms – not just in genres where the focus on form is obvious, such as on games, riddles and children’s rhymes -- but also in “authentic,” “natural,” “communicative” settings (Cook, 1997 and 1994) which makes questionable the idea that only a focus on meaning and function is “authentic” and “natural.” “Substitution tables” and drills can be found not only in children’s rhymes (Cook, 1997, p. 229), but also in their private and public speech in creative imitation of other children’s or adults’ talk. It is not that these types of exercises are endorsed here, but since drills and substitution tables are what Natural second language pedagogies are opposed to, these examples serve the purpose of questioning what “natural” actually is and what it has come to signify. The two examples below show children “naturally” engaging in what actually would appear to be drill-like activities:

(1) Four-year old
(Chanted while walking)
Child 2: Quick, Quick, quick. Quickly. Quick.

(2) Three-year old
Teacher: Let’s go outside.
Child 2: Out. Outside.


Krashen (1982) claimed in his Input Hypothesis that “comprehensible input causes acquisition” and that “successful language acquisition cannot happen without comprehensible input” (Lee and VanPatten, 2003, p. 16, italics in the original). However,
children seem just fine with what could be labeled as “incomprehensible” or not “meaning-bearing” input when they are read stories or talked to in ways beyond their comprehension. For example, children will ask to be read the same incomprehensible story repeatedly just because they like the sound of the voice reading to them or the rhythmic patterns of the text (Cook, 1997, p. 229). “Young children tolerate imprecise meanings because language hangs in a friendly frame of sound” (Cook, 1997, p. 229) and in this way they will use nonsense terms such as “chicken pots” instead of “chicken pox” (Cook, 1997, p. 229).

On the other hand, even if children’s way or the “natural” and “authentic way” was to be focused on meaning and that was the most efficient way, it is highly unlikely that we might be able to reproduce the same conditions in a classroom, since a classroom by logic is the opposite of a natural environment (this topic is related to Vygotsky’s discussion of the role of schooling and concept formation, and will be expanded in the next section). Cook wonders whether, being flooded by input for the same number of years as the average child is the most efficient way for adults to learn a language. Instead, Cook suggests that it would be more efficient to exploit the capacities that make adult learners precisely adults, i.e. the ability to think metalinguistically and in more sophisticated conceptual ways (Cook, 1997, p. 225). Cook not only calls into question the children’s “natural/authentic” way, but also, consequently, the desirability and probability of the alleged result: becoming a native speaker of the L2, which in his opinion can hamper communication in international settings (p. 226).

In adult life, sometimes conversations with intimates and friends “contain little information, and may be regarded as instances of play and banter” (Cook, 1997, p. 230). For example, two friends speak over the phone about going to a social gathering at night. One of them had a long day and is considering going directly to bed instead:
-Bueno, entonces, ¿te vienes o no?

-Mira, yo no sé si vengo, si voy,… si fui, si vine,… o si estuve y estoy ya de vuelta…

The response to the question “contains little information” (“I’m too tired, so I don’t know” could have been enough to show indecisiveness) and focuses more on the playfulness of the verbs of movement pointing at different directions and times in a similar pattern. The focus is not on what is said as much as how it is said. Thus, the comic effect intended lies in the iconicity of the forms chosen, which create an effect of hustle and bustle, and utter confusion, mirroring the hectic day that exhausted one of the friends.

Going back to the dichotomy at hand, if focus on form can be considered reactionary by some, a switch to focus on meaning is not revolutionary, not even slightly untraditional. As a matter of fact, this has been a conventional pendular switch over the last two hundred years of foreign language teaching. The form-focused drill might have been replaced by the meaning-focused input drilling activity. In both cases, the acquisition of a language is placed beyond the student’s control as it comes to depend on either external or cognitive factors (i.e. learning depends on habit formation from external stimuli creating a response in the Audiolingual framework, or it depends on the unconscious creation of a developing system resulting from massive exposure to linguistic input). In both cases, students are presented with a dualistic vision of language. Because of this, it should not come as a surprise that both meaning and form might be lost on the learner when s/he deals with a type of discourse such as literature, where the dialectic, mimetic relationship between form and meaning is critical.

4 -Ok, so are you coming [to the dinner] or not?
-Look, I don’t know if I’m coming, if I’m going,… if I went, if I came or if I’ve been there already and come back.
In this way, neither pole of this dualism has solved the form-meaning dilemma. As is argued here, this dilemma is, in fact, an artificial one. If the starting point is an activity-based pedagogy, both meaning and the forms that convey that meaning become relevant to the learner:

When focusing on meaningful tasks that engage the students, we can see in many cases that in practice it becomes impossible to separate form and function neatly in the interactional work that is being carried out. Instead, all and any aspects of situated language can come under the scrutiny of learners, if this is needed to carry out the work at hand.

(Van Lier, 1996, p. 203)

In letters, in formal documents, in newspapers, in political speeches, on store windows, in apologies over the phone, as we ask for favors, or entertain a casual conversation with a neighbor, choices of form are not fortuitous; they have consequences; they lead to a change of meaning, to some kind of effect. But especially in literature, an instance of adult play (Cook, 1994, 1997), the fallacy of this schism proves more noticeably wrong than in any other discourses, because it is the “linguistic choices driven by formal patterning as meaning” that give birth to “new and unexpected meanings which help to break us out of the routines of everyday life and the narrow assumptions of the social moralities in which we live” (Cook, 1997, p. 240).

Play, however, is not typical of only literary discourse, which makes literary discourse with regard to creativity as “authentic” and “natural” as everyday language. In the last section of this chapter this idea of creativity being the unmarked case in language use will be further explored so that the last and more crucial dualism is finally dissolved: the one between everyday language and literature. In the next section, the question of authenticity in foreign language teaching will be discussed.
2.1.2 Authentic versus non-authentic language use

A series of practices and views of language have become currently associated with Communicative Language Teaching in North America, which Sullivan (2000, p. 117), based on Holliday (1997), and Brown (1994, p. 81) defines as the following set of procedures: a) the use of “authentic” material or realia; b) a connection between the classroom and the “real” world with “authentic” input in “real-life-like” contexts and opportunities to produce language for “genuine” purposes; c) a conceptualization of communication as interaction, thus assigning primacy to oral practice; d) a series of arrangements to enhance oral interaction in the classroom, such as desks in a U-shape configuration, small student numbers, activities designed for group- or pair-work, and equal distribution of roles in activities. Sullivan, later on, proved how these values were conceived of as universal despite the fact that they were clearly emerging from a way of understanding communication only in certain Western cultures. On the other hand, even in these cultures “changes in participation format do not ensure that learners will change their interpretations of classroom activity” due to the learners’ past learning history (Kinginger, 1999, p. 119).

A view of communication that privileges oral interactions and that establishes that language outside of the classroom is “authentic” is usually accompanied by the perception from students and even instructors that the written world of discourse to be found within the confines of the literature classroom is “unauthentic,” “unpractical.” It is not unusual that students would prefer courses on conversation over those of literature on the premise that “normal” people in “real” situations do not use the type of language that is used in poems or novels to communicate, thus contributing to the relegation of literature to only the group of students who want to have a total language experience
and are “prepared” for the assumed “distortion” that is central to literary discourse, i.e. those students reaching the upper levels. In this epigraph, it is suggested that the issue of “authenticity” in the classroom is a far more complex matter than a question of mirroring the world outside the classroom.

Current foreign-language textbooks and pedagogies promote “authentic language use,” thus promising the learner “realia” and practice with the same real-life situations that a native speaker of the target culture might encounter. The classroom mimics the world outside the classroom, and leaves literature only for the advanced learner. Sociocultural Theory offers a divergent view of the role of schooling for children, which has consequences for the role of instruction in foreign-language education.

Vygotsky (1987) extensively discussed the role of schooling in relation to spontaneous concepts and the formation of scientific concepts. Everyday concepts emerge from the child’s own everyday experiences (an example being the concept of “frog,” which a child can recognize or describe as “a green animal on TV my sister is scared of”), but cannot be defined systematically and consistently. Unlike everyday concepts, scientific concepts, such as “amphibian” require formal instruction to be assimilated; they are not likely to emerge from the child’s direct experience of the world. The role of schooling is to bring everyday concepts to the level of scientific concepts (a frog is an amphibious organism, which means that it is a cold-blooded vertebrate, just like toads and salamanders) with the development of awareness, abstraction, and control (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 85; Dixon-Krauss, 1996, pp. 13, 45; Hedegaard, 1990, p. 355). In this way, in school, free from the ephemera of “authentic” or “real-life” situations, children are able to learn to detach their spontaneous concepts from practical everyday experience and to abstract traits and relationships, thus moving from empirical and concrete to decontextualized, generalizing, systematic theoretical thinking. In addition, thanks to the
development of literacy, the child moves from the unconscious and automatic of his/her everyday experience to conscious awareness and voluntary control by being able to permanently represent and reflect, by means of written symbols, upon the new relationships and common traits that s/he has discovered in spontaneous concepts (Dixon-Krauss, 1996, p. 13-14).

Paradoxically enough, the lack of “authenticity” of the classroom environment, its dissimilarity to the settings where everyday experience takes place, is its most propitious feature. However, in methodologies derived from the Natural Approach, the classroom is not used for its affordances but for its greatest constraints: to recreate the “authentic,” “everyday,” “real-world-like” type of spontaneous oral practice with no conscious awareness. On the other hand, Vygotsky (1962) states that if our native language is like an everyday concept that requires no reflection for its spontaneous use, with a foreign language the opposite true. That is, one’s native language starts as spontaneous speech that moves towards more formal and academic forms of speech thanks to schooling and to the development of literacy, which, in turn, afford reflection and hence conscious awareness of what was unconsciously used before. With a foreign language, the process is reversed: a learner starts with conscious awareness and then “the higher forms develop before spontaneous, fluent speech” (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 109). If given the necessary time, these higher forms will eventually evolve into “easy, spontaneous speech with a quick and sure command of grammatical structures,” but “only as the crowning achievement of long, arduous study” (p. 110). However, in mainstream foreign-language teaching this process is reversed, and the fact that the learner is not a child and that s/he is already in possession of a repertoire of linguistic everyday concepts in his/her L1 (which is often banned in the classroom) is not used to full advantage, thus treating the learner and the classroom setting in “unauthentic” ways, by forcing the
student to start from scratch or to be a Robinson Crusoe on a uninhabited island, so to speak, every time.

Other authors question the notion of “authenticity” in the classroom from different angles. Woods (2001, p. 63), drawing on Putnam and Borko (2000, p. 5) claims that “authenticity” lies in the types of thinking and problem-solving skills that are required for an activity, and not in the likelihood that an activity will be similar to something that we would actually do in reality. In this view, even if the world of literature is fictional and therefore not “real,” it is still possible to engage the student in truly genuine ways of thinking by solving problems and enacting a world of meaning through language: “In fiction, reading silently to ourselves, removed from immediate social interaction, we have the opportunity to try out – to play with -- new and unreal worlds in a way which would be quite impossible were we using this language to do real things with real people” (Cook, 1997, p. 240). For Van Lier, authenticity does not lie in materials, the lesson plan, the properties of language, or language use. It is “a process of validation, or authentication” between instructors and students (Van Lier, 1996, p. 127, italics in the original). The author criticizes the simplicity of the concept in standard pedagogies and describes multiple tiers involved in the process of authentication in the classroom (curricular, pragmatic, personal authenticities, each composed of other authenticity elements in turn, p. 145). Van Lier also remarks that authenticity is interconnected and cannot be understood without “the other two members of the curriculum triad: awareness and autonomy” (pp. 144-145). For example, autonomy and awareness are involved in personal authenticity.

In the light of these more complex conceptualizations of authenticity, Van Lier discusses how some of the popular practices in current pedagogies that associate themselves with CLT may now seem “unauthentic.” For example, the exclusive use of
the L2 without resorting to the L1 that mimics a “real” immersion situation may lead to “a case of collective blindness” if learners are confused “about means and purposes” (p. 127). Another likely practice in the current classroom culture, at least in the lower levels, is to limit the amount of corrective feedback for the sake of fluency, to protect the student’s comfort level or to mimic life out on the streets (as we are not often corrected by others outside the classroom). Conflict, errors and disorientation, thus, are perceived as negative and even damaging to the learner’s confidence in the L2, which may lead to moments in the classroom where situations that require intervention are ignored or not successfully repaired, which ultimately is unauthentic (p. 127). Van Lier questions the usefulness of the usual lists of do’s and don’ts that are given in methods courses, pedagogy textbooks and workshops, as instructors have a direct rapport with students (p. 131). Van Lier, in his criticism of the current take on the concept of “authenticity,” states:

In a curious way, it seems to me that the traditional language lessons of the grammar translation type which I remember from my school days might lay greater claim to that sort of authenticity than some of the so-called communicative classrooms that I have had occasion to observe in recent years. I must emphasize that old lessons seem to have been authentic for me, although they may well have been inauthentic for some of my classmates.

(Van Lier, 1996, p. 128, emphasis in the original)

Moreover, the artificial linear progression that is imposed on the students in weak versions of CLT – mechanical drill in the form of the so-called “input-bearing activities,” “meaningful” practice, and simulated “communicative” use -- seem to be very far from the realities of learning a foreign language, thus lacking in authenticity for the language learner. Similarly, Blyth, who advocates a pedagogical discourse grammar in the classroom, contends that “the presentation of grammar in foreign language textbooks and classrooms continues to be based on an outdated combination of behaviorism,

This is not to say that there should be a return to the not so “opposite” type of methodology of drills and substitution tables. The conclusion in any case is that authenticity is not a simple issue as is presented in fashionable “communicative” pedagogies and cannot be captured or charted in a set of prefabricated, a priori pedagogical practices. Authenticity is rather a process undergone between particular students and the instructor in which multiple factors and processes have to be taken into account.

2.1.3 When practice doesn't make perfect: the separation of tools and results in the curriculum

The standard curriculum seems to be divided between “preparatory” courses, primarily aimed at teaching the “essential” grammar, vocabulary and linguistic “skills,” and advanced, content-based courses that reflect the ultimate goals of the curriculum (to be able to use the foreign language in multiple contexts and for different purposes, such as for the professions, to translate, to be able to understand the foreign culture and literature, etc). Literature is usually excluded from the lower levels on the grounds that the language learner is not “ready” for it yet. However, when in the upper levels the class culture switches from a notional-functional communicative syllabus to a content-based syllabus with less attention on the student’s comfort level and a sudden turn to the student’s individual work/ performance as it surfaces in critical discussions and formal oral presentations (Kern, 2002, p. 22), the learner does not seem to be better prepared than before. In most cases, this new concern for form and a proper academic register
does not correspond to the learner’s history or to appropriate linguistic support and instruction at the advanced levels. Bernardt (1995) reports how some colleagues in advanced levels do not provide linguistic assistance because they refuse to “come down to the level of the student” for their perceived need of “something lofty, not pedagogical” (p. 5) at the level at which their course is imparted. At this point, linguistic proficiency is perceived as a prerequisite for the study of literature despite the fact that for most of us, “mastering a language is an ongoing phenomenon” (Barnett, 1991, p. 8).

This vision of the role of linguistic instruction in the curriculum is that of tool for result; it is an instrumental and causal perception in that the application of the knowledge gained in language courses is believed to be the pre-condition for the skills necessary to deal with literature and content courses. This relationship between the tool and the intended result is termed “tool for result” (versus “tool and result”). This term was first used by Vygotsky in reference to his methodology for studying psychology, and was later recycled by Werstch, and Holzman and Newman as they applied it to education. Causal views of the relation between learning and development had already been criticized by Vygotsky. In relation to child development, the Russian psychologist claimed that learning leads development and disagreed with the Piagetian view that children could only learn things that were at their current developmental level. Vygotsky believed that instruction would be “completely unnecessary if it merely utilized what had already matured in the developmental process, if it were not itself a source of development” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 212). The relationship between learning and development is not linear, temporal or casual, but dialectic in that the one is the source and the product of the other at the same time. For Vygotsky, the transformation does not take place with the tool leading to development (tool for result), but with the internalization of the tool in unity with the result (tool and result) in the activity (see
Newman and Holzman, 1993). Vygotsky gives the example of how children learn to write before they have the mental functions for writing. It is the activity of writing that completes the development of the mental functions for writing, just as development of the mental functions for writing completes the learning of writing. Therefore, the type of instruction that needs to be used in our curriculum is not one that “prepares” students for literature when that instruction is “applied” to them (the language courses), but one whose practice is both the source and the product of literary literacy (literature through language), which we will discuss further in Chapter 4.

The linear, causal, tool-for-result view of the relationship between instruction and development is not only reflected in the division between language and content courses in the curriculum. It is also materialized in the sequence of contents of language courses (present must be taught before the imperfect and the preterit; the past must be taught before the future; the future must be taught before the conditional; subjunctive must follow indicative, and so forth), and the artificial developmental progression that is imposed on the students through pedagogical principles (from controlled practice to guided practice to open-ended practice). One of the most common instructional schemes in foreign-language teaching is the PPP (presentation-practice-free production).

Willis (1996) offers a comparison of PPP with task-based instruction, which follows an activity-based pedagogy. In the presentation stage, “[t]he teacher begins by presenting an item of language in a context or situation which helps to clarify its meaning” (p. 134). During this stage, the teacher may make use of pattern sentences and short dialogues that illustrate the items at hand (p. 134). In the practice stage, “[s]tudents repeat target items and practice sentences or dialogues, often in chorus and/or in pairs, until they can say them correctly.” The activities used at this stage
include pattern drills, matching and completing exercises, and activities in which the students have to ask and answer questions “using pre-specified forms” (p. 134). Finally, in the production stage, “[s]tudents are expected to produce in a ‘free’ situation language items they have just learnt, together with other previously learned language.” This “free production” usually takes the form of role plays, simulation activities, or even a communication task (p. 134). But what is ironical about this stage is that, since the forms to be used are specified in advance, in reality there is no such thing as a “free production” stage (p. 135).

The PPP cycle derives from “the behaviourist view of learning which rests on the principle that repetition helps to ‘automate’ responses, and that practice makes perfect” (Willis, 1996, p. 135). It is based on the assumption that there is a natural progression from controlled practice to free production (Van Lier, 1996, p. 58), “a uniformity and controllability of internal processes which, however convenient this would be, simply does not exist” (Van Lier, 1996, p. 59). One of the problems that Willis points out is that knowledge is not necessarily applicable or transferable outside the task (tool for result), which results in a false impression of mastery while doing the task. However, often learners manage to do the task without the use of the structure, since, usually, the ultimate purpose of following this sequence (PPP) is to produce the item of language without mistakes rather than performing specific communicative functions.

In the writing models in the foreign language curriculum, a similar linear, tool-for-result progression from a knowledge-telling model to advanced composition (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996) has contributed to the cognitive gap between the lower and the upper levels according to Kern (2002). The type of assignment in a “knowledge-telling” model could be exemplified by a composition written in response to the question “What did you do during the holiday weekend?” which is characterized by the fact that the “primary
Problem is that of generating enough useful information from their [the learners’] own internal resources” (p. 119). This task, as was the point in the previous section, could be identified as “authentic” in the light of the current understanding of communicative language teaching because it seems “relatable” to the students’ lives, something that one might well do outside the classroom. However, this task, if presented as above, may not trigger any type of “abstract logical organization” for the writing assignment, or “considerations of information ordering, of relative salience of information, of audience expectations, and of logical pattern of argument organization” (p. 121). In this way, it is difficult to understand how a “knowledge-telling” model would make students any more “ready” for an advanced understanding of writing and reading.

Proposing a way out of this dichotomy between the lower and the upper levels, Byrnes (1997, p. 9) emphasizes the need to move students, beginning with their first college language courses, away from the highly contingent language use in largely interactional oral communication of meanings that has in recent years become the momentum driving to their language acquisition; faculty members must introduce students to the linguistically considerably more elaborated environments of written language and particularly to literary texts.

Byrnes emphasizes that more attention on the students’ “formal appropriateness, accuracy, and complexity” in the context of their extended discourse and the texts created by them in the L2 classroom is in order (1997, p. 9). Literature cannot be left for the time when learners are “ready” for it; otherwise it will be too late (Schultz, 2002, p. 4). In a tool-and-result view of the curriculum, learners will be able to deal with literature by dealing with literature, not when they are “prepared,” but throughout the whole curriculum, as nobody is prepared for any activity before doing the activity. One gets prepared for something by doing it as one is adequately mediated within one’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), i.e. the activity zone that falls between what the learner
can do by himself/herself and what the person can do with other people’s help. In Chapter 4, ways of mediating learner involvement with literature will be discussed.

2.1.4 The oral versus the written

Another dualism that perpetuates the separation of language and literature in the curriculum is the schism between oral and written language use based on a set of features (such as nominalization, abstraction, context-dependence, degree of formality, etc.) that have been normally attributed to either oral or written language in a black and white manner. For example, oral texts tend to be associated with an informal register, less abstraction, more context dependence, and lack of permanence; on the other hand, written texts tend to be identified with the opposite features, i.e. permanence, nominalization, context independence, formality, etc.

In a curriculum that places most of its emphasis on the oral communication of the speaker’s needs at the lower levels, literature has been reified as a written artifact that does not relate to the speaker’s world. In Chapter 1 we saw how for centuries methodologies and approaches to language teaching claiming to be “communicative” privileged speaking and relegated writing to more advanced courses, forgetting that texts are part of our everyday communication too, and that literature has dialogues and is sometimes written to be performed or read aloud. Although this classification of writing outside the category of our daily communication may seem somewhat odd, it is not unusual to hear learners complain that writing courses do not help them with everyday “normal” communication or with having “a regular conversation” as they would have in a foreign-language setting. In this way, literature is assigned to the world of the written and
of the “unauthentic” … even more so for being associated with specific formal features that are believed to be absent in everyday language.

Grabe and Kaplan (1996) point out that oral language and written language are neither contraries nor reflections of each other. The authors discuss how historically writing and speaking have coexisted “in many complex patterns of use,” for example, written texts that are read aloud as a social activity, or texts that are written for oral presentation … (p. 15). Likewise, McCarthy and Carter, 1994, remark that “[f]or instance, a message may be written but intended to be delivered as speech (e.g. a university lecture), or spoken, but destined to be transmitted to its intended audience in writing (e.g. a statement at a press conference)” (p. 4). Thus, the authors make a distinction between medium (according to which we have phonic and graphic transmission) and mode (which refers to the sender’s choice of “features normally associated with speech or writing, regardless of the medium in which it [the message] is transmitted” (p. 4).

In addition, when we talk of “features normally associated with speech or writing,” it has to be made clear that it is “a question of degree” (Cornbleet and Carter, 2001, p. 83) rather than a question of having a dichotomous set of clear-cut characteristics (Cornbleet and Carter, 2001, drawing on Grabe and Kapplan, 1996, p. 16-18). Cornbleet and Carter (2001) explain how a series of characteristics, which the authors refer to as “myths,” inflexibly assigned to written texts are also shared by spoken genres, and vice versa. Some of these “myths” are that writing is permanent, formal, one-way, message-oriented and context-independent, whereas speech is temporary, informal, interactive, socially-oriented, and context-dependent (p. 81-83). However, notes on the fridge door such as shopping lists are more often than not intended to be temporary, emails to friends are informal, text messages are interactional, greeting cards are socially-
oriented, and equipment instruction leaflets are context-dependent, whereas recorded political speeches are permanent, oral presentations are formal, lectures are one-way, weather forecasts are message-oriented, and poetry-recitals are context-independent (pp. 81-83).

As far as literature is concerned, the distinction between “medium” and “mode” is a useful one. For example, we normally have access to poetry through texts, however poems are also written to be read aloud; chansons de geste and epic poems were oral genres until jongleurs started to write them down to be able to remember them. And the same can be said of folkloric songs and stories, as well as dramas, which are written but are supposed to be acted out. Additionally, as Carter and Walker (1989, p. 6), and Maley (1989, p. 12) observe, literature is characterized by the variation that it exhibits, i.e. one can find all types of genres (e.g., Benedetti’s “El sexo de los ángeles” exhibits some of the formulae of scientific reports; Esquivel’s La ley del amor mixes science-fiction, indigenous folklore, soap opera, esoteric literature, thriller and detective novel), texts of any subject matter, all types of geographical, diachronic and social variation, and the written and oral modes (for example, Vázquez Montalbán’s La rosa de Alejandría opens with a very colloquial conversation full of slang among a group of Spanish delinquent youths). Moreover, the fact that literature presents something that can be as transient as a dialogue in the written medium affords reflection and awareness. Therefore, even in a curriculum that still makes this separation between the oral and the written in the lower and upper levels, literature would still have a role for the study of oral interaction.

2.2 Literature and everyday language use: Beauty and Beast?

Figure of speech
Any intentional deviation from literal statement or common usage that emphasizes, clarifies, or embellishes both written and spoken language.

(Encyclopedia Britannica online, definition of “figure of speech,” available at http://www.britannica.com/, italics added)

“Literary” language is usually viewed as an embellished, elevated type of language with particular textual properties that are idiosyncratic and specific only to the productions of play-wrights, novelists and other owners of “poetic license” and accredited inkpots. This makes literary discourse different from “everyday,” “practical,” “authentic” discourse. With such special linguistic status, the literary canon thus becomes the epitome of language use, the highest and loftiest expression of a particular culture and values in the eyes of a nation. Being such a complex matter, it seems that literature can be reserved for only a few privileged experts that, with the necessary background, may have access to the “right” interpretation and “the author’s intention.” Those who aspire to appreciate this epitome of linguistic and cultural expression (e.g. our L2 students) will have to thoroughly know the workings of “common language” and later be mediated by certain forms of academism to be able to comprehend this more elevated “literary language.” Thus literature will necessarily be postponed until the learner reaches the upper levels (again). This academism is usually based on others’ privileged knowledge and experience with literary texts (e.g. content, lectures and expert criticism), with the subsequent conversion of literature into the practice of a few experts, and the consequent alienation between literature and (the learner’s) life – including personal meaning and significance.

Learners end up perceiving literary discourse as a secret art because of their own histories in the foreign language curriculum. First, it seems secret because it is shared by only a few gifted writers who have been granted this rare talent. Second, literature seems a secret art because it is apparently correctly interpreted by critics and
other literary experts that can understand the meaning of literary texts. However, the only true secret would actually be that linguistic creativity exists in all of us, an unveiled secret that might not be resisted if we start to share it with learners from the outset of the curriculum.

2.2.1 Creativity in expected places

[L]inguistic creativity is not simply a property of exceptional people but an exceptional property of all people.

(Carter, R. 2004, p. 13)

It is hardly surprising that advertisements, political discourse or playful genres (children’s rhymes, tongue twisters) are extremely creative and possess features that are traditionally assigned to literature. The linguistic devices that are normally taught in literature courses are ubiquitous in the above-mentioned genres (see McQuarrie and Mick, 1996; Leigh, 1994; G. Cook, 1992; Zinken, 2003). Repetition may be a distinctive feature of Kiswahili Classical Poetry, but it is also an effective and persuasive device in other genres such as prayers, speeches, commercials, songs and headlines, for establishing an iconic relationship between form, a meaning of urgency, and its permanence in time. (Consider, for example, the momentous effect of the repetition of “I have a dream” throughout Martin Luther King’s legendary speech on August 28th, 1963, at Lincoln Memorial.) Parallelism and anaphora are types of repetition that are typical of political discourse: “What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence and lawlessness” (Robert F. Kennedy on April 4, 1968, in Indianapolis, after the assassination of Martin Luther King). Such repetitions can also be found in commercials,
and soup opera dialogues. The following examples exhibit anaphora and parallelism: the first is a political manifesto, the second a laxative ad, and the third is an ad for L’Oreal hair color cream:

**Example 1**

Otro Madrid es posible, vota izquierda.
Porque no es cierto que las ciudades tienen el alcalde que se merecen.
Porque ya son más que suficientes 14 años de Partido Popular.
Porque durante estos 14 años, Madrid ha degradado su estética hasta extremos insufribles.
Porque la derecha ha convertido a Madrid en una ciudad ABURRIDA, AGUJEREADA, CAÓTICA, BUROCRÁTICA, CUTRE.
Manifesto 'Otro Madrid es posible'


**Example 2**

Por la noche te lo tomas

Por la mañana funcionas

[Bekunis Complex]

**Example 3**

Crema colorante Triple Protección:

PROTEGE ANTES: El nuevo Serum Protector cuida las zonas dañadas del cabello, protegiéndolo y preparándolo para darle color.

PROTEGE DURANTE: La crema colorante que no gotea, da color y protege.

PROTEGE DESPUÉS: La savia con Ceramida-Proteína prolonga la protección.

---

5 A different Madrid is possible, vote for the Left Wing. Because it's not true that cities have the mayor they deserve. Because it’s more than enough to be for more than 14 years under the Right Wing’s rule. Because for these 14 years with the PP, Madrid’s aesthetics have been deprecated to insufferable extremes. Because the Right Wing has made Madrid a boring, chaotic, classless city always under construction. “A different Madrid is possible” Manifesto.

6 It’s taken at night. It works in the morning.
Other types of repetition associated with literary texts are chiasmus, antimetabole, isocolon, and polyptoton. Chiasmus is a pattern in which two structures are parallel, but the second one is reversed (Harmon and Holman, 2003, p. 89): “Ayer naciste y morirás mañana” (“Yesterday you were born and you’ll die tomorrow,” from “A una rosa” by Luis Góngora). An antimetabole is the same as chiasmus, but it involves repetition of the same terms in the first structure, for example: “¿Siempre se ha de sentir lo que se dice? / ¿Nunca se ha de decir lo que se siente?” (“Do we always have to feel what we say / and never say what we feel?” from “Epístola satírica y censoria, escrita al Conde-Duque de Olivares” by Quevedo). Isocolon, in turn, is a pattern in which elements of a proposition are symmetrical in length and structure to those of another proposition, thus generating rhythm and balance (Myers, and Wukasch, 2003, p. 177), for example “el barco sobre la mar / y el caballo en la montaña” (“the ship on the sea / and the horse on the mountain,” from “Romance sonámbulo” by García Lorca). Polyptoton, also prominent in literature, involves the use of a word or its stem in the same context (Myers, and Wukasch, 2003, p. 284), but exhibiting different grammatical categories or functions as a result of morphological inflection or derivation processes, for example, Shakespeare’s sonnet (1957, p. 60):

[...] Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.

However, these types of repetition are also typical of political discourse, as well as of headlines, advertising mottos and sayings, for its mesmerizing quality. A well known antimetabole appears in John F. Kennedy’s 1961 legendary motto, “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” Less recognized, but just as effective are other antimetaboles used in mottos and advertisements: “Los Serrano: Una comedia de familia. Una familia de comedia.” Isocolon is equally pervasive in mottos, headlines and popular sayings: “African Dialogues, American Interests” (Voices, June, 2004, p. 8); “Good Drinking for Good Living” (Voices, June, 2004, p. 17); “A quien hierro mata, a hierro muere” (“He who lives by the sword, dies by the sword”). Sometimes, isocolon is accompanied by antithesis: “Más prestaciones, menos espacio” (a car commercial); “More savings, less hustle;” and even rhyme: “Menos autoayuda y más literatura” (GPS magazine archive in El Mundo newspaper, February 2005). Everyday polyptoton, and other similar devices, appear in tongue twisters, commercial mottos and jokes, and are possible because of the morphological processes of a language, not because of linguistic distortion:

El cielo está enladrillado.

¿Quién lo desenladrillará?

El desenladrillador

Que lo desenladrille

Buen desenladrillador será.

---

8 The Serrano’s: A family comedy. A comedy family.
9 More applications, less space
10 Less self-help and more literature.
11 The sky is bricked.
Who will unbrick it?
The unbricker
Nursery rhymes, riddles, tongue twisters, commercials and other popular “genres of play” (as Cook, 2000, calls them) also exploit two types literary devices that are typical of poetry: alliteration, the repetition of consonant sounds in nearby words (Abrams, 1999, p. 8), and assonance, the same as alliteration but with vowel sounds (Myers, and Wukasch, 2003, p. 28). For example, tongue twisters rely on particular types of alliteration and assonance to create a difficult pronunciation. The alliteration of sounds that is so typical of poetry (for example, “A las aladas almas de las rosas” in “Elegía a Ramón Sijé” by M. Hernández, “Bajo el ala alev de su leve abanico” by Rubén Darío) is also typical of tongue twisters (“she sells sea shells by the sea shore but the sea shells that she sells are sea shells I’m sure;” “Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper, if Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper, then where is the peck of pickled peppers that Peter Piper picked?”) The same sort of alliteration is used in mottos, and political discourse (“The ballot or the bullet,” containing both alliteration and assonance, was a maxim repeated by Malcolm X throughout his 1964 speech in Cleveland, Ohio).

Syllabic linking and syneresis or liaison are traditionally taught in metrics classes because they are essential to establish syllabication in Spanish poetry. The number and the boundaries of syllables will determine the flow, pauses, rhythm, length, and stress of each line. In synalepha the final vowel sound of a word is fused with the vowel sound of the following word (Myers, and Wukasch, 2003, p. 357). Syllabic linking takes place when the final consonant or coda of a word and the initial vowel of the next word combine to form a syllable. It also happens within a word (for example, de-sha-cer and not des-ha-cer). Thus, we read Becquer’s lines as “con-pa-la-bras-que-fue-se-naun-tiem-po/ sus-pi-ro-sy-ri-sas-co-lo-re-sy-no-tas” rather than as “con-pa-la-bras-que-fue-

Who will unbrick it
A good unbricker will be.
sen-aun- tiem-po/ sus-pi-ros-y-ri-sas-co-lo-res-y-no-tas" ("Rima I"). However, syllabic linking and synalepha are natural, everyday phenomena of the language user. A Spanish commercial promoting solar-energy uses the brand name "H₂ Sol" (May 2004) thus exploiting syllabic linking the way in which the chemical formula for water, H₂ O, is read in Spanish (/a-tʃe-do-so/, which is very similar to /a-tʃe-do-sol/). In this way it is emphasized that this type of energy is as natural as water.

Likewise, rhyme is not restricted to poetry either. It is used in slogans ("El pueblo unido jamás sera vencido"),12 mottoes, sayings ("An apple a day keeps the doctor away") and commercials. This is the transcript of a Spanish commercial (May, 2004) for Vodafone, a cell phone company, that makes use of rhyme, not to beautify its product but to represent miscommunication caused by the poor sound quality of cell phones of their competition during a crucial moment in one’s life—the onset of childbirth. The result of this word play is reminiscent of Tirso de Molina’s satiric comedies of confusion and entanglement:

-Hola, mamá. Que estamos en el hospital. Que ya han empezado las contracciones.

-¿Vacaciones?

-Sí, contracciones. Dicen que tendremos el niño en tres horas.

-¿Esporas?


-Eso, eso,...mejor me lo explicas otro día.

-Sí, en ginecología. Es muy fácil de ver.

-¿Comer? Sí,... estamos comiendo... en un restaurante. Lasaña.

-¿Que estáis en la montaña?

12 The people united will never be defeated.
Sí, lasaña, sí.

¿Qué?, ¿os habéis ido el fin de semana?

¿Tu hermana? No, tu hermana está en otro restaurante.

Eso, eso, venid cuanto antes... Pues, nada, que aquí os espero.

¡Yo también te quiero!  

Puns, also frequently associated with the literary, are based on the polysemic capacity of words. For example, amphibologia is a type of pun that exploits the ambiguity of the multiple meanings of a word (Myers and Wukasch, 2003, p. 12). Although, we might associate it with literary fragments, such as the ambivalent prophecies of Macbeth’s witches (Myers and Wukasch, 2003, p. 12), amphibologia can also be found in jokes and mottos. For example, “These colors don’t run,” a motto displayed on American flags after September 11th, is reminiscent of detergent warnings on colors that bleed into each other, also tapping into the symbolic association between cowardice and the act of running away from a critical situation. The joke, as many others, “¿Qué pasa si un elefante se para en una pata? Se queda el pato viudo” is based on the polysemy of the word “pata,” which means both “leg” (of an animal or an object) and “female duck” in Spanish. The amphibologia in the comic strip below is based on the polysemy of the

---

13 -Hi, Mom. We are at the hospital. The contractions have started.
-Carpacio departed??
-Yes, just started. It seems we’ll have the baby in three hours.
-Free flowers?
-Yes, three hours. Room 110. The gynecology department.
-Yeah, yeah ... Your father and I eventually got out of that apartment.
-Right, that department. It’s just a 10-minute drive ...
-No, no, we actually were home at 5. Now we are having dinner with Sue and Luigi.
-You’re going to Fiji???
-Luigi, right.
-You just planned it tonight?
-Mike? No, Mike is with his friends at the Blue Moon.
-Good idea, get here soon ...
-OK, Sweetie, I’ll see you then in June.

14 What happens if the elephant stands on a leg/ female duck? The male duck becomes a widower.
expression “esto es un robo,” which can mean both “Hands up, this is a robbery” and “What a rip off!”

Paranomasia, a pun based on the similarity of sounds of different words (Myers, and Wukasch, 2003, p. 295) such as "All moanday, tearsday, wailsday, thumpsday, frightday, shatterday till the fear of the Law" (James Joyce’s Finnegans Wake, p. 301) is often exploited in commercial mottos: “Don’t Desert Dessert” (Ben and Jerry); “Si no separas tus envases, el sistema de recogida selectiva y el reciclado se paran” (by the Spanish Ministry of Environment, May 2004); riddles: "oro parece, plata no es"; and jokes: “Outside a hotel: ‘Help! We need inn-experienced people’” (available at jokes.com); “This is Powerpointless”.

---

15 This is a robbery. Well, if you don’t like the prices, you can go to another store, ma’m. Sorry, it’s a habit.

16 “If you don’t separate your recyclables, the recycling system and selective collection will stop.” “Separas” (you separate) and “se paran” (they stop) sound as if they were different forms of the same word when pronounced at a normal pace. In addition, this paranomasia iconically represents the mixing of all containers when you do not separate your recyclables (“separas,” which is the mixing of the syllabus and the containers, versus, “se paran” which is two words and looks as if there is a separation of recyclables as there is a separation of syllables). The lack of separation in “separan” causes the whole system to stop (“se paran”). There is therefore acoustic and orthographic mimesis with the message of the commercial.

17 “It looks like gold, it is not silver.” In this riddle, when “plata no es,” “it is not silver,” is pronounced at a normal pace, it sounds like “plátano es”: it is a banana. So that is the solution; this entity that looks like gold but is not silver is a banana.

18 A contemporary joke on the overuse of Powerpoint and other technological paraphernalia. I am indebted for this example to Virginia Fernández-Vallejo.
Commercials usually make use of hyperbole (exaggeration), irony and metaphors. “Do not concentrate. Do not disturb. Nature at work,” a Minute Maid orange juice commercial, reifies nature as a person or a factory intentionally working on creating a pure, unmanipulated product for the food store. Metaphors in horoscopes are ubiquitous, and they usually purposefully allow multiple interpretations for different people with different life situations. In “Dear Pisces, that's a very pretty fantasy that you're wandering off into the sunset with, but chances are high that it's making you miss something real back here on planet Earth” (from Yahoo Astrology at Yahoo.com), fantasy is compared to self-absorbed wandering flight into a sunset, while reality is earth bound, walking with your feet on the ground.

Instead of representing one term with another as in metaphor, entities can be represented by their component parts or by other entities to which they are somehow related; these are then cases of metonymy and synecdoche, which are commonly (but not exclusively) used in literature. While in synecdoche a part represents the whole or a whole represents a part, in a metonymy a closely related entity or an attribute is used to represent a certain concept. Occasionally, the distinction between synecdoche and metonymy is not so clear-cut. For instance, Lorca, in his poem “Grito hacia Roma,” directs a furious cry against “Rome” because Pope Pius XI has signed the Lateran Treaty with Mussolini in 1929 (Clementa Millán, 1992, pp. 272-273). In my view, the relationship between the Pope and Rome is that of synecdoche, as the whole (Rome) represents a part (the Vatican, and inside the Vatican, another part, which is the Head of the Catholic Church). It could also be argued, however, that the relationship between the Pope and Rome is metonymic since the Pontiff is represented by a toponym of the Vatican. This literary example is similar to the use of synecdoche and metonymy in the news, where the “White House” represents the people in charge of the government of
the United States, “Spain” as in “Spain withdraws troops from Iraq” represents the Spanish government, and “the British Crown” represents the queen and other members of the aristocracy.

Other figures that are typical of TV and commercial language are paradox, contrast, oxymoron, and synesthesia to create a more dramatic effect: “But the new looks are really going to make noise” (Curb appeal, HGTV, 7/7/04, my emphasis); “Face your frustrations. Then eat them” (Ben and Jerry’s ad for “Waffle Cone Sundae, your emotional rescue,” my emphasis); “Available in three flavors, the iBook G4 doesn’t sport PowerBook amenities such as …” (expert review on the Apple G4 iBook laptop computer, my emphasis); “Can beauty come from a bottle? Drink it and feel yourself bloom” (Evian bottled water, my italics). However, TV and journal language, commercials, political language, riddles, nursery rhymes, etc. are expected to be creative and subjective. They are supposed to attract people’s notice by diverting attention from everyday language; therefore, it could appear that these genres are in effect only “an intentional deviation from the common literal statement” (see quote from the Encyclopedia Britannica online at the beginning of epigraph 2.2). We will therefore analyze creativity in everyday language to show that such an assumption is unwarranted.

2.2.2 Creativity in your backyard: the unbearable literariness of the human being

Just because one cannot see, doesn’t mean he has no vision. And just because one cannot walk, doesn’t mean he can’t do the distance.

(Stevland Morris, also known as “Stevie Wonder,” my emphasis)
In this section we will see that literary discourse is just one more type of discourse on a continuum with "common language," and not an estranged type of language with textual features of its own. Generally, in characterizing literary language versus everyday language, it is said that the latter is literal, objective and referential and the former is figurative, distorted and subjective. Harris (1981) had already proposed a "demythologized" linguistics that would put an end to the long-established "fixed-code" myth, which "fails to come to terms with linguistic creativity" (p. 153). In a previous work (Harris, 1980, The Language Makers), the author had strongly criticized linguistic surrogationalism and contractualism for sustaining the idea that the meanings of a language "reflect" reality, are fixed, and are the same for all language users. Harris shows in his last chapter of The Language Myth (1981) how language is creative, figurative, contradictory, indeterminate, enjoying "only a provisional determinacy, relativised to a particular interactional situation" (Harris, 1981, p. 167).

Along the same lines, Gibbs (1994) contends that figurative aspects of language in general disclose the poetic structure of the mind. Gibbs argues that "literal" language is the marked case, since most of our language is not literal, as a result of a mind "constituted by various figurative processes that are then linguistically communicated by speakers/listeners" (p. 27).

... the traditional view of mind is mistaken, because human cognition is fundamentally shaped by various poetic or figurative processes. Metaphor, metonymy, irony, and other tropes are not linguistic distortions of literal mental thought but constitute basic schemes by which people conceptualize their experience and the external world.

(Gibbs, 1994, p. 1)

Carter (2004), drawing on work by Gibbs (1994) and Lakoff (1987) explains how metaphor is "a fundamental and ubiquitous structure of language" rather than "an exception or distortion (p. 120). Along the same lines, Turner (1996) claims that "[t]he
literary mind is not a separate kind of mind. The literary mind is the fundamental kind of mind,” and the literary principles of story, projection and parable “make everyday life possible” (p. v). Because metaphorical thinking is an essential feature of the mind, everyday metaphors often remain invisible. For example, our computer is conceptualized as an office, and thus, we have documents, folders, files, a desktop, a recycle bin, a mailbox, a control panel, etc. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) reveal how everyday metaphors and other figures are ubiquitous and systematic, such as IDEAS ARE OBJECTS: “I gave you that idea;” “it’s difficult to put my ideas into words;” “when you have a good idea, try to capture it immediately in words;” “his words carry little meaning,” etc (pp. 10-11). Another example of everyday metaphor is THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS: “thus they have a foundation and a framework;” “one can construct them,” “they stand, collapse and fall apart;” “they are shaky or solid and strong” (p. 46). Thus, when a science article described how the Milky Way “had eaten” the Canis Major dwarf Galaxy in 2003, an entire system of cannibalization was evoked: “dismembered corpse,” “pushed and pulled,” “torn apart and swallowed,” “ripped apart and swallowed,” “the violent ripping apart,” “the galactic snack,” “digested galaxy” (Science and Technology: Space News at MSNBC.com, November, 4, 2003, available at http://www.msnbc.com/news/988973.asp?cp1=1 ). Such terminology makes it easier for the lay person to understand what happened between the galaxies, just as saying “yeasts are pigs that belch and extend the dough” (“Good Eats,” Food Network, 7/7/04) may be a better way to understand the fermentation process in making bread. This is not to say that the role of metaphors is restricted to everyday usage. Much to the contrary, Fichtner (1999) emphasizes the theoretical potential of the metaphor in that “[m]etaphors are not illustrations of empirical facts, but rather visual images of theoretical relationships and, thus, means of reflection” (p. 323). The author explains how metaphors are vital to
our conception of reality, how our experiences in everyday life, art and science are structured in systemic ways, and new dimensions of meaning are added through metaphors (p. 315). Similarly, Carter underscores the fact that in “academic discourse, theories themselves are regularly explained in metaphorical terms” (2004, p. 120).

In addition to the representation of experience of the lay and of the experts, metaphors are ways in which cultures and communities of practice structure and make sense of experience and perceptions of the world. For example, chefs have different metaphors to talk about flavors since their experience is richer and subtler than that of a lay person. Flavors are talked about as three-dimensional bodies and events: a favor has different layers; a flavor has different parts, or says nothing at the beginning but then has a surprise at the end. Likewise, wines are “full-bodied,” or “have a great body,” “have a big / savory nose,” “big tears,” or “legs” and nice “textures.” Another example is how people living in Bosnian and Croatian mountain areas conceptualize their way of SINGING (ganga) AS WEAVING. When a singer is singing ganga and another wants to join in, the second one asks “Can I weave with you?” or when one wants to compliment a singer, one says kind words along the lines of “You intertwined your song very well” or “There was a nice thread to your song” or “Your voice had a very nice color and texture” (Pacific Street Films, and Educational Film Center, 1999).

A type of metaphor, synesthesia, which compares different sensorial impressions, is as ubiquitous in everyday language as in literature. We usually show disapproval of synthesized music by describing it as “plastic music,” thus mixing the physical and the audible. In Spanish, “la basura canta” (the garbage sings, i.e. I can smell it from here) mixes the olfactory and the auditory. James Hewitt, a famous yogi, counsels you in The Complete Yoga Book (1977, p. 14) to “observe your breathing” in a 

\(^{19}\) I am indebted for these examples to Professor James P. Lantolf.
yoga posture that requires to keep your eyes shut (italics added). When somebody speaks and we understand, we “see” or “see his/ her point”…even if we are in the middle of a power outage at night or permanently deprived of sight. If one’s working environment is too noisy, then one cannot hear himself/ herself thinking. When a friend complains via email, we may respond “I hear you.” When a reply message from one’s boss shows lack of comprehension or disregard for a request, we still may ask ourselves if the person is deaf or what (even if the request was submitted in writing in a previous email). The synesthesia lies in the fact that the boss might actually be deprived of hearing, and still choose to hear her/his employees’ needs … Additionally, we may talk to a person who does not see what we are saying. A friend’s sad tone over the phone worries us and makes us remark, “No te veo bien” (literally, “I don’t see you well” in Spanish, which indicates that the friend does not actually “sound well”). Similarly, in Spanish one can say “no me suena su cara de nada” (literally, “his/ her face doesn’t sound familiar at all,” in other words, “his/ her face doesn’t look familiar”) thus mixing the visual and the auditory.

Flavors are robust and we do not see them coming, wines are dry, colors are either warm or loud; faces are cold; fear is palpable, we may feel blue sometimes, and speak black or white as the occasion requires; headlines scream outrageous news, my computer motherboard does not see my hard drive, and my watch says 2:35; a student asks a reference to make her look good… over the phone!; odorless things such as an explanation may smell wrong, fishy and it may even stink; physically attractive people are eye candy; we may have good and bad tastes for different things even if our gustatory papillae are not involved (e.g., in clothes). Additionally, visual and not only acoustic phenomena may have onomatopoeic representations in the language. For instance, some hip-hop stars refer to the sparkling quality of their jewelry and to the
jewelry itself as some / the "bling bling." Thus, they may say “I like the glamour, the fans and the bling bling,” usually accompanying the term with a gesture that opens up a curled hand and extends the fingers. The gesture (which mimics a sudden and bright glitter), together with the duplication of the word “bling,” and the often higher-pitched tone used in the pronunciation of this term points to an interpretation of this expression as onomatopoeia of the sound that metals and stones allegedly emit when they dazzle … a sound that is similar to the one used in whitening chewing gum and tooth paste commercials when people smile and dazzle others.

Turning to “poetic” schemes, we use figures of repetition in everyday language as much as we scorn them as a sign of expressive deficiency in student compositions. Tannen (1989, chapter 3), McCarthy and Carter (1994, pp. 145-146) and Carter (2004, pp. 6-8) explain how self-repetitions and repetitions of the words of others contribute to mutual intelligibility, rapport and interpersonal involvement in conversation, just as in literature they also work to connect with and engage the reader. Famous examples of epizeuxis, the vehement repetition of terms without other interposed terms (Myers and Wukasch, 2003, p. 126) resound in our ears: “The horror, the horror” (The Heart of Darkness by J. Conrad); or “Reputation, reputation, reputation! O! I have lost my reputation” (Othello by W. Shakespeare, II.2, p. 66); “Words. Words. Words” (Hamlet by W. Shakespeare, II.2, p. 247), “To the swinging and the ringing/ Of the bells, bells, bells /Of the bells, bells, bells, / Bells, bells, bells” (“Bells” by E. A. Poe); But O heart! heart! heart! ("O Captain, My Captain" by W. Whitman). However, repetition devices are used in literature because of their ordinary iconicity; not the other way around. In 30-minute Recipes (Food Network, 4/21/03), buffalo wings were spiced up so that they would “become naughty and yummy yummy!” which involves personification, onomatopoeia and epizeuxis for intensification. Repetition or reduplication is
grammaticalized in some languages (Mandarin, Nahuatl, Japanese, Turkish, Sanskrit, Swahili and Tagalog) for plural formation, to mark the collective, for aspect, etc, and in other languages, such as Spanish and English, it may indicate intensification, quantity, diminution and even verbal aspect: *it’s been time and time and time and time again* (iterative aspect); *barrí y barrí y barrí y barrí* (durative or continuous aspect marked by the reduplication of a verb in the preterit); *-He terminado. -Pero, ¿terminado terminado? –Sí, terminado terminado terminado* (completive aspect by the reduplication of the past participle). Other types of repetition such as anaphora and parallelism are typical of everyday verbal displays of anger, confusion or indignation: *And you tell me that? You, the person who is always asking for help. You, the person who never helps others!* This is just a lackluster example of anaphora that could potentially be heard on a TV soap opera but also in an argument in the apartment next door.

Other traditional “literary” figures, such as synecdoche and metonymy are also pervasive in “common” language. Consider the following example of everyday metonymy from Carter (2004, p. 123):

Waitress 1: The ham-sandwich at table 11 wants the bill.

Waitress 2: OK, I’ll get it.

The ham sandwich ordered by the person at table 11 is used, in a metonymic process, to refer to the patron. In the same way, we may ask “Are you open?” to a person working at a store, when actually what is kept open is the store itself, not the person. An instructor complains that the problem with her class is that “there is too much testosterone,” thus establishing a prejudiced connection between being female and a good student, and referring to the male students through the masculine hormone. In the same way, a grandparent may express how much s/he misses his/ her grandchildren by saying “I want some of this noise and mess around my house more often,” thus
metonymically referring to his/her grandchildren by the disruption that they cause in the orderly adult world.

As we saw in the previous section, the most common type of synecdoche is the one that involves the substitution of an entity by one of its part. Thus, the “big screen” is usually used to refer to cinema (versus “television”); “visera” (Spanish for “visor”) refers to the whole baseball cap, not only to the part that projects shade over the eyes; “the European Cup” refers to the whole championship rather than to only the prize. “The silver” and “the china” denote our finest eating utensils and dishware. Likewise, “tissue” denotes a familiar object in personal hygiene, but its etymology only points to the fact that it is just made of “fabric” or “of woven material.” “The strings” and “the winds” in an orchestra refer to both the instruments and the players, but they are only a part of what is required to make music. Athletes do not seem to get medals at the Olympics anymore, they get “golds,” “silvers,” and “bronzes.” “Alcohol” is just one ingredient in spirits, but it denotes all that the bottle contains. Likewise, “high heels” refers to shoes with high heels.

In addition, an entity can be named not only after one of its parts, but also after one of its characteristics, which constitutes metonymy. Some examples are “shorts,” “fries,” “greens,” “sweets,” “tens and fives” (when talking about dollar notes), “móvil” (Spanish for “cell phone,” which literally means “moveable”), “portátil” (Spanish for “laptop,” which literally means “portable”), “combustible” (Spanish for “fuel,” from “burnable” in Latin), “automobile” (self-propelled in Latin), “mini” (Spanish for “miniskirt”), “habano” (Spanish for “cigar,” literally “from Havana”), “circus” (“ring” in Latin), “euritakoa” (Basque for “umbrella”), literally “for the rain”\(^\text{20}\). The process of nicknaming is based on a similar process, as when a part of the body or of a person’s attire that is

\(^{20}\) I am indebted to this example to Silvia Álvarez Olarra.
considered prominent is selected to give a name to a person. For example, we may refer
to a man with unruly hair as “el pelos,” using his hair to give him a nickname. (Notice that
the definite article in Spanish would agree in gender and number with the person
described, not with the part of the body that is being highlighted. But we may still
attribute a similar use of agreement by Pessoa to poetic license when he called a
masculine-looking woman something analogous to “aquella chico” – that-feminine boy -
in his Livro do desasosiego!)

Metonymy is also involved in many associations between body parts and certain
qualities as a result of contiguity or associated functions; for example, we say that
somebody has “a fine palate” when we mean that this person has a sophisticated
appreciation for food, using a part of the mouth to refer to eating habits and preferences.
Other cases of metonymy involving contiguity include Spanish “radio” and
“radiocassette” to refer in Spanish not only to the medium of “radio,” but also to the
machine where this medium is played (literally, “radio player” and “stereo”). Similarly,
“microwave” does not refer to the waves that heat food, but to the machine that
generates these waves; the word “shades” refers to “sunglasses,” which produce the
shade; a “facial” refers not to the face, but to the treatment that is applied to it; “subway”
refers not only to the underground way, but to the vehicle that transports people; “cache-
nez” (French for “scarf”), literary “hide-nose;” “marciapiede” (Italian for “sidewalk”),
literally “march-feet;” the word “wrap” denotes a type of sandwich, but it literally simply
tells us how the bread is arranged in the sandwich.

Similarly, an object that is present in or related to one’s working environment can
provide the name for the person that does such work: e.g. “herrero” – blacksmith - is
named after “hierro” – iron --; “mesero” – waiter - is named after “table” – mesa -;
“carabiniere” – a member of the Italian national police force - is named after “carabina” –
rifle -- in Italian; botones – bellboy - is named after the typical buttons in the bellboy uniform in Spanish, and the bell used to call the bellboy in English. Likewise, some patronymics\textsuperscript{21} derived from the occupations that families inherited from generation to generation in former times: Thatcher, Taylor, Baker, Harper, Barber, Shoemaker, Smith, Mason, Cooper, Carpenter, Wright, Steward, Herrero, Zapatero, Camarero, Sastre, etc.

Additionally, some of the examples that have been examined, as well as the ones presented next, exhibit synecdoche and metonymy in their etymology. For example, “hippopotamus” means “river horse” in Ancient Greek; similarly, “helicopter,” literally means “spiral wings;” “bicycle” translates as “two cycles or wheels” from Greek; “moto” (Spanish for “motorcycle”) refers to “something that moves” (Latin, motor); “theater” meant “a place for viewing” in Classical Greek; binoculars “two eyes” in Latin; “bus” from omnibus, a plural dative: “to/for all” in Latin; “amphibious” means “two lives” in Greek; “television,” “distant vision” also in Greek.

Although all these examples of everyday synecdoches and metonymies are usually beyond our linguistic awareness in regular communication exchanges, they become fairly conspicuous once they are pointed out. In a more revealing venue, cognitive semantics shows how the phenomena of metonymy and synecdoche are even more ubiquitous than the previous examples show. This branch of linguistics discloses how metonymic processes, \textit{inter alia}, permeate our grammar and reflect the ways in which the world is conceptualized and construed by language users based on their sensorimotor experiences (Langacker, 2005, p. 164; Pecher and Zwaan, 2005, p. 4). In this way, Langacker (1990) gives us examples that would seem completely “literal” and totally unremarkable to the untrained eye, such as the following:

1) “David blinked”

\textsuperscript{21} I am indebted to Professor James P. Lantolf for these examples.
2) “She heard the piano”
3) “I’m in the phone book”
4) “Your dog bit my cat”

(pp. 189-190)

The author shows how metonymy is involved in the fact that the predications in the above utterances (namely, the “blinking,” the “hearing,” the “being,” and the “biting”) can be compatible with their arguments (the subjects, objects, and adverbials of the verbs). In other words, taking example 1), the “active” or “participating” zone of the blinking is not all of David’s body and persona, but only his eyelids. In 4) the “active zone” would correspond to some part of the dog and some parts of the cat, but not to the whole animal. In 2) and 3) the “active zone” does not even correspond to a part of the designated element, since in 2) the “active zone” is the sound emitted by the piano (not a part of the piano), and in example 3) the “active zone” is the person’s name, not some part of the person (Langacker, 1990, p. 192). In “poetic” terms, we could conclude that 1) and 4) and cases of synecdoche (where the whole stands for the part), while 2) and 3) are cases of metonymy, where there is relationship of contiguity between the entity that is represented and the entity that represents. In addition, 2) qualifies as a synesthesia in that we hear a material object, not a sound (unless we actually heard the piano crashing down onto the sidewalk from the seventh floor during a moving accident). Langacker concludes that this discrepancy between the predications and their “active zones” “is thus the rule, not the exception” (p. 191) as we can see in the commonness of propositions such as “Roger heard a noise,” “Roger walked faster,” “Roger is digesting,” “Roger whistled,” “Roger figured out the puzzle,” “Roger breathed hard,” “Roger licked the popsicle,” etc (p. 191). Also consider how recurrently we say things such as “the book beeped as I was exiting the library,” where actually the book does not beep, the
sensors of the exit did. Days are sad when *people* and not days feel sad. We talk of “bottomless chips" when the container on which we obtain our free refill is the one supposed to be “bottomless.” A singer asks for ‘more orchestra’, when s/he actually want it to sound louder, not increase its size or number of members. This transposition or transfer of characteristics from an object to the contiguous one or to its contexts is typical of hypallage and pathetic fallacy in poetics.

This notion of the mind as essentially literary has profound bearings on our view of language. Langacker points out how language has literary capacities, such as metaphor, metonymy, fictivity, mental space construction, and conceptual blending because of an imaginative cognition (2005, p. 164). However, these capacities are “grounded in everyday bodily experience: motion, perception, muscular exertion, etc” (p. 164); they are not distortions of “the real” or “the literal,” and they are “not limited to the kinds of nonactuality involved in making false statements, in describing future events (which might not eventuate), or in creating fictitious worlds (as in a novel)” (p. 170). As he did with metonymy, the author presents unexpected examples of “fictivity” and reveals how indeed “fictitious entities are invoked and directly described even when our concern is with actuality” (p. 170, emphasis in the original). For example, a pervasive case of “fictivity” is “fictive motion,” in which the path of a moving entity is usually immobile, but described in dynamic terms thus suggesting movement. Therefore, the motion of the path is virtual and has an experiential basis in that it reflects how the person moving along the path perceives the path during the movement.

Examples of this are numerous in literature; we all have read of trees running by the sides of a railroad car as the protagonist of the story takes a trip on a train. We have also read of moons and stars floating on the waves of a river or the sea when actually the moon and the stars are immobile and what moves is the water on which they are
reflected. Here we have two concrete cases of fictive motion in literature. In the first one, the protagonist is riding a motorbike and, for a moment, the narrator describes the character’s riding experience as if everything else were moving but him:

*Dejó pasar los ministerios (el rosa, el blanco) y la serie de comercios con brillantes vitrinas de la calle Central.*

[He allowed the bureaus (the pink one, the white one) and a string of dazzling-windowed stores on Main Street go past him]

(“La noche boca arriba” by Cortázar)

This fictive motion together with other devices by Cortázar serves well its purpose of placing the reader in the rider’s pleasant and smooth point of view, thus causing a shocking turn of events when the protagonist has a fateful accident that leads him to embark on a quest for what is real and what is fictitious… a quest that started to materialize with his fictitious perception of “reality” on the motorbike ride. The second example is from the “Romance sonámbulo” by García Lorca. In this fragment the event of the wind moving the branches of a fig tree is construed as if the branches actually decided to move by themselves in order to “sand” the air with their rough leaves: *La higuera frota su viento / con la lija de sus ramas* [the fig tree rubs the wind around it / with the sandpaper of its branches].

Moreover, fictive motion is also to be found in commercials and the language of the media. For example, a highway billboard of Remax, a residential real estate agency, advertises that this is “The Sign That Brings You Home,” thus generating a pun on an idiom, and construing the fact that Remax finds a home for you as if Remax actually transported the home to you (instead of *taking* you to an immobile house). It will not be difficult to realize why such a commercial evokes a feeling of convenience. In the same way, monster.com with its motto “Let the right employers find you” places the job seeker in an inactive, effortless position. A similar phenomenon, “fictive scanning,” could be
involved in expressions such as “There’s too much going on” or “There’s too much happening” as ways of describing the over-elaboration of somebody’s attire by TV fashion critics. Thus, the mere existence of an excessive amount of accessories, patterns or colors becomes dynamic as the fashion critic finds himself / herself scanning and judging a multiplicity of details that, otherwise, are static and eventless.

Finally, “fictive motion” and “fictive scanning” are everyday phenomena that show how our grammar is linked to our perception… they do not obey to an impulse of being “literal” most of the time and “distorted” on occasion. Thus, we describe how “roads bend to the right” or “go up and down” or “around a mountain,” when actually the only thing that actually moves in all those directions is the person who is traveling on the road. You can be riding a bicycle and “see a low-hanging branch rushing towards you,” when actually it is you that is rushing towards the branch. “The sun rises or sets”\textsuperscript{22} when it is actually the earth that moves around the sun. Likewise, we say things such as “the pagoda tips over a precipice” or “the cathedral rises to the sky,” and “chimneys belch smoke into the atmosphere,” where motion is projected onto a motionless entity.

Although time is construed as a progressive line in our culture, “spring and the night arrive,” as though humans were static and times could move. However, examples do not have to be far-fetched (although, I would argue that the ones that have been presented here are pretty common). Apparently “literal” propositions such as “a scar extends from his ankle to his knee” (Langacker, 2005, p. 168), and “from one restaurant to the next, prices vary greatly” (p. 177) also involve “fictive motion” and “fictive scanning” respectively, as the regular use of quantifiers entail the use of “virtual” or “fictive” abstract planes in our minds.

\textsuperscript{22} I am indebted to Professor James P. Lantolf for this example (personal communication, June, 2004).
In light of the interface between the mind, the world and figurative language, Gibbs (1994) rejects the idea that semantics can still be viewed as the study of literal meaning and that figurative language should go to the “waste-basket” of pragmatics (p. 5). Hanks (1996, chapter 5), similarly, offers a discussion about how the traditional idea of separating semantics and pragmatics has been recently called into question, and how contextualized approaches to semantics more appropriately situate literal meaning itself in the intersection of linguistic form with context, as opposed to “the idea of a fixed literal sense inhering in grammatical form” (p. 106). On the other hand, Gibbs also dismisses the idea that figurative meanings can be explained, as in traditional lexical semantics, as “some highly abstract set of features” that “unifies all of a polysemous word’s different meanings” (p. 9).

With respect to this point, the contrary could be argued, that certain metaphorical uses of words become so stable that they are later introduced into dictionaries as other meaning entries or synonyms (Widdowson, 1975, p. 35). An example of this is the Spanish word “trasvasar,” defined in the dictionary as “to move liquid from one container to another” (Diccionario de la RAE). It became a metaphor with the advent of the European Union and the two-speed Europe, when people started to use “trasvasar” as the process of implantation of a super-structure from one country to another without taking into account the economic and political idiosyncrasies of the target nation. This process is similar to what Gibbs explains in relation to words such as “see” or “stand”: “New work in lexical semantics suggests that the meanings of many polysemous words can be explained in terms of basic metaphors that motivate, among other things, the transfer of English vocabulary from the domain of physical motion and object manipulation and location […] to various social and mental domains” (1994, pp. 9-10).
Gibbs analyses metaphor, metonymy and irony as a reflection of our “common schemes of figurative thought” (1994, p. 15).

As Hanks argues, we tend to attribute “elements of style” only to literature when they actually can be typical of speech of all types, included both oral and written speech (1996, p. 184). Hanks (1996, chapters 1 and 7) and Gibbs (1994, p. 24) provide interesting examples challenging the literalness of seemingly straightforward words. Here I present an example of my own with a word that should be apparently quite straightforward: the meaning of “we.” “We” seems to univocally be a social deictic pronoun in the second person plural in the nominative case. Its “literal meaning” is “somebody else and I,” or the group of people where I myself am included. “We” could include also an animal, since we tend to personify animals in some cultures. For example, I could say, “We are best buddies,” talking of a dog and myself. Could we do the same with an object? For example, could we say “We (the spaghetti and I) are in the dining room” or “We (the spaghetti and I) are spicy.” It would sound humorous, but it would be possible and the “literal” meaning of “we” would still apply.

Consider now a different case from a cook on the Food Network (4/21/03, *Sarah’s Secrets*). The cook was preparing two dishes at the same time – she was working on a cake on the kitchen counter and she had a pot with spaghetti on the stove, one in close proximity to the other. At a certain point, she finished the cake and then turned to the pot on the stove. As she raised the lid, she said, “Let’s see … we are getting nice and loose over here.” But what was actually getting nice and loose was the nearly *al dente* spaghetti (third-person singular) in fast-boiling water. This use of “we” could not possibly include literally the speaker and the audience in the activity of getting “nice and loose,” as neither the cook nor the spectators were evidently (and fortunately!) being cooked. A possible interpretation is that this social deictic was restructured in the
speaker’s course of meaning-making through speaking and in her material circumstances as a spatial deictic to distinguish between the two different dishes that were both in the “literal” spatial zone of the “here” (on the kitchen counter and on the stove, both in close proximity with respect to the location of the cook’s body). Therefore, the spaghetti has to become a “we” by deictic symbiosis as it became the focus of the cook and the audience’s activity and occupied their virtual space. Thus, a social deictic is construed as a spatial deictic to distinguish between foreground and background as both the spaghetti and the cake were physically in front of the cameras, at the same distance from the cook. In contrast, everything else that is foreign to this activity, whatever else the “we” of the audience and the cook is not acting upon, is not included in our spatial/ personal/ activity focus, and needs to be in the third person (even if that “something else” is still within the same physical distance as the pot with the boiling spaghetti, i.e. even if it is “literally” “here” too). Now, it would be more difficult to claim that “we” univocally indicates social deixis, a pronoun that is the subject of the action. It would seem dubious to claim that the context, as it is understood in the traditional sense, only “modified” its literal intrinsic meaning or added some type of “connotation.” This is an instance of how contexts do not preexist language. Contexts are created in the moment of speaking.

The example of “we” in the cooking program raises the question of the concept of “context.” In a traditional view, context is understood as existing outside the interlocutors (who seem to share the same understanding of the world). The role of context as traditionally understood only “modifies,” adds connotations to the inherent “literal” meaning of the grammar. To illustrate how this is not the case, let’s consider the slogan “Support our troops” that started to be displayed on windows and bumper stickers after the onset of America’s war on Iraq. The question is what does “Support our troops”
actually mean? What is it asking us to believe and to do? What is the context of this utterance and how does it ‘affect’ the expression’s meaning? For some people “Support our troops” means “make it possible for the troops to stay in Iraq and honor their job there.” For others the same words mean “save their lives by getting them out of Iraq.” Both sides use the same motto, although the anti-war position has made an addition: “Support our troops. Bring them back home.” Can we say that one meaning is a simple modification of the other, which has been just “fine-tuned” or “adjusted” to the context? If so, which meaning would be the literal and which the modification? Moreover, the addition of “Bring them back home” would result in a meaning inconsistency, if “Support our troops” actually means “support their work in Iraq” or some superficial alteration of that “original” meaning. Because, while the sign is the same (“Support our troops”), the meaning is not simply “modified” by the context; as a matter of fact, both meanings are more than completely different – they are radically opposed.

On the other hand, if context were to be found in the reality that surrounds the speakers – the way it has traditionally been understood - we would not have significant changes of meaning, for the external social context is very similar for two citizens living in a country at war arguing what is best for the nation. What is radically different is the speakers’ histories and their meaning that they make of the world, an element that had been considered stable or, at least, unproblematic in the traditional view of context. Drawing on Voloshinov (1986/ 1929) and Rommetveit (1974), Hanks (1996) explains how context should be understood as entailing the intersubjective “contracts” between the speakers, “ongoing discourse, and a horizon of background experience.” Interlocutors know the world from different perspectives; therefore, “knowledge and experience are differential,” which accounts for the multiple meanings that can be dispensed to the same word. Lexical and sentential meanings, then, are indeterminate
until placed in context; thus, it is context that adjudicates meaning (p. 86). Context is the
speakers’ representation of the world rather than the world surrounding the speakers.
This view of context is in consonance with the idea of context that the reader brings to
the text in Cook’s framework of literature as discourse (language schemata, text
schemata, and world schemata), as we will see in Chapter 3.

The previous note on the instability of the sign, its non literalness, is also in accordance with the Vygotskian concept of sense (as opposed to meaning) (Vygotsky, 1962). For Vygotsky sense has preponderance over meaning, the latter being “the most stable and precise zone” of sense, just “potentiality that finds diversified realization in
speech” (p. 146). On the other hand, the sense of a word is “the sum of all the
psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word. It is a dynamic, fluid,
complex whole, which has several zones of unequal stability [...]. A word acquires its
sense from the context in which it appears; in different contexts, it changes its sense” (p.
146). For Vygotsky meaning is just an orientation that can only be realized, completed and constructed in speech activity (“sense”). Similar to this idea is Halliday’s concept of “meaning potential,” which can only be fulfilled in social context, as the notion of social functions that language serves is central to the study of language (Halliday, 1978).

Widdowson (1978), similarly to Vygotsky, discusses the idea that words have
significance (the counterpart of Vygotskian meaning) and value (the counterpart of
Vygotskian sense). Therefore, both in everyday language and in literary texts, language can only be fully understood and achieve value when in use. Turner (1996), who argues that “narrative imagining – story - is the fundamental instrument of the thought,” (p. 4) which is one of the ways in which “the mind is essentially literary” (p. 5), argues that
“literature takes its instruments from the everyday mind” (Turner, 1996, p. 26) and views
meaning (which would correspond to Vygotskian sense) as unstable:
Meaning is not a deposit in a concept-container. It is alive and active, dynamic and distributed, constructed for local purposes of knowing and acting. Meanings are not mental objects bounded in conceptual places but rather complex operations of projection, binding, linking, blending, and integration over multiple spaces. Meaning is parabolic and literary.

(p. 57)

In this way, we may believe that some processes such as “action-events” (see chapter 3 of Turner, 1996, and Lakoff, 1987) are typical of just “literary” language. This is a process in which physical or spatial events such as being beautiful, aging, living, dying, loving are poetically and dramatically converted to actions performed by actors: Cupid, the Lady with the Scythe, Time as a relentless agent or the Greek God Chronos, Destiny and its Wheel, Spring or the Green Knight as regeneration, the Night or Darkness as agents of the unknown or the sinister. Examples of this pattern are copious in all types of literature. In Shakespeare’s King Lear the storm (Act III) is blind as the King’s rage and judgment with his daughters. This phenomenon of nature is depicted as an agent that humiliates the king by pulling his beard, which is the greatest offense that a king or any old man could suffer, and thus the emotions of anger and humiliation turn into an action.

Another example comes from Gongora’s sonnet V “Mientras por competir con tu cabello,/ oro bruñido al sol relumbra en vano” [while in order to compete with your locks, / polished gold dazzles in vain in the sun], where the agent-less physical state or event of being blonde is transformed into a story-action performed by polished gold and hair in golden competition. Garcilaso de la Vega reformulates the action-less event of having compatible personalities as an action of his soul, which has tailored its perfect match as from a piece of fabric: “Mi alma os ha cortado a su medida” (i.e. “we are made for each other.”) Pristinely poetic though this might seem to us, as Turner (1996) argues, action-stories or parabolic projections happen in literature because that is the way the mind organizes world experience, which shows up also in our parabolic grammar.
In “Sarah’s Secrets” (Food Network, 04/21/2003), the cook warns that “The pasta should never wait for the sauce, the sauce should wait for the pasta,” which reshapes the event-story of pasta getting cold and mushy by the natural laws of chemistry as the action-story of items of food waiting for each other. (This utterance also presents examples of personalization, and isocolon or chiasmus). At a certain point on the same cooking program, the announcer rejoiced that “we have all these nice textures going on,” where a texture, which is an existential event, is infused with durative, imperfective or iterative aspect by being reshaped as literally an on-going, drawn-out or repeated action.

A painter may explain to you how ordinary graphite pencils repel any pastel color laid on top (Harrison, 2003, How to Paint and Draw, p. 200), thus conceptualizing a chemical process that is in fact due to the oily composition of the graphite pencils rather than to an action of the pencil itself. Likewise, descriptive events such as a combination of color or the specific look of a room may become an action performed by the room itself: “This room gives me the sass and the romance that I’m looking for” (Movie and Makeover, TBS, 7/10, 2003). In cooking processes, ingredients seem to have a life of their own: salt makes vegetables sweat, vinegar brings out the flavor of onion and pepper in sofrito, and once a cheese heats up, it has to loosen up some of its character and flavor.

In the same way, new shoes can kill us; work drives you crazy, especially when fear seizes you and anxiety paralyzes you; and then, back at home, vodka burns one’s throat; curry spices up chicken; it is a shame that the foods that make one’s mouth water usually fatten one too, thank God that exercise reshapes your body, and a cream can smooth your wrinkles; a certain color can flatter you or totally wash you out; spring is yet to come and then love knocks on one’s door or arrives unexpectedly; although the planet
is dying, the sun will rise every morning for at least another five billion years; it is incredible that contemporary science allows us to know so much about the future; truth is that in an high-tech society computers can make one's life easier; but modern diseases are appearing; for example, be careful with smoking, because cigarettes can take years off your life just as cancer takes thousands of lives every year; bad habits eventually take their toll on you … The examples are innumerable.

In addition, just as in everyday parables and narratives, our viewpoint does not always coincide with the moment of speaking, thus being susceptible to manipulation for the creation of certain effects. Turner (1996) explains tenses in English (especially those cases that are believed to be exceptions) by describing the foci and the various viewpoints adopted by the speakers. This accounts for the fact that we can use the present or the future to talk about the past. This example of a future used to talk about the past is possible as speakers can choose to take a perspective that precedes the moment of speaking and the narrative focus: the two Arabian clans intervening in the Visigoth civil wars in Hispania will eventually defeat the Visigoth King Roderic in 711; they will establish their kingdom in the Al-Andalus and beyond. In turn, it is also possible to use the present or even the past to talk about the future if the speaker chooses to make the moment of speaking precede the focus and make the perspective posterior to both: comías con tu jefe mañana, ¿no? [you had lunch with your boss tomorrow, right?] (For more examples, see chapter 8 in Turner, 1996). The consequence is that we cannot teach time and aspect as univocally conveyed by specific verbal forms or tenses. For example, we cannot claim that the imperfect tense is always used for actions in progress or unfinished, otherwise, utterances such as “En 1959 Richie Valens moría en un
accidente de avión a la edad de 17 años,\textsuperscript{23} which obviously refers to the chronology of completed past events, would not make sense. Turner proposes that tense and aspect be taught in ways that show how choices of preterit vs. imperfect, or present vs. past vs. future have a discourse dimension, and, moreover, in ways in which the so-called “exceptions” can be accounted for. McCarthy and Carter (1994) give details about how the traditional account of tense and aspect is “oriented toward the “objective” representation of time, of time as an ideational element of the message” (p. 94), which fails to explain how coherence is possible in a text where different tenses and aspects can refer to the same event. The authors relate this manipulation of tense and aspect to particular effects (e.g. foregrounding, “now-relevance”) and discourse patterns (e.g. problem-solution) characteristic of the conventions of certain oral and written genres, such as “hot news,” jokes, etc. (see chapter 3 of McCarthy and Carter, 1994). The idea is that, rather than a basic univocal grammar, we have a narrative, parabolic, interpersonal, dialogic (receiver-involving) discursive grammar. Some researchers, such as Hopper, even argue against the idea of system or grammar and submit that in reality we have a linguistic repertoire of strategies for building discourse (Hopper, 1987).

Finally, to make the case that literariness is a feature of everyday language stronger, I want to discuss the creativity of language of people who seem too far from literary circles. I am referring to a type of slang called \textit{Cheli} that is associated with delinquency in Spain. Although it has become popular through movies and television,\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{23} According to most textbooks the preterit is the aspect for chronology, one-time finished, punctual events, and the imperfect for actions in progress or unfinished and also for habitual actions. However, in the example, we have a punctual, one-time event that is finished or completed. Bolinger (1968), drawing on Bull’s terminology, explains that cyclic verbs such as “morir” in the preterit may have an inceptive or terminative aspect. That would make preterit “the correct choice” if we were to take the objective-time perspective that is more often than not presented to language students. However, what is overlooked in most textbooks is the speaker’s subjectivity and the meaning that is intended in speech. In that way, the speaker may want to leave the event open in the past to emphasize its relevance at that time or its lingering impact.
Cheli began as a self-marginalizing jargon that emerged from street groups as a way of talking about their activities without being understood by outsiders to their community, especially the police. It represents aspects of the world that are conventionally considered taboo, for example, violence, murder, death, the horror of prison, drunkenness, the anguish of drug withdrawal, etc. Sometimes, these terms may sound like “criminal poetry.” A *mojada* (“a wet one”) is the action of knife stabbing, so *dar una mojada* (“to give a wet one”) is to stab somebody, based on the extremely brutal metonymy of the feeling of bloody wetness on the victim’s body and the perpetrator’s hands. In a less atrocious vein, the word *madero*, for policeman, can be either a synecdoche or a metaphor in the Surrealist venue (the color of the uniform, similar to wood – *madera* - representing the whole person).

Another type of slang, Cockney slang, which evolved in England, is based on rhyme. Entities are referred to by a phrase in which the last word rhymes with the original word. For example, “wife” is replaced by “storm and strife.” Sometimes the second (rhyming) word is not used, so “wife” is called simply “storm,” and if I used your socks, then “I wore your *almonds,*” that is to say “your *almond rocks,*” which are “socks” (Wright, 1981).

In conclusion, the so-called “literary language” taps into the natural resources of the language that we all speak. Literature is inseparable from the material of what it is made and from the humanity of its creator. It exists in the image of language that is spoken by poets and non-poets. If in this section I gave examples of the “figurativeness” of everyday language, in the next section, my purpose will be to show that Literature can, conversely, be ‘unpoetic’.
In his first “Rima,” of which I just presented the opening lines, the Spanish Romantic poet, Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, was expressing his struggle in finding an appropriate linguistic vehicle or a poetic language that could be, on the one hand, elevated, sublime, diaphanous and ethereal, and, on the other, uncontaminated and untouched by a society to which the Romantic is rebelliously opposed. Both conditions were met by music according to the poet, who creates mimesis between his linguistic exploration, the lexical choices (hymno, cadencias), and the acoustic aspect of the rhythmical pattern of the rhyme, which is extremely musical. In the last stanza, however, the poet eventually concludes that there is no possibility of totally linguistically escaping societal contamination; thus, a schism exists between a smeared society and poetry in its unadulterated Platonic form. This can only be observed in pure form in the beauty of the untouched, innocent beings that populate our world (for example, women, as they often platonically appear in his rhymes).

Despite the prevailing associations between the essence of poetry and the type of language for which Bécquer and many others searched high and low, this has not been the way in which poetry and “poetic language” have been conceived of and
characterized throughout history. Again, this informs us about the temporal and spatial (and I would add, “personal”) arbitrariness of the term “literature,” which, curiously enough, in some moment of history just meant “anything that is written.” Some centuries after Bécquer, poetry is conceived by some as something entirely mundane that is linked to ordinary human experience of the world and evolves with people throughout the centuries. Such a quotidian view of poetry is accompanied by a quotidian poetic language:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ya sé que no es eterna la poesía,} & \quad \text{I know that poetry is not eternal,} \\
\text{pero sabe cambiar junto a nosotros,} & \quad \text{but can change with us,} \\
\text{aparecer vestida con vaqueros,} & \quad \text{can show up dressed in jeans,} \\
\text{apoyarse en el hombre que se inventa un amor} & \quad \text{can lean on the man that invents a love} \\
\text{y que sufre de amor} & \quad \text{and that suffers from love} \\
\text{cuando está solo.} & \quad \text{when he is alone}
\end{align*}
\]


Luis García Montero and José Hierro, exponents of the poesía de la experiencia (experiential poetry) among others, do not attempt to escape the “contamination” of society; on the contrary, they search for a type of “literary language” that is relatable and easy to understand. Similarly, novelist Miguel Delibes uses the language of the illiterate in Los Santos Inocentes. The Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén even represents orthographically the phonological characteristics of his dialect (e.g. in Mulata) infusing his poems with the qualities traditionally attached to the oral mode. Examples are
numerous. Consider the following poem by David González, a young and highly respected Spanish poet.

**denominación de origen**

*la misma palabra lo dice: cárcel.*

diminutivo de cárcel: reformatorio.

sinónimos de cárcel:
penal
presidio
correccional
penitenciaria
(los dos últimos incluyen matiz de regeneración).

prisión es la palabra escogida o forense.

se la conoce también por otros nombres:
talego (el más extendido)
maco
trullo
trena (germanismo).

los gitanos la llaman estaribel o estar,
que viene a ser lo mismo pero abreviando. sin embargo,
cuando estás dentro de una,
cuando te ves allí metido,
el nombre es lo de menos,  
no tiene mayor importancia,  
lo único que cuenta,  
es que siempre,  
en todo momento,  
es una cárcel.  
una cárcel, tío.  

[origin denomination]  
the very word says it: jail.  
the short for jail: reformatory  
synonyms of jail:  
prison  
big house  
house of correction  
penitentiary  
(the last two contain  
a nuance of regeneration).  
jail is the word of choice  
or forensic term.  
it is also known by other names:  
slammer (the most widely-spread)  
pokey  
can  
clink (after a real jail in London).  
gypsies call it stariben
or sturaben,
which are more or less the same,
almost homophones. however,
when you are inside of one,
when you see yourself in there,
the name is the least important thing,
it’s of no relevance at all,
the only thing that counts
is that always
at all moments
it’s a jail.
a jail, man.]

Certainly, the status of this text as poem cannot depend on its textual features, but on its features as discourse where a context is created with the reader who reads into the poem. Far from looking for a “pure” language untouched by society, as Bécquer did, this poem plunges into the mundane.

González’s poem exhibits some features that may be associated with an informal conversational register: a vocative (e.g. “man” or “dude”) that establishes a certain relationship of camaraderie among the participants in familiar contexts; discourse markers, such as abreviando, that is, “in short;” colloquial lexicon and argot, etc. Additionally, the poet seems to be fleshing out information that can be found abbreviated in a dictionary. For example, by spelling out “the diminutive of jail,” and “from German,” González seems to be elaborating on the typical parenthetical italicized abbreviations of the common dictionary entry, such as (dimin.) and (Germ.). In addition, he announces that what follows is a list of synonyms of “jail” (“sinónimos de cárcel”), which he arranges
into separated lines, without punctuation. In contrast, the typical dictionary entry would present an uncommented list of synonyms separated by commas and semicolons, and arranged in a paragraph following the definition proper of “jail.”

Occasionally, the poet seems to adopt a more formal, lecture-like, writerly register with the Spanish passive reflexive, and heading-like nominal phrases (“sinónimos de cárcel” versus “now I am going to say/list some synonyms of jail”). Nonetheless, this impersonal note is surpassed by a string of emotionally laden, ordinary argot terms for “jail.” An original paradox revolves around one of the common words related to “jail” --“reformatory,” according to the poet is the diminutive of “jail.” This is not possible in the metalinguistic sense of “diminutive,” but only in the experiential realm, in which a reformatory is but a friendlier version of a real jail for a minor. However, original though this paradox may be, figures of contradiction, irony, etc. are also common in everyday speech, and in non-poetic genres such as jokes, commercials and news.

Because of this reconstitution of dictionary information, the poet appears to be reading aloud or lecturing on the definition of “jail” to an (imagined) interlocutor or audience that cannot access the poet’s written source. Plausibly, the poet may be ironically mimicking the authoritative tone of the written word and of certain writerly spoken genres (e.g. the academic lecture) in which reliability and truth are established through impersonal and aseptic uses of language. The re-registration in the poem allows González to add impromptu personal, experiential information and meanings that cannot be found in a dictionary or in another impersonal written source. These remarks ironize discourses that are constructed as foreign to human experience, but, which, paradoxically, enjoy more attention, face validity and authority than first person, ordinary discourses. This is not only a confrontation of adequate and valid expressive vehicles, but also a confrontation between the establishments and systems in which such genres
and registers are functionally embedded. In the end, González may be validating the voice and the experience of participants of certain social contexts as reliable, authoritative sources of truth and meaning. Additionally, by extension, the poet seems to validate the marginal world about which he writes as a valid aesthetic, literary object, and to vindicate the creativity of non-standard language uses.

So far I have discussed how González re-registers non-literary genres in his poem. Now I will discuss how the text establishes itself as a poem. When one looks for the type of patterned language that is typical of the poetic genre, one finds that González’s text, like most poems, is divided into lines. However, this is also a characteristic of some ads and other everyday texts (e.g. shopping lists, leaflets, posters, etc.). In addition, González’s poem is in blank and free verse, that is, it is an unrhymed poem that lacks a consistent, identifiable metrical pattern. The poem mixes odd-numbered syllable lines (11 syllables, 13 syllables, 7 syllables, 3 syllables) with even-numbered syllable lines (6 syllables, 8 syllables), which, according to conventional metrics in the Spanish language is not a harmonic, well-patterned metrical scheme. The metrical pattern is only regular for the first six lines thanks to variations of an even-numbered stress pattern (e.g. 2-5-8-10 for the first line, (2)-4-7-10-12 for the second, etc.). In this way, words that are infelicitously too long for poetry such “reformatorio” or “correccional” support the stress pattern with both primary and secondary stresses on even-numbered syllables.

On the other hand, this emerging metrical pattern is ruptured in the seventh line with an odd-numbered stress pattern ((3)-5), which may be a purposeful interruption. However, the following line is what conventional metrics would deem to be an ill patterned, unbalanced line because of two contiguous stresses (on the second and the third syllables). This seems to point to a random distribution of tonic and non-tonic
syllables as in spontaneous spoken language production, which is less justified in a genre that is typically based on patterned language and, thus, can be carefully constructed on paper.

Notwithstanding the irregular metrical scheme, there is a certain patterning in the poem thanks to the string of juxtaposed jail terms, and a two-halved, caesural structure, in which the first part of a line or a whole line announces a definition or a term that is provided or commented on after a break or pause by the second part of the line or the following line. However, this form of patterning is hardly an exclusive feature of poems either, as we can see in the following commercial description of a hair product below:

What you wear begins with your hair. What’s on your body ….. the most comfortable thing you own. What’s in your hair …..Potion 9 wearable treatment. It makes your hair comfortable, lived in. Stylish. The only wearable treatment with nine ingredients to help repair damaged hair while building in style. Anytime. Anywhere. Anybody. Pure magic.

(My italics)

The above text also exhibits a two-halved structure created by pseudo-cleft clauses, and a question-answer pattern. It is only towards the end of the poem that we can read such a distinct pattern as the anaphoras and the parallelisms in the ad ["when you are inside of one,/ when you see yourself in there,/ the name is the least important thing,/ it’s of no relevance at all."]

Additionally, although the imaginative use of punctuation in the poem may evoke the particular style of some other poets (e.g. e. e. cummings, bell hooks and Mario Benedetti, inter alia), we find that manipulation of punctuation is also present in the above ad and may be also present in speech-based genres (e.g. online synchronic chat conversation, email, personal notes, etc.).

The ad also engages in original uses of punctuation with periods that separate a list of words and a nominal phrase (“Anytime. Anywhere. Anybody. Pure magic.”) to form
what sounds like a dactylic trimetrical line (i.e. anytime anywhere anybody: '- - ' - - ' - - ) followed by a trochaic dimeter (i.e. pure [pause] magic: '(-) / ' - '). Interestingly, the list of items in the ad would seem to conform to traditional literary conventions to a larger extent than the list of jail terms in the poem, because while the latter is a list of informal, common, ordinary, argot terms related to the notion of “jail,” the items in the ad have been selected to have “any” in common (thus, constituting a rhetorical figure called symplece), and are arranged in increasing intensity and relevance: from circumstances (anytime, anywhere) to participants (anybody) to a climax of “pure magic.”

In sum, there is not a single particular, specific formal feature in González’s poem that can be claimed to be completely exclusive or defining of poetry, unshared by other written and oral, literary and non-literary texts. Furthermore, González seems quite determined to seek voices from non-poetic genres. Nevertheless, although the language in González’s poem sounds very far from the type of unearthly, uncontaminated ‘literary language’ sought by Romantics like Bécquer and Modernists, some readers will attribute a high value to this text as a poem precisely because of that. This is because they may find it original, provocative, disruptive, more relatable and engaged with the close reality of the world. Others will appreciate that the author is using a stigmatized jargon in the frame of a poem with the metalanguage and the detailed lexical information (intertext) that only a dictionary can provide, thus consciously revealing through his linguistic and social choices that he is educated and informed and has chosen not to “fit” into conventional society. The poem shows a piece of experience that cannot be learned from the dissected, aseptic, ahistorical, sophisticated words, which anyone can find in dictionaries. Others, despite (or because of) recognizing the disruption, will reject the poem, the world and the values represented in it. The plurality of contexts that readers bring into a text is unpredictable and should not be replaced by the words and the
experience of critics. The main point is that literature cannot be found in a text. It is to be found between an author, a text and a reader, which makes sense dynamic rather than immanent to a piece of work. To put it in Baktinian terms, literariness is the spark of meaning that moves between all the protagonists of discourse.

In addition, non-elevated resources have been exploited in literature. Fernando de Rojas used an acrostic message in the introductory poem in the prologue of *La Celestina*. Similarly, Chaucer is famous for his abecedarian poem (“Prior of nostre dame”) and Ende’s *Never Ending Story* for being an abecedarian fantasy novel. However, acrostic, acronyms and abbreviations, creative, playful and ingenious as they are, were not born with literature. Acrostics were used in Kabalistic charms and as mnemonic devices in the Hebrew Psalms of the *Old Testament* to facilitate their oral transmission. They are part of commercials, and riddles, of scientific, technical, political and economic lexicons, of puzzles and newspaper crosswords. Similarly, one of the most canonical literary works in the world, Cervantes’ *Quixote*, is plagued by genres that could have qualified as sub-literary in Cervantes’ own time, and by clichéd expressions common in oral speech, which characterized the vulgarity of Sancho, and, eventually, the “sanchification” of Don Quixote.

I argue that it is precisely because of these “profane,” “everyday language” features that I have discussed, these poems, novels and tragic comedies are as “literary” as they are. The everyday resources were at the service of meaning construction, thus creating a refreshing or destabilizing effect and a sense of originality for some of their readers. Along different lines, some of what are considered now artistic manifestations were originally conceived to be univocally, unambiguously and even indexically

---

24 Pun on words based upon Bakhtin’s metaphor of meaning as a spark between two terminals (Volosinov [Bakhtin] 1986 [1929]: 102-103).
interpreted by certain interlocutors. This is the case with spiritual of black slaves, where biblical imagery and metaphors were conventionalized by the community to be interpreted as meticulous instructions for a successful escape and for hiding fugitives. Although some of the lines may sound very explicit ("wade in the water," "you may hinder me here but you can't up there," "oh, go down"), the predisposition to search for figurative meaning in songs, poems, and other similar genres contributed to the slave drivers’ ignorance of the content of the messages, and to the chanting of instructions on ways to escape in the cotton fields in American South some centuries ago. Vygotsky in his *Psychology of Art* (1971) refers to Bücher’s studies on the origins of art, and how he found that both poetry and songs originated in the history of humanity as a way of marking the rhythm of work, of signaling the "beginning of a simultaneous collective effort" (Bücher, 1923, p. 173) and of relaxing "cathartically the tremendous stress created by labor" (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 245).

This issue of the impossibility of discriminating between literary and everyday discourse on the basis of formal features has left us yet with two more questions that will be answered in the next chapter: if literature is not abstract, subjective, embellished, figurative language, what is it? If what can be found in literature can also be found in any other type of discourse, why even bother to teach literature?
Chapter 3

In search of lost definitions

Ghosh shook his head. “You are still young. Free,” he said, spreading his hands apart for emphasis. “Do yourself a favor. Before it’s too late, without thinking too much about it first, pack a pillow and a blanket and see as much of the world as you can. You will not regret it. One day it will be too late.”

“My grandfather always says that that’s what books are for,” Ashoke said, using the opportunity to open the volume in his hands. “To travel without moving an inch.”

(Jhumpa Lahiri, The Namesake, p. 16)

Chapter 2 obliquely inquired into the nature of literature by examining and questioning the principles upon which its implementation has been traditionally based in the foreign-language curriculum. As a result, some loose characterizations and pedagogical perspectives were produced: literature is authentic language use, is not a field for exceptional linguistic distortion, is populated by both oral and written modes, is suitable for beginners as well for the intermediate and the advanced, focuses attention on meaning as much as it does on form. However, this indirect examination of the concept of literariness was a by-product of a contestation to well-established views that opposed literature to everyday, authentic, oral, communicative usage, which was the focus of Chapter 2. This leads us to the present Chapter, which attempts a reconceptualization of language and literature as discourse. The first section of the chapter discusses what is implied in a discursive view of language, and the consequences that this view has for the allocation of meaning. The second section surveys the different perspectives under which literature has been studied and analyzed in the last two centuries, specifically in relation to diverse elements such as authors, contexts, readers, and texts. The third section scrutinizes a series of conceptualizations
of literature clearly influenced by the approaches discussed in the second section, and searches for a definition that establishes both its contiguity and its distinctiveness with respect to other discourses. The fourth and last section provides reasons to account for the inclusion of literature in the curriculum given its characterization as one more type of discourse. Chapters 4 and 5 will in turn deal with specific pedagogical implications derived from these and other considerations.

3.1 Discourse: breaking the bread of meaning, sharing our minds and worlds with others

“And what does it mean?

Langdon always hesitated when he got this question. Telling someone what a symbol “meant” was like telling them how a song should make them feel – it was different for all people. A white Ku Klux Klan headpiece conjured images of hatred and racism in the United States, and yet the same costume carried a meaning of religious faith in Spain.”

(Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, p. 58)

The first two chapters underscored the creative and figurative nature of language as opposed to the prevailing pedagogical practice of implementing a sentence-bound, rule-constrained concept of language. Thus far, it has been proposed that a notion of language as discourse should supersede a traditional dichotomous notion of language as an entity with immanent meanings independent from contexts and thence with a literal, neutral existence. But how can the notion of “discourse,” which has been dispensed so prodigally though vaguely up to this point, be more specifically defined?

Cook (1994) defines text, context, and discourse in the following terms: *Text* is “the linguistics forms in a stretch of language, and those interpretations of them which do not vary with context” (p. 24). *Text* interacts with *context*, “a form of knowledge of the
world" (p. 24). *Discourse*, hence, can be defined as “a stretch of language in use, taking
on meaning in context for its users, and *perceived* by them as purposeful, meaningful
and connected” (p. 25, italics added). Although this two-tier definition may sound
dualistic (and, admittedly, to a certain extent it is), what makes this definition useful and
what Cook was provisionally establishing here is the existence of “linguistic data,” which
had been denied by some extreme Reader-Response theorists (see next section), who,
in turn, were reacting to other approaches that placed an excessive focus on the text
without taking into account its readers. Another useful part of this definition is the
emphasis on the fact that a text is not realized as such until a reader actualizes it, i.e.
when language is in use or in context. The sum of perceived purpose, meaning and
connection in a stretch of language is what makes us see a text as “coherent.” In
defining coherence as a “perceived” quality, coherence is thus made dependent on, and
variable with, the perceiver and his/ her context (Cook, 1994, p. 25).

Given this definition, the conceptualization of language as discourse broadens
the traditional scope to view language as a phenomenon that is “functionally and socially
oriented,” with non-literalness as “a basic linguistic and communicative characteristic”
(Carter, 1997, p. 219); that is, with meaning *not* residing immanently in structures and
texts, but socially distributed, and only fully realized when in use. Thus, discourse is “the
dynamic realization of texts as expressive or communicative acts” (Kern, 2000, p. 9, note
1); that is, the “activation” of a text, which otherwise is “inert,” by a reader or interlocutor
and his/ her context (Widdowson, 2004, p. 8). Widdowson (1989) remarks how
communicative competence “is not a matter of knowing rules for the composition of
sentences and being able to employ such rules to assemble expressions from scratch as
and when occasion requires” (p. 10). Communicating is rather being able to apply and
adjust “partially pre-assembled patterns, formulaic frameworks, and a kit of rules so as to
speak” guided by our meaning and “contextual standards” (Widdowson, 1989, p. 10).

Because of this situatedness, language, far from being neutral, is tinged with our being-in-the-world, and hence linguistic resources are permeated with schematic aspects, just as schematic resources are imbued with linguistic aspects as well (Kern, 2000, p. 67).

Meaning is made through writing systems, vocabulary, syntax, cohesion conventions, organizational patterns (formal schemata), genre, style, stories, and declarative knowledge (content schemata) used according to procedural knowledge (Kern, 2000, p. 67). These meaning sources or, in Kern’s words, Available Designs, co-exist on a continuum featuring more or less schematic or linguistic aspects. However, “each of these Available Designs involves both a cognitive and a social component – no element is fixed and independent of the humans who determine it” (Kern, 2000, p. 67). The “contextual standards” that guide us as we are engaged in discourse are also created as we speak, as has already been remarked in Chapter 2. Gee (1999) called this “a magical property” because “when we speak or write we craft what we have to say to fit the situation or context in which we are communicating. But, at the same time, how we speak or write creates that very situation or context” (p. 11). This idea is in tune with Cole’s notion of context as “weaving together,” in which the interlocutors’ discourses and threads of context recombine and reorganize the system of which they partake to create a new pattern (Cole, 1996, p. 335). In those threads of context, an interlocutor is not separated from his/her external context; as the mind works through their artifacts, minds and contexts are also woven into functional systems where the relationship between mind and context is organic, their boundaries dynamic and ambiguous (p. 135-137). To give an example of a functional system in order to elucidate the notion of interlocutor’s context, if a person is trying to locate a place with a map, would it be exact to say that the map is part of the external context, an artifact that is adjacent or peripheral to the
mental process of finding a place? The argument made here is that the map is part or an extension of the person’s mind in that it mediates the process of thinking and conceiving of space and location with affordances$^{25}$ and restrictions. The notion of mediation implies that the map cannot be understood as an addition to an autonomous, clearly delimited mind. This artifact rather has to be understood as, using a biology metaphor, a symbiotic, parasitic entity to the mind, in that the latter is constituted by, enmeshed in, woven with, permeated through, by its tools and artifacts, which are provided for by cultures that in turn have reproduced and transformed these tools and artifacts through generations on end. In other words, the map is assigned psychological status by the individual in order to think about space and directions.

As a result, social and cultural worlds are as embedded in the human being as the human being is embedded in these worlds, for people think with and through the artifacts of the culture, which include verbal and written interactions with other individuals (Moll, 2000, p. 265) and with artifacts. This embeddedness clearly relates to the idea of the semiotic mediation of activity where language is a culturally shaped tool through which the mind explains and makes sense of “reality,” as it was discussed in the section about Sociocultural Theory in Chapter 1. Language becomes, in Feire’s terms, “world-and-action” since “language is impossible without thought, and language and thought are impossible without the world to which they refer” (Freire, 2000, p. 20). Along the

$^{25}$ Affordance is defined as a property of the environment in as much as it is relevant to an organism in that environment. As the very word indicates, an affordance “affords” the organism further action, but does not cause or trigger it (Van Lier, 2000, p. 252). For example, in the case of the map, the affordances that the map lends are not properties of the map or the map user, but of the relationship between the map and the map user. Thus, a map may afford to find a place on campus, but it can also afford to protect oneself from rain, or to write down the new telephone number of an old friend that we meet after a long time. Therefore, “[w]hat becomes an affordance depends on what the organism does, what it wants, and what is useful for it” (Van Lier, 2000, p. 252). In other words, a map might afford the map user to orient himself or herself in space, but in other instances a compass, a list of directions or a galaxy at night might afford such action instead.
same lines, Gee (1999) emphasizes how discourses in tandem with our activity create ways of “being:”

We continually and actively build and rebuild our worlds not just through language, but through language used in tandem with actions, interactions, non-linguistic symbol systems, objects, tools, technologies, and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling, and believing.

(p. 11)

Thus, it is language-mediated activity, and not language alone, that is the source of meaning, behind which hides “socially developed methods of action (operations) in the process of which people change and perceive objective reality” (Leontiev, 1978, p. 85). As Gee (1999) posits, “the material world takes on meanings” only in “the interaction of that world with human activity, language, sociocultural knowledge, attitudes, and identities, and political relationships” (p. 84). Then, meanings interpret the world in human consciousness, and become consciousness’ most important constituters (Leontiev, 1978, p. 85), which provides us with affordances that both empower and constrain our ways of thinking.

Thus, the embeddedness of social and cultural worlds in the individual happens as personal sense develops from social meaning in the course of activity. Meanings represent an ideal form of the objective world that is revealed by cooperative social practice. When meanings are interpreted by “concrete features of the individual, by his former experience, by the uniqueness of his circumstances, temperament, etc.,” then meanings in the form of personal sense enter in the system of individual consciousness (Leontiev, 1978, p. 89). I will give an example from a movie entitled Maria Full of Grace that dramatically illustrates the difference between social meaning and personal sense.

The protagonist of the film, Maria Álvarez, is a pregnant teenager from Colombia who enters the United States illegally. As she is rambling down a New York street,
coming back from a doctor’s visit, a man outside a store arranges a rose display at
which she looks intently, almost sarcastically. Roses are part of a semiotic system in
which they are the embodiment of feelings of love, innocence, passion, and beauty in
many cultures. This social meaning emerges from a cooperative practice that involves
dating rites, social values and religious beliefs about relationships, the construction of
gender roles and sexuality, marketing, political and economic interests around the
organization of family, etc. But the personal meaning that Maria experiences, a former
rose packager working under humiliating conditions, is now in tension with this social
meaning that accosts her on the sidewalk. At this other side of the assembly line, Maria
looks at roses that, sold at a much higher price than her salary would have afforded,
exude a romantic, happy, promising air in the store display and in other people’s lives.
Her intent look captures the clash between abstracted social meanings and her personal
significance attached to roses in what Leontiev called the “double life” of meanings. On
the one hand, meanings are “produced by society and have their history in the
development of language, in the development of forms of social consciousness” with
human knowledge, cognitive means, and ideological (religious, philosophical, political)
representations of society (p. 89). As meanings are individualized and subjectivized,
they form individual consciousness and constitute the individual’s personal sense; while
our external sensitivity connects meanings with the objective world, personal sense
connects meanings with the individual’s own life in this world, with his/her motives (p.
93).

However, despite of this movement within the concrete individual, meanings do
not lose “their social-historical nature, their objectivity” (p. 89). Hence Maria’s
contestation of the factory conditions, and her posterior sarcastic look at the rose display
are possible because the social and the subjective are present and in tense
contradiction. In this way, personal sense directly relates to motivation, since the individual’s consciousness appears directly for the subject in the forms of interest, passion, boredom, inclinations, remorse, etc. These emotions help evaluate the individual’s objective circumstances and actions and signal the personal significance of these events for his/her life (pp. 91, 95). In this tension between social meaning and personal significance, as individual consciousness develops, personality or identity is forged and transformed, a topic that will be fully discussed in Chapters 6 and 10.

Now turning to literary discourse, we are faced with the different social meanings and individual significances of the author and the readers, which additionally exist on temporally and culturally displaced planes in most cases. This situation is not exclusive to literature; literary texts together with other dislodged texts such as the Bible, constitutions and legal documents, have experienced periods of rigorous submission to exegetical scrutiny. Various stances have been taken with respect to the allocation of meaning and the placement of critical interest throughout history. Some literary theories have centered on the author’s significance, while others have been concerned with the meanings “inherent” in the texts. Likewise, some approaches have focused on the reader’s personal sense, and others have been interested in how literary works are part of social meanings and superstructures. In order to investigate these centers of interest, theories have focused on the text, on the author’s information, on the reader and the reading process, or on the historical context of the work of art. These literary approaches will be succinctly examined in the next section, which will also serve to situate the history of the characterizations of literature examined in the third section, since many of the definitions of literature included in the third section are either reactions to the shortcomings of these diverse approaches or attempts to integrate and complement them.
3.2 Searching for meaning: authors, readers, texts and contexts.

3.2.1 Meanings in the author’s world.

To start with the earliest group of theories, around the nineteenth century, a first group of approaches, Biographical Criticism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, and Phenomenology, situated the author as their center of interest. While Biographical Criticism, as its name indicates, focused on the author’s biographical information, Phenomenology submitted that the author was present in the text and that extensive reading of his/her works could reveal his/her psychology, which led to Psychoanalytic Criticism, mostly influenced by the work of Sigmund Freud. This approach not only focused on the author per se, but also on other aspects the author’s work, such as characters, who were analyzed as if they were real people (Klarer, 1999, p. 91-92) and conversely, I would add, real people who were analyzed as characters, as the names of some complexes – Oedipus, Electra, etc. - seem to indicate. Psychoanalytical Critics searched for analogies between Freud’s concepts of id, ego and superego and the workings of literary texts. As they did so, the issues of repression and sublimation became critical to this theory, as art, in a Freudian view, is a mechanism for the release of unconscious psychic forces (Booker, 1996, pp. 29, 31).

3.2.2 Meanings in texts

Among the approaches that focus on the text, Formalism (actually a linguistic-based theory), whose main proponent was Roman Jackobson, revolved around the main principle of “defamiliarization,” by means of which an object is made perceptible to the
viewer or reader. This theory saw the literary text “as an autonomous object divorced from the specific circumstances of its creation and creator, and from the historical and social context of its reception” (Cook, 1994, p. 130). Formalism focused on the “estranged” form of literary texts, and structurally analyzed thematic elements traditionally assigned to content rather than to form (such as plot and characters) (Klarer, 1999, p. 84), while denying “historical, sociological, biographical or psychological dimensions of literary discourse” (p. 82).

In his writings on art and esthetics, Vygotsky rejected Formalism and the idea of “art as technique” for not recognizing the “psychological significance of the material” (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 57). Formalists, however, introduced the significant notion of “estrangement,” by means of which we restore “the feeling of life, by instilling feelings and sensations into things” that had been dulled by the automatism of our vital habits (Shklovskii, 1919, pp. 104-105, quoted in Vygotsky, 1971, p. 57). However, despite this definition of “estrangement,” Formalists fall into the contradiction of affirming that content or material are not essential in art as they conclude that the purpose of estrangement is merely to perceive an object (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 57). The pleasant perception of the uncommon, thus, becomes an end itself, and turns the function of art into the mere perception of estranged forms in the Formalist view, but nothing is said of the possible purpose of restoring these sensations and feelings to life (p. 62).

According to Cook (1994), the problem with the concept of defamiliarization as formulated by Formalists is that the “norm” against which this “distortion” takes place is not defined; for this author, the “norm” should be determined according to the coordinates of the psychology of the reader and “the particular and changing social and historical context which conditions it” (Cook, 1994, p. 139). Here Cook takes a stance similar to that of Prague School Functionalism (1920s-1960s), which socialized and
historicized the notion of defamiliarization and submitted that there is no norm of perception against which to construct a universal concept of the un/familiar (Pope, 2002, p. 88), which renders literature subject to constant reclassification. Cook, Bruner, Vygotsky, and Fowler, among other researchers, have recycled the concept of defamiliarization, though in different ways, to define literariness and account for the aesthetic effect produced by art, as will be seen in the next section.

Another text-centered theory was Structuralism, which searched for the underlying structure, “story grammar” or text schemata in genres and groups of texts. This theory encompasses diverse writings and authors such as Lévi-Strauss’ structural anthropology, the formal linguistics of Saussure and of Chomsky, Barthes’ and Derrida’s first writings, and the works of Russian Formalists as discovered and translated in the West (Pope, 2002, p. 127). Under the Structuralist perspective, texts are not considered as individual items, but as larger sign-systems (Pope, 2002, p. 127) with the practical endeavor being the same as with structuralist linguistics: “to identify the minimal parts of a genre (almost always, in practice, a narrative genre) and to elaborate rules of paradigmatic substitution and syntagmatic combination” (Cook, 1994, p. 141). The main weaknesses of this theory are the arbitrariness in the choice of the object of study, “the definition of units, rules of combination, and the selection of significant features” (Cook, 1994, p. 146). Another substantial criticism that has been leveled at this and other text-oriented theories is that sign systems can only have full significance when “they are related outwards […] to conceptual representations (schemata)” (Cook, 1994, p. 149). Because of the study of sign-systems, there is a close association of Structuralism and Poststructuralism with Saussure’s Semiotics or Semiology.

On the other hand, Poststructuralism is both a break and a continuation of Structuralism with the later writings of Barthes, Derrida and Foucault. The main
difference is that while Structuralism conceives of sign systems as complete, finished and knowable, Poststructuralism considers them unfinished, incomplete, unknowable, full of holes (Pope, 2002, p. 127), thus emphasizing the unstable nature of meaning (Peter Widdowson, 1999, p. 84). In relation to this instability, Poststructuralism uses the analytical techniques of deconstruction, a notion of Derrida by virtue of which any reading that seems logical can be disestablished by the text’s own signifying system (P. Widdowson, 1999, p. 85). Thus, texts are unreadable in that they do not have “a” meaning, and, as the author cannot control the text, texts can be continually rewritten by readers (p. 85). Poststructuralism also works with Derrida’s notion of the différance, which involves the idea that we never gain understanding of things directly but by comprehending what they are not (Pope, 2002, p. 131). In this way, Poststructuralism makes emphasis on inverting or decentering hierarchies (for example, male and female), on resisting binary thinking, on finding absences, silences and gaps. Another theory that has been associated to Poststructuralism is Postmodernism, which also envisages the impossibility of arriving at a certain truth by deconstructing the notions of “history” and “reality.” However, Postmodernism differs in that it grows in an artistic milieu and focuses on global communications and commercial multimedia, where “Literature” becomes one more set of texts on a continuum of popular artistic production and reproduction (P. Widdowson, 1999, p. 87), while Poststructuralism emerged from a language-focused academic milieu concerned with Linguistics, Anthropology, and Philosophy (Pope, 2002, p. 127).

Going back earlier in time to another theoretical approach that centered on the text but is independent from European Formalism and Structuralism, we have the emergence of I.A. Richards’ New Criticism in the 1930s and 1940s in the English-speaking academic community (Klarer, 1999, p. 85). According to Henry Widdowson
(1992), Practical Criticism, I. A. Richards’ initial proposal reacting to Old Criticism, was
an attempt to find the significance of the literary text in some middle ground among 1) the writer’s intention as textually manifest, 2) the text’s intrinsic meaning regardless of the writer’s intention, and 3) the meaning that the text has for the reader regardless of the writer’s intention and the text’s intrinsic meaning (p. viii). Nevertheless, Richards abandons his more reader-centered approach (which acknowledged the contextual nature of reading literature, including the readers’ experiences), to evolve into New Criticism, in which the text becomes an autonomous entity. New Criticism rejects methods that attempt to recover the author’s intention or motivation in writing a text (Intentional Fallacy) and the reader’s emotional reaction to texts (Affective Fallacy), since “all the necessary information to arrive at the ‘right’ or ‘more adequate’ interpretation” is to be found in the text (Bressler, 1999, p. 66). In the spirit of New Criticism, the only role that is left for the reader is to “discover the meanings that are immanent in the text” (H. Widdowson, 1992, p. x, emphasis in original). In other words, what follows from New Criticism is that the reader can be the animator of the text by activating or finding its meaning, but s/he cannot be the “author of personal reaction,” thus leaving the exegesis of the text to critical authorities, which turns literature into an elitist practice (H. Widdowson, 1992, p. xi). However, later in the 1930s, Rosenblatt further develops Richards’ initial interest in the contextual nature of the reading process, emphasizing that meaning evolves only from the interaction of the text with reader (Bressler, 1999, p. 67). In this way, Rosenblatt also negates the Formalist principle that the text is autonomous and that its meaning can be scientifically extracted by formal analysis, and creates a bridge between prevailing New Criticism and Reader-Response Criticism.
3.2.3 Meanings in Readers

As far as reader-centered approaches are concerned, although Reader-Response Theory had prominence during the 1970s and 1980s, its roots can be traced back to the ideas about the active role of the reader that started to emerge in the 1920s and 1930s, as we have seen. It also has roots in Gadamer's hermeneutics, though it does not concern itself so much with the literary tradition (Eagleton, 1996, p. 64). Reader-Response Theory, a critical theory, rejects the New Criticism's Affective Fallacy and posits that there are as many texts as readers (Klarer, 1999, p. 92), therefore the focus is on the interaction between reader and work, on the practices of the readership of texts, and more specifically on how readers read the same literary text in diverse ways. Thus, the term Reader-Response criticism has become associated with the work of critics that define their area of investigation in terms of the “reading process” and the “reading response” (Tompkins, 1980) of individual readers and groups or “types” of readers. These critics also maintain that the meaning of a literary work does not have a separate existence from the individual reader’s response to the text, and investigate how and to what extent the spatial, temporal and cultural gap between the reader and the writer is bridged. In this way, although multiple approaches exist under the umbrella of Reader-Response Theory, they all have in common that the focus is on the reading process, and that the text not as an end in itself but as some kind of trigger for the reader (Booker, 1996, p. 41). However, as Bressler (1999) points out, since Reader-Response Criticism espouses a variety of critical approaches (most of them fall into the categories of Structuralism, Phenomenology or Subjective Criticism), each theory will allow in practice a smaller or greater involvement on the part of the reader in discovering the text's meaning (pp. 70, 78). For example, for Structuralists, as we saw earlier, a
reader brings to the text “a predetermined system of ascertaining meaning” that applies directly to the text (Bressler, 1999, p. 70). For this reason, in the end, Structuralists seem to focus more on a linguistic theory of communication and interpretation, and leave the reader and the text aside (Bressler, 1999, p. 70). The Structuralist search for a purely objective reading of literary works despite the unavoidable element of interpretation has attracted some criticism, such as that of Bahktin, who remarked that language, as a social practice, is infused with evaluations (Eagleton, 1996, p. 106; P. Widdowson, 1999, p. 81).

A second group of Reader-Response critics subscribed to Subjective Criticism, and were influenced to a large extent by Freudian psychoanalysis (such as Norman Holland). The critics of this approach recognized the role of the reader and his/her thoughts, beliefs, and experiences in the extracting a work’s meaning; however, those responses to the text had to be challenged, amended, and ratified by the social group to which the reader belongs, and it is only in this negotiation between the reader and the social group that the reader can find the text’s meaning (Bressler, 1999, p. 74). A third methodological group of approaches in Reader-Response Theory, Phenomenological Critical approaches, places the focus on the perceiver, implying that the literary text is the product of the interaction of the objective existence of the text with the subjective consciousness of its readers (Booker, 1996, p. 44), thus supporting the philosophical principle in phenomenology that objects have meaning only in the perceiver’s consciousness (Bressler, 1999, p. 71; Booker, 1996, pp. 44, 484). Although this theory sees the text as having an objective existence of its own, by submitting that the text is filled with gaps and indeterminacies that call upon the reader for completion (Booker, 1996, p. 44), it allows the first step towards establishing the inseparability of text and reader’s mind that characterized Iser’s and Fish’s work, among others.
Iser, one of the main proponents of Reader-Response theory, draws on Ingarden’s and Jauss’ work, and argues in conjunction with Fish that texts present to the reader sequential instructions regarding interpretation (Booker, 1996, p. 44; Kern, 2002, p. 112). In addition, Iser underscores, just like Ingarden, that those instructions are incomplete, and that the reader has to “fill” them in according to his/her knowledge or experience (Bruner, 1986, 25). Therefore, Iser places his focus on the process of concretization of the text by the reader, which makes the critic’s role that of examining and explaining the text’s effect on the reader, as text cannot be understood without the reader’s mind (Bressler, 1999, p. 72). The difference between Iser and Fish is that Iser distinguishes between an “implied” reader, which is one that has all the “predispositions” necessary to allow the literary work to function to its full effect, and the “actual reader,” shaped by his/her personal norms and prejudices (Bressler, 1999, p. 72). (A discussion on the issue of reader validity and variability in relation to descriptions of literature will following in section 3.3.4.) This distinction between “implied” and “actual” reader made it possible for the text not to “disappear” in the interpretive process, since linguistic fact unrecognized by the actual reader continues to have textual existence (Cook, 1994, p. 175). The “disappearance” of linguistic fact and the rejection of linguistic approaches to the text have been subjects of major criticism against Fish and his Affective Stylistics, a theory submitting that even the formal features of a text, such as parallelism, are also part of interpretation (see Fish 1981, p. 7; Fish, 1980; H. Widdowson 1992, introduction and notes 4 and 9, and Cook 1994, pp. 174, 214-218). In addition, Fish’s solution to what he calls “promiscuous interpretations” through the socialization of readers into “interpretive communities” (H. Widdowson, 1992, p. xi) has also received criticism. H. Widdowson submits that by denying “the divergence of individual interpretations” and
deferring “to the judgment of an informed elite” “[t]he essential elusiveness of poetic meaning is thereby fixed, and falsified” (H. Widdowson, 1992, p. xi).

3.2.4 Meanings in larger contexts

In addition to this variety of Reader-Response approaches and to the theories that focused on the literary text or on the author, there is a group of approaches that do not regard literary texts as “self-contained, independent works of art” but as part of a larger context (Klarer, 1999, p. 94). The definition of “context” in this case will depend on the specific theory within this group of approaches; thus context can be historical, social, political; it can refer to literary genres, nationality or gender (Klarer, 1999, p. 94).

The most widely recognized of these approaches is Literary History, which arranges texts according to periods and emphasizes the historical background and influence of one period on another. This approach is so pervasive and well established institutionally in the teaching of literature that it has become very difficult to conceive of it as merely “arbitrary and subject to conventions as any other approach” (Klarer, 1999, p. 94).

Another contextual approach is Marxist Literary Theory, derived from Marx’s and Engel’s models of economic and political change, which posited that human consciousness is not determined by any spiritual entity, but is shaped by material activity, which is central to Marx’s dialectical materialism (Bressler, 1999, p. 212). According to Marxist Theory, the economic means of production in a society (the base) generates and controls the superstructure, that is, “all social and legal institutions, political and educational systems, religions, and art” (Bressler, 1999, p. 212). Therefore, literature exists in “the context of larger socio-political mechanisms” (Klarer, 1999, p. 95), is part of the superstructure, and mirrors the economic base of a society. Thus, the Marxist critic places the literary
work in relation to its historical context and its economic means of production, situates the author and the text in their cultural setting, pays attention to the manner in which power is maintained, and to the relations between the economic base and the ideological superstructure (Pope, 2002, pp. 105-106). However, Vygotsky reminds us that the Marxist approach to art also involves the study of “the psychophysical effect of artistic creation,” especially as art cannot be explained “as a direct consequence of economic conditions” (1978, p. 12). Marxist theory has influenced Feminist, African-American, Gay and Lesbian Literary Criticism and Colonial Literary Studies (Klarer, 1999, p. 95). It has also influenced Cultural Materialism in the United Kingdom and New Historicism in the United States. The latter builds upon Poststructuralism and Deconstruction by placing the emphasis on text as discourse in a historical dimension, and studying literature in conjunction with other texts.

In conclusion, literary texts have been studied from multiple perspectives that have left pending issues in relation to exegesis, the role of the reader, the issue of temporal and social dislocation, the relationship of literature with other discourses, and the most controversial question: what is literature? Many investigators have attempted to provide a definition of what seems to be a truly ineffable, elusive notion. In doing so these authors revised, expanded or combined the principles of the above theories or attempted to overcome their shortcomings, among which, an exclusive focus on authors, texts, readers, or contexts.

Far from attempting a conclusive (and, hence, most likely simplistic) resolution of a protracted debate, the following section examines the attempts of various disciplines, including literary criticism, hermeneutics, psychology, and linguistics, to construct a viable definition of literature. This debate reconsiders the reader’s role, the validity of different interpretations, and ways of dealing with literature in the classroom in light of
diverse conceptualizations of literature. Although the characterizations presented in the following section integrate multiple foci, perspectives, and disciplines, none of the approaches are completely free of controversies and exempt from further interrogations; however, some definitions seem more promising than others, as will be examined.

3.3 On literature

Graesser, Gernsbacher, and Goldman (1997), from a cognitive linguistics point of view, provide a definition of literary narrative that seems to synthesize some of the most recurrent characterizations that investigators have cited in order to define literature:

Literary narrative has a number of properties which are different from the narrative, expository, and pseudotexts that cognitive psychologists have traditionally analysed. Literature is written in part to produce emotional responses in the reader, such as surprise, curiosity, or suspense (Brewer and Ohtsuka, 1988). Literature is written to reveal deep truths about life and reality, even when the plot is entirely fictional. Literature has a high density of nonliteral forms, such as irony, metaphor, understatement, and hyperbole. Literary excerpts are sometimes crafted to support multiple interpretations (that is, intentional ambiguity) rather than to converge on a single intended meaning. Literary texts often violated linguistic and social conventions, thereby encouraging the reader to reflect on language and society. Literary texts have points of view that are unusual (for example, between a character and an omniscient narrator).


The authors later add that “a common arousal pattern in aesthetic works” is the creation of “tension and then abrupt release” (p. 313). These proposed characteristics and others will be discussed in this section.
3.3.1 Literature: converting the water of life into wine that refreshes the world

“If geometry were to contradict our passions and our interests as morals do, then we would argue against it and we would violate it in spite of all the evidence of Euclid and Archimedes”

(Leibniz, 1936 New Experiments on Human Intelligence, p. 88, quoted in Leontiev, 1978, p. 90)

Vygotsky's view of literature relates to Graesser, Gernsbacher and Goldman's idea of tension and abrupt release. In Psychology of Art, Vygotsky's dissertation, the Russian psychologist does not define literariness (or art in general) in terms of historical contexts, or the artistic traditions in which art is embedded. Nor does he find it useful to investigate the psychology of the author or that of the reader/spectator, as both of them are “shrouded in the psyche's unconsciousness” (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 23) and the processes of art creation and reception “appear to be obscure, unexplainable, and concealed from the conscious mind” (p. 71). By rejecting this methodology, Vygotsky was making an attempt to move the Psychoanalytic focus from the subconscious to considerations of how the subconscious becomes social in art (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 84). In this way, Vygotsky was rejecting Freud's view of mental unconscious processes as separated from the conscious by an impenetrable barrier and, hence, either unknown to us or disintegrating at the moment in which they become conscious. Instead, he proposed that a dynamic, continuous flux exists between the conscious and the subconscious areas, and that the subconscious is present in our actions and behavior. Hence, the starting point for the analysis of the subconscious should be works of art, as they are objective facts in which the subconscious reveals and manifests itself most clearly (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 72). Thus, the Russian psychologist takes the work of art as the basis for analysis of his “objective-analytic method” or what Kozulin calls an “oblique” or “indirect method” (Kozulin, 1990, p. 37). In this method, the structure of the aesthetic
reaction is reconstructed not from the author's or the reader's psychologies, but from the system of stimuli in the work of art that is designed to excite the aesthetic reaction (p. 24).

Vygotsky also criticized Psychoanalysis’ “pansexualism and infantilism,” and its narrow view of human existence that fails to represent the social nature of life. In addition, in Vygotsky’s methodology, there is a clear demarcation from Formalism, since, as it will be remembered from the previous section, Vygotsky criticized the Formalist denial of the psychological dimension of content and material. According to Guijares Lima, by attempting to reconstruct the intended effect of the work of art, Vygotsky positioned the elements of artistry in a “psychological environment,” for the effect of the work of art, including the Formalist concept of estrangement, supposes the interaction between art and its recipient, and thus involves “psychological means,” and psychological “procedures and devices” (Guijares Lima, 1995, p. 415).

Having said all this, Vygotsky’s *Psychology of Art* became the first sample of a unified psychology where higher mental functions are mediated by semiotic systems (from language, gestures, music, ways of dressing, and mathematics to literary works) (Kozulin, 1990, p. 36). Vygotsky’s proposal of art as “a social technique of feelings” (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 17) or “as the social solution for the subconscious” (p. 85) fits into what would become Vygotsky’s theory of symbols as barriers and transformers of human natural impulses (Kozulin, 1990, p. 43). Just as language transforms lower-order biological functions into higher-order cultural functions, art, a complex system of symbols, semiotically mediates and transforms original human feelings into a socially wrought aesthetic reaction, thus resolving the unconscious (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 113) and transforming it into “behavioral and cognitive manifestations that have social form and meaning” (Kozulin, 1990, p. 44). Along these lines, Kozulin (1998) calls the literary a
“psychological supertool that mediates human experience,” a “higher-order psychological tool” that serves as “an instrument of cognitive change” (p. 130), since “cognition [but especially emotion, Kozulin, 1993, p. 255] is affected by the possibilities inherent in literary form” (Kozulin, 1998, p. 132). By “form” Kozulin means “such aspects of discourse as its genre-specificity, the ability to encompass temporary relationships, the hypothetical, ‘as if’ possibilities inherent in it, and so on” versus the content, images or ideas (Kozulin, 1998, p. 132). Additionally, Minick (1989) underscores the tacit implication in Vygotsky’s dissertation that “unique forms of mental functioning appear in connection with the reading of a literary work” (p. 167). Thus, literary activities do not involve “pre-formed, natural, cognitive, emotional, or personality characteristics of the individual,” but “generate psychological functions” (Daniels, 2001, p. 155), an idea that is central to the rationale for a tool-and-result pedagogy that will be proposed in Chapter 4.

In Vygotsky’s view of art, artistic mediation happens through a process of catharsis, produced by the special relationship of form and content in the work of art. Against prevailing views of art in his time that characterized the relationship between content and form as harmonious, Vygotsky contends that their relationship is dialectical, as form contradicts, overcomes, destroys content. Form and content move in contradictory directions, producing a “short-circuit” or intense discharge of emotions or

---

26 Unlike in “isolated mind” approaches to emotion (Brothers, 1997), affect forms part of a unified whole with cognition in Sociocultural Theory. As Vygotsky posited in the last pages of Thinking and Speech (1962), “[t]hought itself is engendered by motivation, i.e., by our desires and needs, our interests and emotions. Behind every thought there is an affective-volitional tendency, which holds the answer to the last “why” in the analysis of thinking” (Vygotsky, 1993 [1929], p. 150). In this way, both cognition and emotion are dialectically interrelated in personal sense, and, consequently, in the constitution of the individual’s personality.
catharsis, having an impact on the mind, as emotions are released, and human feelings are transformed.

Vygotsky quite gracefully defines what, in his theory, literature is and is not by comparing two views of the aesthetic effect with two miracles from the Gospel. A first view of art, dismissed by the author, considers that the function of literature is to contaminate others with the author’s feelings, which would be similar to the effect produced by the miracle of the multiplication of the fish and the bread. In this miracle, the peasants ended up eating what they would otherwise normally ingest in their daily lives, though communally and in larger quantities, which relates to the idea of literature as the fruitless emotional intoxication of a multitude of readers, an insubstantial conveyance of the author’s sentiments to the social without transformation. However, this is not what art is according to Vygotsky. Art transcends, transforms, transubstantiates, changes quality, not quantity. Art is catharsis, a different type of miracle, not the multiplication of fish and bread into massive amounts of the same fish and bread, but rather, another miracle, the transformation of water into wine. Thus, through art, the miracle of transforming, transubstantiating, overcoming, transcending human feelings (rather than that of contaminating others with them) is effected:

Indeed, art’s true nature is that of transubstantiation, something that transcends ordinary feelings; for the fear, pain, excitement caused by art includes something above and beyond its normal, conventional content. This “something” overcomes feelings of fear and pain, changes water into wine, and thus fulfills the most important purpose of art. One of the great thinkers said once that art relates to life as wine relates to the grape. With this he meant to say that art takes its material from life, but gives in return something which its material did not contain.

(Vygotsky, 1971, p. 243)

Thus, catharsis is the overcoming or the destruction of content by form (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 214): “a feeling expressed by a technique will never generate a lyric poem or a
musical composition. To do this we require the creative act of overcoming the feeling, resolving it, conquering it” (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 248, emphasis in the original).

Vygotsky illustrates the concept of catharsis with three examples: the analyses of a fable, a drama and a novel. I will give an example of my own based on the poem by Federico García Lorca of Teaching Unit 2 in Chapter 5.

### 3.3.1.1 Fight and flight: catharsis in Lorca’s “Cogida y muerte.”

The concept of catharsis as “overcoming,” “resolving,” “conquering” a feeling is useful in explaining why a poem on bullfighting and death can leave (some) readers with a feeling of aesthetic pleasure despite the fact that the topic of death is an unpleasant one, and bullfighting is a tradition opposed by many who believe in both human and animal rights. I present a personal interpretation of the above poem to illustrate the concept of artistic catharsis. From what has been argued so far about personal sense, I do not submit that this is the only way of looking at or feeling about the poem, nor do I contend that everyone who reads this text should obtain any aesthetic sensation from it, much less in the same way as I do. This is also a partial analysis for reasons of space; I have left out of the analysis some elements of the poem such as figures, verbal aspect, articles, clause types, and phrases, some of which will be discussed in more detail in the Teaching Units of Chapter 5.

To begin, the content, fabula or anecdote of the poem takes the reader through a goring scene, the bullfighter’s agony and, finally, his death. However, despite the progressive irrevocable tragedy that finally eventuates, it would be fair to say that the poem does not evolve into some kind of hopeless “tearjerker,” or into a morbid recreation of the death of the famous bullfighter Ignacio Sánchez Mejías; on the
contrary, the final effect is one (at least for me and, maybe, for some of the readers that value this poem) of aesthetic pleasure and resolution. On the plane of content, through impacting images, we see the fragile bullfighter being inexorably gored by an indomitable animal; we see his unstoppable agony for never-ending moments, while friends and fans wait in shock and finally in grief. However, this downward spiral of emotion unchained by the content meets an equally powerful, though totally opposing, escalating force in the form. The form is forged and dominated by the harmonic repetition of a mantra-like refrain ("a las cinco de la tarde") that competes for attention with the content in every other line, and rocks every flash of despair into a numbing trance.

Thus, while the content moves the action downward, unleashing horror in a turbulent cascade of events, flashbacks, and emotions during that terrible afternoon, the hypnotic counterpoint of the refrain arrests this fall in two different ways. First, the refrain literally breaks the crescendo narrative line by cutting into it after each new proposition. In this way, the eventless, impersonal, tense-less, non-gravitational dimension of the refrain destroys the multi-focal narrative of the poem in which vividly animate, striving images from multiple psychological planes and temporal perspectives conflate. At precisely five o’clock in the afternoon, we are left with only a crystallized dimension of reality and dead-end resistance. While content brings movement, an unmovable and ritualistic form reins back all struggle to a halt. Both agony and lingering hope are shattered against the swelling materiality of an insistent Greek chorus. Form destroys the temporal advancement of the poem, anchoring the poet’s cosmos at a dreadful moment against which all images clash with neither closure nor further development. And yet the incantatory form into which the refrain hammers the poem destroys the content in still another way: if content incites a woeful cry, form chants majestically and
heroically of a splendid, beautiful human being never to be forgotten. Thus, the exquisite
force of the poem lies, according to a Vygotskian view of art, in the fact that all these
facts are not only constructed through either the content or through the form, but through
the dialectic, tragic transfiguration resulting from the dramatic synergy of both. In relation
to catharsis, Kozulin commented,

The reader experiencing this double structure of the text develops
conflicting affective tendencies, one of which is associated with material,
the other with the formal side. The original source of these affects may
also be the unconscious. The tension mounts and at a certain moment
the reader achieves a catharsis, when the formal, artistic aspect finally
overcomes the material aspect of the text. The discharge of the affect
takes place in a form of intensive fantasy that restructures the reader’s
entire inner experience.

(Kozulin, 1990, p. 45).

Thus, though the alliance of form and content is conflictive, the feeling of tragedy
does not disintegrate as a result of these opposing forces; quite the contrary, this tension
is transformed and channeled through a solemn, stately hymn that sings not only of the
horror of Ignacio’s irreparable death, but of the magnificence of his life, and of life, of his
art, and of art, of character, of friendship, and even of grief. With the cathartic effect of
art, we arrive at a “resolution of a certain, merely personal conflict, the revelation of a
higher, more general, human truth in the phenomena of life” (Leontiev, 1971, p. ix). That
is to say, the mediating power of art “brings the most intimate and personal aspects of
our being into the circle of social life” (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 249). As catharsis takes place,
art is born and feelings are overcome in the creative process of art perception (Vygotsky,
1971, p. 248), and that is how the reader’s inner experience is restructured and
organized for future behavior (p. 253). In that respect, Vygotsky argues that art is
delayed reaction; that is, real emotions have direct effect on the psychomotor system – if
we fear for our lives, we remove ourselves from the dangerous situation that triggered
those feelings -- but the emotion that is obtained in art does not generate any type of physiological reaction on the periphery. Thus, military marches do not actually incite soldiers to march proudly in parade, Vygotsky comments, as emotion in art does not drive “to do anything, it only creates a vague and enormous desire for deeds or actions” (1971, p. 253):

> Although music does not generate any direct actions, its fundamental effect, the direction it imparts to psychic catharsis, is essential for the kind of forces it will release, what it will release, and what I will push into the background. *Art is the organization of our future behavior.* It is a requirement that may never be fulfilled but that forces us to strive beyond our life toward all that lies beyond it.

(p. 253, italics added)

Common feelings about the world and the ordinary passions that torment the human soul are overcome and transformed into something novel that enlarges our realm of experience. Some trace is left that “compels us to look upon the world with new eyes,” creating, in that way, “a very tangible environment for subsequent actions” and manifesting itself in our behavior later on (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 270, note 3). Therefore, through this “dialectical, reconstitutive behavior of the emotions” (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 256) that happens in the aesthetic experience, art does not only transform reality “in the constructions of fantasy, but also in a genuine recreation of things, objects, and situations” (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 261).

In sum, Vygotsky conflates the formal and the psychological in his vision of art. Although art as a process of transformation involves a technical element, as we have seen, it cannot be said that form alone creates a work of art (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 61): The formula “art as technique” immediately triggers a question: “a technique for what?” (Vygotsky, 1971, p. 56). Vygotsky gives us the answer, Guijares Lima comments: “art is not itself the aim […] but a means to a renewal of perception and feeling of reality, of
things in the world‖ (Guijares Lima, 1995, p. 415), it generates new mental dispositions and effects psychological change (Guijares Lima, 1995, pp. 415-416), which relocates the Formalist concept of alienation or estrangement in a psychological environment.

Other investigators have also moved the concept of alienation or defamiliarization into a psychological plane by describing not necessarily the development of specific types of mentation, but how literature, through its form, has a specific effect on the mind. Bruner and Widdowson’s ideas are closer to Vygotsky’s view of art, while Cook presents a somewhat different take on defamiliarization.

### 3.3.2 Literature: subjunctive lives in “as-if” worlds.

Bruner (1986) criticizes the absence of any consideration of the reader in literary analysis, which typically characterizes a text in terms of "its structure, its historical context, its linguistic form, its genre, its multiple levels of meaning" (p. 4). For the author, an essential step in literary analysis is to discover “how and in what ways the text affects the reader and, indeed, what produces such effects on the readers to occur” (p. 4). In other words, “What gives great fiction its power?: what in the text and what in the reader?” (Bruner, 1986, p. 4, italics added). Bruner, in an amalgamation of cognitive psychology and literary theory, concludes, in a similar way to Vygotsky, that the world created by great fiction is so forceful that it transforms our experience, not only of the fictional world, but also of the ordinary world (Bruner, 2002, p. 9). Literature defamiliarizes our reality by forcing us to explore “human plights through the prism of imagination” (p. 10) and by offering “alternative worlds that put the actual one in a new light” (p. 9). This “trafficking in human possibilities rather than in settled certainties” (1986, p. 26) is made possible by the “subjunctivity” of the literary text – i.e. its capacity
to keep “meaning open or “performable” by the reader” (p. 26) -- which is in turn created by “lexical and grammatical usages that highlight subjective states, attenuating circumstances, alternative possibilities” (1990, p. 53). This capacity of literature renders the world foreign to us again, rescues reality from commonality, and compels the reader to respond to this powerful provocation with his/her own narrative (Bruner, 1986, p. 24).

Clearly drawing on Ingarden’s and Iser’s ideas, Bruner explains that “the text itself has structures that are “two-sided”: a verbal aspect that guides reaction and prevents it from being arbitrary, and an affective aspect that is triggered or “prestructured by the language of the text.” But the prestructure is “underdetermined”: “fictional texts are inherently indeterminate” (1986, p. 24). Because of this indeterminacy, a range of actualizations is allowed; the reader is called upon to perform meaning (p. 25), to become a writer, “a composer of a virtual text in response to the actual text” (p. 24) in Barthes’ sense. Drawing on Iser, Bruner defines literary narrative as a speech act, “an utterance or a text whose intention is to initiate and guide a search for meanings among a spectrum of possible meanings” (1986, p. 25). But then he adds “[d]iscourse must make it possible for the reader to ‘write’ his own virtual text” (p. 25), in other words, it must have enough “subjunctivity.” Bruner adopts Todorov’s series of transformations that render actions “psychologically in process” or “subjunctive” rather than complete or defined. Some of these transformations are mode, aspect, intention, manner (the attitude that modifies the action’s intention), status (negation as a trigger for presupposition), appearance, etc. (1986, p. 30). In this way, in a comparison of an expository text to Joyce’s “Clay,” Bruner shows how the short story contains more of those transformations, which renders the latter text more amenable to interpretation.

The susceptibility to interpretation that Bruner discusses is analogous to H. Widdowson’s notion of the evocativeness and the elusiveness of the world represented
in the literary text. Similar to Vygotsky and Bruner, the British linguist views art as “the transfiguration of the trivial” (H. Widdowson, 1992, pp. 31) into extraordinary meanings cued by the power of the form of the work of art. This forces the reader to suspend his/her first inclination to resort to the conventional context of social life to interpret texts, and impels him/her to look beyond into imagined or, in Bruner’s terms, alternate worlds: “Representation, then, as a mode of meaning, is bound to be disruptive and to require readiness to adopt different ways of reading and thinking for its realization” (H. Widdowson, 1992, p. 24).

In connection with this idea of meaning elusiveness, H. Widdowson, similar to Vygotsky, invokes a conflictual principle in art represented through another religious metaphor: that of poetry (and, by extension, any art) as the Indian god Siva, “both destroyer and creator, undermining the conditions necessary for reference in order to create the conditions necessary for representation” (H. Widdowson, 1992, p. 60). This idea also relates to Bruner’s and Iser’s ideas that the literary text exists in indeterminacy though with the provision of a guiding principle that precludes total arbitrariness and that makes rewriteability possible. According to H. Widdowson, literary texts fulfill, on the one hand, a “destructive” or “divergent” condition, which “disperses meanings and disrupts established ideas” (p. 61); therefore, the aesthetic potential of a poem lies in its incongruity compared to established structures of reality, which thus evokes variable responses (p. 61). But we need another condition that would balance the destructive condition – otherwise, we may fall into the trap of thinking that the more incomprehensible a work of art is, the better it is. The second condition is what Widdowson calls “the convergence condition” (p. 62). This condition allows the disruption, unsettlement, and discordance of the work of art to become congruent,
realigned, and reconfigured into a new order (p. 62). The clash of both conditions sparks off the aesthetic response, and makes the construction of personal sense possible:

The reality which is represented in poems, fashioned in patterns of language detached from context and reassembled into a different order, is a reconciliation of contraries. It is both particular and general, private and public, actual and abstract, divergent and convergent, fleeting and yet held in perpetual poise.

(Widdowson, 1992, p. 67)

3.3.3 Literature and the metamorphosis of mind

In a slightly different venue to Bruner and Widdowson, Cook (1994) includes a historized version of the notion of defamiliarization in his theory, which, in an attempt to describe literature as discourse with a sociohistorical dimension, tries to overcome and integrate approaches to literature that centered either on the reader or the text. By transcending the concept of defamiliarization in the reader’s mind, the author overcomes the shortcomings of discourse-analysis and schema-theory approaches for the characterization of literary discourse in relation to the reader’s schemata. Under these perspectives, readers’ schemata are usually viewed as static representations to be applied when text comprehension requires them, rather than as forms of knowledge susceptible to change in their interaction with texts (pp. 182-183). On the other hand, Cook views defamiliarization as a process in which the estranged forms of language and text in a literary work in interaction with the reader’s own world schemata enact a fictive world that can potentially produce alteration of the reader’s schemata (pp. 202-203). Literary texts are designed and intended to provoke an alteration (versus addition or reinforcement) of this schemata, which, in the discursive experience, is ultimately
dependent on the reader’s own existent schemata, including his/her experience of language, texts, and the world. More precisely, Cook defines literariness as a dynamic interaction between linguistic and text-structural form on the one hand, and schematic representations of the world on the other, whose overall result is to bring about a change in the schemata of the reader. I shall call this dynamic interaction ‘discourse deviation’ (Cook 1994, p. 182)

Thus, literature is a type of discourse that “has a particular effect on the mind, refreshing and changing our representation of the world” (p. 4). The major function of certain discourses, such as literature, is “to effect a change in the schemata of their readers” (p. 191). Sensations of “pleasure, escape, profundity, and elevation” are believed to be ramifications of this function, as well as the social esteem attached to this type of discourse, which has “no other apparent social or practical function,” according to the author (p. 191). The texts that accomplish this effect may vary among individuals and groups of people; however, “the effect itself may be universal and answer a universal need” (p. 4).

### 3.3.4 Some considerations of mind-disruption, readers and the concept of literature

At this point we need to pause to discuss three matters related to what has been presented thus far. First, how does the fact that non-literary discourses also have a transformative effect on the mind affect the previous characterizations of literature? Second, who is the reader in the above models? Is s/he always disrupted by literary art forms? Are all readers considered “valid” in these theories? If the reader is the yardstick of disruption and schema refreshment, does that mean that we have as many concepts of literature as readers? And thirdly and most importantly, if the answer to the last
question is yes, how is it possible that, despite such extreme relativity, people can distinguish literary from non-literary discourses even when they do not experience such disruption? Addressing these questions will assist us in revising some of the previous ideas about what constitutes a literary text as such.

The first consideration is in relation to the view of literature as a type of discourse that affects the mind, a point on which Vygotsky, Bruner, Widdowson and Cook seem to coalesce. As was pointed out in Chapter 2 and at the beginning of the present chapter, non-literary discourses, semiotic tools in general, affect the way we view the world and result in a configuration of our inner experience -- actually, of our mind. According to Gee, secondary Discourses, such as church-based, business, legal, or school Discourses, can reconfigure our essential primary Discourse (our most private discourse, which is appropriated usually within a family, as one is born into a culture) together with our values, attitudes, and beliefs. In turn, one’s primary Discourse serves as the “framework” for the appropriation of other Discourses later in life (1990, p. 150). New or secondary Discourses can influence and reshape a person’s primary Discourse, “build on, and extend, the uses of language and the values, attitudes and beliefs we acquired as part of our primary Discourse” (Gee, 1990, pp. 151-152). Among social discourses, narratives, not only of the fictional type, construct reality, become part of our inner experience, and give shape to things in the real world. Narratives can be even more powerful than experience, they can sanction what is “fact” in a court of law or even justify and rationalize racist policies, as might have been the case with some former anthropological accounts on African culture (Bruner, 2002, p. 8). 27

27 The idea of the mind as essentially constituted by narratives influences a psychology based on literary models. As becoming a person involves being-in-culture and becoming mediated by semiotic tools, one of them being narrative among other literary modalities, Cultural Psychology proposes that human psychological life and experience be studied as a process of “authoring” of
In addition, Cook (1994) concedes that there are texts other than the literary that can “refresh” or “reorganize” our schemata (p. 192), such as jokes, comedy routines, graffiti and advertisements. However, the author excludes these texts from the literary, contending that their dominant function is often “alien to literature,” or that they disrupt language and text schemata while preserving world schemata (e.g. jokes) (p. 193). In addition, according to the author, the extent of the change has to be taken into consideration (p. 195). But the “extent of disruption” can be a problematic criterion as it is not an essential or defining category for literariness. In addition, both the “extent” and the “disruption” of world schemata are notions that make the concept of literature relative for every reader, and usually readers know that something is literature even if they do not find it disrupting or schema-altering.

On the other hand, discourses do not have to be literary-like to reconfigure our inner experience. As was discussed in Chapter 2, Vygotsky’s notion of scientific concepts posits that scientific discourse in conjunction with activities in the school setting can derive in certain types of mentation, such as theoretical versus empirical thinking and syllogistic reasoning. An excellent example of this is provided by Luria (1934, 1976), who conducted a study among non-schooled Central Asian peasants in which the participants were asked to solve certain formal syllogisms of the following type: “In Siberia all the bears are white; my friend Ivan was in Siberia and saw a bear; what color was it?” (Luria (1934, 1976) in Cole, 1990, p. 99-100). As the participants tried to solve these syllogisms, they resorted to their everyday empirical knowledge and produced one’s self-narrative (Kozulin, 1998, p. 132). Thus, Cultural Psychology in opposition to Natural-Scientific Psychology is ontologically grounded in culture (versus nature), epistemologically concerned with interpretation (versus prediction), and methodologically oriented toward semiotics (versus physics) (Kozulin, 1998, p. 134). Newman and Holzman’s psycho-therapeutical method is based on the performance of alternative role identities to effect transformation in patients’ lives.
context-specific interpretations, such as “I have never been to Siberia, so I cannot say what color the bear was; Ivan is your friend, ask him” (Cole, 1990, p. 100).

Aware of the capacity of scientific discourse to constitute realities and ways of thinking, Bruner tries to establish differences between the discourse of science as opposed to literary discourse, in a different direction. According to the author, narrative thought represents “truths” that can be found generalizable for our lives under the form of the concrete, the particular, and the empirical, which is the opposite movement in paradigmatic or logo-scientific thought, which proceeds from the empirical to the abstract (1986, p. 13). Narrative thinking thus “deals in human or human-like intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course. It strives to put its timeless miracles into the particulars of experience, and to locate the experience in time and place” (p. 13). This is, in Widdowson’s words, literature’s capacity for creating “out-of-the-ordinary meanings” out of ordinary events and experiences (Widdowson, 1992, p. 14). Literature tells us truths about the world by giving us “believable (though not necessarily ‘true’) historical accounts” (Bruner, 1986, p. 13). Gadamer points out that while both literary and temporarily dislodged non-literary texts hold the same hermeneutic status, the difference between literature and non-literature lies in “the distinction between the claims to truth that each [type of text] makes” (1995, p. 163). Mills (2004) concurs with this idea in her discussion of the relation between “truth” and diverse discourses,

History texts are privileged in their relation to truth; autobiographical writings are privileged in terms of their supposed authenticity in relation to an authorial voice; and literary texts have a complex relation to both truth and value on the one hand being seen as providing a ‘truth’ about the human condition, and yet doing so within fictional and therefore ‘untrue’ form.

(p. 20)
But then how would Ortega y Gasset’s essays, or, for example, Mariano José Larra’s newspaper articles, which are part of the Spanish literary canon and are studied in Spanish literature classes, fit into Bruner’s model of narrative versus paradigmatic thinking? What about biographies (occasionally included under the umbrella of literature), which involve, by definition, claims to a “truth” that requires being more than simply “believable” in a fictive world?

Additionally, by defining literature in terms of psychological change and according to the type of “truth” it reveals to its readers, previous theories raise other controversies about who the reader actually is, which is the second of our considerations. While the critique of the Formalist formulation of defamiliarization seemed to be fair, the placement of this concept in a psychological environment and the inclusion of the reader in a definition of literature may lead us to an extreme relativist perspective on this concept. In other words, with readers from different periods and different cultural contexts, who would serve as a yardstick to establish what disrupts our mind or reveals a worthwhile “truth about the world”? Or is the concept of literature doomed to be dependent for characterization on every reader?

To start with, the coordinates upon which Cook defines deviance may pose a problem when it comes to establishing who the “disrupted” reader actually is. As has been discussed above, Cook concedes that some non-literary discourses are also schema-refreshing. Conversely, the author also agrees that there are texts that are considered literary but are not disruptive according to his analysis. An example of this would be Bond’s “First World War Poets,” which according to Cook, fails to be linguistically deviant when measured against the schemata of readers at the time of production, “members of the post-war generation in Britain” (p. 171). Although the author agrees that this poem and other works mentioned in the book (such as Jane Austen’s
novels, p. 194) are subject to reclassification depending on changing audiences (p. 174),
Cook applies the notion of deviance more often in terms of innovation with respect to a
certain literary tradition than in reference to the variable schemata and discursive
repertoire of the actual reader (probably in order to avoid the aforementioned problem of
conceptual relativism). Consequently, such a notion of deviance raises several
questions. First, it makes it difficult to sustain the idea that literariness depends on the
disruption of the three types of schemata. Not many works would qualify as completely
literary if, in order to achieve the status of literature, authors constantly had to divorce
the linguistic, textual, and ideological tradition in which they were formed. Should we
conclude therefore that, for instance, Shakespeare’s sonnet XVIII (“Should I Compare
Thee to a Summer’s Day?”) is less literary than sonnet CXXX (“My Mister’s Eyes are
Nothing like the Sun”) because the former falls along the lines of conventional
metaphysical poetry at the author’s time, while the latter parodies the clichés of this
poetical tradition, thus disrupting the language and world schemata of his contemporary
reader? As far as textual schemata are concerned, to separate “textual” from “language”
schemata may be a thorny issue as well; additionally, “textual” schemes are not always
that malleable.

Continuing with sonnet examples, the textual structure or scheme of a sonnet,
which is about six hundred years old, may still be a source of disruption for readers who
are used to its form. Some poets have ventured to “defamiliarize” the sonnet textual
form. For example, in Lorca’s posthumously published poems, apparently discrepant,
disharmonious variations of line-based stress schemes were seamlessly combined in
the same sonnet. Nonetheless, many conventionally wrought sonnets still cause an
intense aesthetic effect and have considerable significance to diverse readers. These
sonnets do not challenge the textual schemata of readers accustomed to the sonnet
form. Conceivably, what might never cease to disrupt the textual imagination of some people that approach poetry is simply the engagement with a discourse that forces them to suspend linearity in favor of the temporal collapse of diverse planes of reality as these planes are linked and called upon by particular rhyme schemes or other rhythmic devices such as parallelism (Widdowson, 1992, p. 51).

Notwithstanding the general considerations for differing readers that can be derived from this approach, the reader in Cook’s model of literature as discourse seems to be a contemporary “ideal reader” or a displaced “expert reader.” In my view, a theory that captures the nature of literariness should be able to explain why “actual readers” of diverse experiences and without the appropriate background information, using Cook’s own words, “do seem to find something accessible, beautiful, understandable, enjoyable, and uplifting when they reach out to the literary traditions of societies and social groups which are not their own” (1994, p. 3, emphasis in original).

In a similar venue, Fowler also defines literature as discourse, and discourse, in turn, as language in its communicative context, socially and historically situated (1996, p. 93), which warrants the role of linguistics in the study of literature:

[W]hatever ‘Literature’ is, it is a fact that the texts which are regarded as literary are in any case language. Thus, we may take whatever linguistics can tell us about language, in its broadest sense, as applicable to literary texts, and to the process of communication.

(1996, p. 237)

Fowler situates the discursive dynamics of the literary in the same remote place as Cook, thus excluding the actual reader. Although Fowler claims to refer to the “average reader” and not to a “superreader” (1996, p. 241), the author bases the concept of “literary competence” on the world schemata or encyclopedic knowledge of the circumstances of creation of a literary work. Thus, “literary competence” is “schematized
knowledge possessed by those people who have had a literary education” (p. 241), and in the end, a “question of factual knowledge” (p. 242). Such a notion of literary competence discounts readers who have pleasant and significant experiences with literature but are not in the possession of such information or formal literary education. When the author considers the role of the actual reader, he uses a concept similar to that of Fish’s interpretative communities and expert critics to “solve” the “problem” of differences in personal meaning regarding the texts, and wrong interpretations, even when he asserts that the knowledge of the competent reader does not need to be “special, superior, ‘aesthetic’ knowledge” (p. 241):

Individuals do of course respond subjectively, but the practice of literary criticism is to engage in discussion towards agreement on interpretation and judgment; where disagreement persists, critics generally occupy differing positions within one overall framework of debate. Thus critical response is not subjective but intersubjective, something worked out within a community, and going beyond the level of individual subject’s consciousness.

(Fowler, 1996, p. 247)

In collusion with an ideal reader and an interpretive community, there is an equally “ideal,” univocal, standard reading derived from the contextual circumstances of creation. In effect, according to Fowler, the occurrence of various interpretations of a literary text according to a range of experiences and knowledge is problematic, which leads us to believe that a “literal” meaning is expected from a literary work:

People understand language by imposing on it interpretations which are based on their previous experience of the world (and of language). The problem in communication is that everyone’s experience is different.

(Fowler, 1996, pp. 239-240, italics added).

If the fact that we all contribute to communication with different experiences is a ‘problem,’ then what would be the solution? According to Fowler, “communication generally takes place unsubverted by such anarchy” (p. 240) thanks to the application of
schemata. Thus, by applying appropriate “encyclopedic knowledge” (p. 240), people manage to communicate and obtain truer interpretations of texts. In my view, there are three main “problems” with Fowler’s proposal and, by analogy, Cook’s model. The first is that both authors, especially Fowler, apparently assume that schemata are the same for everybody in a given social group. Even in a ‘factual,’ ‘encyclopedic’ view of schemata in a given expert group, this would hardly be true. As Widdowson (2004), drawing on Mey (1993), posits, schemata or shared contextual assumptions are dynamic, unstable, subject to continuous modification during the process of discourse (p. 46), not static, which is the consequence from objectifying context into a construct for analytical purposes (p. 75). In this way, it is possible to have two non-dislocated interlocutors with the same “encyclopedic knowledge” of a social context, but reading two different meanings into the same text, as it was seen with the “Support our Troops” slogan in Chapter 2.

Second, Cook’s and Fowler’s precondition of certain schemata for aesthetic appreciation would imply that texts that are closer to our sociohistorical experience would be of more aesthetic value than others that are more dislocated, which is not always the case. If it were, we would not be able to account for the fact that some young people without much formal literary education can in fact be fascinated by temporally and occasionally spatially remote works such as Bécquer’s legends and rhymes, Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, or Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, inter alia, to cite some classic readings popular at the time of my own formative years. Most likely, the message that these works conveyed to this type of reader may not have been the kind of meanings that experts would hope; however, it is difficult to justify why some types of dialogue between readers and literary texts are considered more valid than others.
The third issue with Fowler’s model and Cook’s theory is the assumption that people resort to literature to *reconstruct* others’ meanings. Cook claims that “[h]is approach, however, of its nature, can never assign the quality of ‘literariness’, once and for all, to a given text, but only to a given discourse: to a text, in other words, in interaction with a *particular reader*” (Cook, 1994, p. 182, italics added). However, Cook does not explain how defamiliarization happens for readers who are separated from the sociohistorical contexts from which the literary work emerges, other than to claim that it occurs “in the light of background information” (Cook, 1994, p. 3). Moreover, in considering the pedagogical implications of his model Cook establishes the recreation of the socio-historical world of the readers for which the work was intended (supposedly, expert readers at the time of the creation of the literary work) as a precondition for literary appreciation (see Chapter 4). This stance towards literary texts corresponds to a conservative hermeneutic position that reduces the task of hermeneutics to reconstruction (Gadamer, 1995, p. 166). According to this view, when texts are torn from their original context, they lose significance (p. 166), as the work of art is not “a timeless object of aesthetic experience but belongs to a ‘world’ that alone determines its full significance” (p. 166). This implies that the literary work’s significance is to be restored by reconstructing the author’s mind and by re-establishing the world and the tradition where the text had its genesis, with historical knowledge (p. 166).

Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism and polyphony in literature, especially the novel, is useful here to counteract the conservative hermeneutic perspective. As much as he emphasized the social nature of language and its semantic, heteroglossic sedimentation throughout history, just as Cook and Fowler insist on the sociohistorical embeddedness of literary texts, Bakhtin posits that the voices in a novel are not submissive to the author’s control (Bakhtin, 1981). On the contrary, texts are “Carnival” spaces where
readers can liberate themselves and even subvert the author’s point of view (Bakhtin, 1984). In that way, because of texts’ heteroglossia or borrowed voices, there is never “a first word,” nor is there a “last word,” as the dialogic context “extends into the boundless past and the boundless future” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 170). Past meanings are not the more stable as they will always be recreated in the process of dialogue between the reader and some of the voices in the literary work:

At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue’s subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context). Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival.

(Bakhtin, 1986, p. 170)

Furthermore, sharing the sociocultural dimension with the author does not imply that the reader will have his/her “schemata” in common, or, to put it in Bakhtin’s terms, that the reader will hear all the author’s voices or the predominant viewpoints in his/her work. I am myself close to what Fowler and Cook would consider a competent reader with the appropriate “encyclopedic knowledge” of Luis Garcia Montero, as I am from the same city, I have similar political and social views, there is only a fifteen-year generational gap, he was my literature professor at the University of Granada, and I am acquainted with his works, his life, his views of the world, the works of other poets that influenced him, other people from the same literary circles, etc. But do I share the schemata of his experience or the schemata of the reader that he has in mind (if he has one)? I do not believe that I, or any other student or colleague, was ever equipped to reconstruct Garcia Montero’s psychology of creation or to submit incontestable interpretations of his poems. My guess is that even García Montero’s significance of his own texts has changed over time. On the other hand, it would be a sad state of affairs if writers wrote exclusively for their students, friends, colleagues, and other contemporary,
or non-contemporary though well-informed readers. As Gadamer posits much in line with Bakhtin, any reading of the work of art, no matter how well informed, is in itself “a second creation,” a “reproduction of the original production”: “What is reconstructed, a life brought back from the lost past, is not the original” (1995, p. 167). Gadamer instead advocates a hermeneutic position close to Hegel’s, who submitted that “the essential nature of the historical spirit consists not in the restoration of the past but in thoughtful mediation with contemporary life” (pp. 168-169, italics in original). Thus, for Gadamer, literature has achieved “its own contemporaneity with every present” (p. 391). To understand a literary text does not mean to reconstruct its past, as the temporal alienation is overcome “by virtue of its own meaningful presence” (p. 165); in that way “art is never simply past” (p. 165). To understand a literary text means, “to have a present involvement in what is said” (p. 391). Maybe, that is what García Montero is telling his readers in a poem entitled “Garcilaso 1991,” about love and war (Gulf War I) in the 20th century. In the poem, García Montero reveals his intention to read and rewrite Garcilaso’s clichés of war and love in the Spanish Renaissance according to his own experience, in his own terms, in his own space, in his own time … Then, who is the reader not to do the same?

… But then, does that mean that we have as many literatures as readers? How is it possible that we normally can distinguish between a literary text and a non-literary one, even when it is impossible for us to “rewrite” it according to our own experience? As can be concluded from the above discussion, by being based on a conceptualization of literariness as disruption or deviance from a specific literary tradition, Fowler’s theory and Cook’s approach may be helpful in explaining the social relativity of the selection of the works that constitute a canon or establish a new literary tradition at a specific point in

---

28 Love and war were constants in the life and poems of 16th century poet and soldier Garcilaso de la Vega.
time. Still, their models might not be particularly useful in accounting for how literary texts are recognized as such by actual readers with varying experiences, schemata, and multiple reactions (including indifference to a text). Similarly, Vygotsky’s model did not account for this either, as the Russian psychologist assumed that the reader would identify a text as literature and that s/he would be sensitive enough to recognize the text’s workings.

Some authors have quite willingly acknowledged the impossibility of collating common features of literary works, and have plunged into a culturally agreed-upon concept of literature. Eagleton (1996) embraces this historical instability of the concept by defining literature as “highly valued writing” according to historically variable judgments in close relation to ideologies (pp. 9-10, 14). Therefore, what is literature now may not have been literature in the past or may not be literature in the future, depending on the criteria according to which texts are valued in specific historical contexts:

It is true that many of the works studied as literature in academic institutions were “constructed” to be read as literature, but it is also true that many of them were not. A piece of writing may start off life as history or philosophy and then come to be ranked as literature; or it may start off as literature and then come to be valued for its archaeological significance. Some texts are born literary, some achieve literariness, and some have literariness thrust upon them.

(Eagleton, 1996, p. 7)

The same historicism applies to the different theories in the history of literary criticism, according to Eagleton. In a chapter pointedly called “Political Criticism,” the author submits that the history of modern literary criticism is a product of the political and ideological history of our epoch (p. 168). For example, the very idea that literature has to “disturb” and “transgress” the reader’s world (a criticism that Eagleton levels at Iser, but that may seem applicable to some of the models presented above) is, according to the author, part of the “modern-day European liberal” viewpoint that is typically suspicious of
“systems of thought” (p. 71), for many literary texts validate conventional ways of thinking. But if value judgments on literature are so tied to specific ideologies, what makes it possible for some people living in the 21st century to enjoy, say, Catulo’s poems, which were written a century before Christ? According to Eagleton, it is the fact that we always interpret literary works in the light of our own concerns (p. 10), which allows readers to recreate different works out of what seems to be “same” text (p. 11).

Another author who emphasizes the role of ideology in determining the notion of literature is Peter Widdowson. The author deconstructs the canon of what he humorously calls the DWEM (that is, Dead White European Males)’s literature (1999): “While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with being dead, white, European or male, the fact that the received Canon was so emphatically imbued with these characteristics revealed that it was neither ‘natural’ nor ‘given,’ but rather constructed, ideological partial” (Peter Widdowson, 1999, p. 64). This conglomerate of features together with the contingent, subjective, arbitrary evaluations of what becomes literary nowadays reveals, “the material market forces and cultural predilections of publishers, reviewers and critics which are visibly at work ascribing to a text those literary features and qualities which will then be ‘found in’ it to value or deprecate” (p. 69).

At this point I have to agree that the concept of literature or any art needs to be contemplated with a certain modicum of relativism and in relation to ideologies, and economic forces. If we believe that this notion is intricate and variable as it stands at this point, we only have to look at other cultures to remember how our concept of art is even more arbitrary, as in other societies art not only refers to the work itself but also to the creating, the performing, the listening/reading/viewing/dancing by the spectator, who becomes a co-author without whom the work of art is not complete (Small, 1987, p. 50, in Dimitriadis and McCarthy, 2001, p. 105). However, for the purposes of this
dissertation and since every author so far (including Eagleton and P. Widdowson) seems to agree that readers do actually recognize some texts as literary, I would like to explore further and give some consideration to the issue of how one knows what literature is regardless of one’s eventual attachment to or disenchantment with the literary work.

### 3.4 Defining literature

One way of defining literature and precluding extremes of exclusive categories or total arbitrariness is in terms of continua of relative features that all discourse types share to a greater or lesser degree, but are more typical of literature. An example of this type of characterization is provided by Carter (1997), who does not define literature “in any exclusive sense” (p. 169), concurring with a view that perceives different levels of literariness between Literature with a capital “l” (the canonical type) and literature with a small “l” (jokes, advertisements, proverbs, etc) (Carter and Nash, 1990; McRae, 1991; McCarthy and Carter, 1994; Carter, 1996). Carter (1997) presents a characterization based on clines to describe the “prototypical in conventional literary language use, as far as it is understood in its standard, modern average Western conception” (Carter, 1997, p. 128). According to the author, the features included in these clines determine different degrees of literariness, thus providing a systematic basis for allotting more or less literariness to one text or another. For instance, the more literary a work is the less medium dependent it will be, i.e. the more internal reference it will enjoy, and the less likely part of its meaning will have to reside in codes, abbreviations, illustrations, maps, recordings, etc. Literary texts also generally exhibit the feature of re-registration; that is to say, all sorts of registers, genres, and linguistic resources, are open to utilization in literature. In addition to medium independence and re-registration, literature tends to
have a greater degree of semantic density and polysemy, which implies the “interactive patterning” of “several superimposed codes and levels” (p. 133) on the one hand, and the ambiguity and multiplicity of interpretations and meanings, on the other. In relation to patterning, Carter explains how discourse patterning is more likely to “reinforce content” (p. 135) more so in literary texts than in other texts. Finally, the interaction between the reader and the author in literature is more displaced than in other texts, as meanings and speech acts emerge “indirectly and obliquely” (p. 135).

However, due to the disrupting nature of literature, establishing a set of features, even a relative one, must always be considered provisional. In fact, some literary works may exhibit the characteristics arranged on the “minus literary” extreme of this cline and obtain more literariness precisely for this reason. For instance, Esquivel’s *La ley del amor* is a good example of re-registration (more literary), on the one hand, in that it draws from indigenous tales, science-fiction, terror, detective and police novels, and soap opera for its plot (as it was indicated in Chapter 2). However, the relationship between the reader and the author is more direct than one would expect in a novel when she tells the reader to find an accompanying CD with music and play a song to be better able to comprehend the characters’ feelings and thoughts. The author also refers the reader to some drawings that visually represent flashbacks or *déjà-vus* from characters’ previous lives. This reliance on music and drawings in addition to the written text makes this story medium dependent (minus literary), which paradoxically enhances, rather than diminishes, its literariness. In my view, this novel can be identified as literature precisely for its medium dependence in interaction with the re-registration of a collage of non-literary elements that fill its pages: the reliance on drawings and music to describe emotions or mental states; the use of genres traditionally assigned to subliterature (such as science-fiction and detective story); the platitudinous topic of true love surmounting all
difficulties, overused in literature and other arts and with an otherwise unoriginal treatment through soap-opera-like passages and love-and-hate stories of the Spanish occupation of the Americas… Each of these elements separately may constitute an anti-literary statement, but surprisingly the resulting polyphonic orchestration of disparate and potentially cacophonous components achieves a harmonious, meaningful coherence. In the end, pictures, music and text form an eclectic whole that is complex to integrate and less stale than we had originally been incited to believe, with love surviving a hidden plot throughout historical times, technologies, media, modernity, social evolution, and other invisible forces, connecting past, present and future.

In addition to the idea of continua, authors have described literature in terms of “representation” (H. Widdowson, 1992; Carter and McRae, 1996; and Carter and Walker, 1989). Although there are significant variations on the use of this term itself, I will apply it here mostly in the same way as H. Widdowson (1992). This author discusses how language in common communicative events used for identifying relevant contextual information necessarily disappears from our focus of attention as soon it serves its purpose for meaning. This is what Widdowson calls the referential use of language (p. 32). On the other hand, the way language is used in literature is different in that in literary texts it attracts attention not only to the content but also to the form through unconventional patterning and its dissociation from connections with context, which leads to “a renewal of our experience of the language” (p. 32). “Freed from the usual dulling effect of context” (p. 32), the language of a literary work presents us with a problem that cannot be solved with conventional thinking, forcing us to transcend the familiar, to look for alternatives to reality, or notice an aspect of our world that had not entered our awareness or to which we had remained impervious up to that point (p. 12). Thus, the world of a literary work is not the fruit of direct experience, but the
representation of experience, which impels the reader to "suspend disbelief and participate imaginatively in the world created by the text" (Carter and McRae, 1991, p. xxiv). Representation then occurs through formal textual elements that allow mimetic correlations between form and meaning to be highlighted (Carter and McRae, 1996, p. xxiv). But it is the way words are used that "encourages this imaginative involvement and enhances its pleasure" (Carter and Walker, 1989, p. 6); it is this provocative prominence of form that the reader recognizes as literature even when it does not become significant to him.

This position would explain why the literariness of everyday language goes unnoticed in our daily communicative encounters, for, even when it construes a vision of the world, such everyday literariness renders its service to meaning rather than to the accentuation of form in conjunction with the enhancement of diffuse meanings. This conceptualization is also useful to explain why some narratives, autobiographies, essays, and other genres achieve the status of literature while others do not. Jokes and rhymes may attract attention to their form, but not to make their meaning suggestive. On the other hand, it could be argued that creative genres, such as commercials, may also bring attention to the form by being elusive, evocative, poetic, etc. For example, Cook (1994) shows several examples of ads that are very similar to poems. However, the highlighted forms in the text of a commercial point to a constrained circle of meanings applicable to the product that the commercial advertises, thus tying the spectator to the conventional context of an object rather than opening his/her scope to alternative worlds. On the other hand, it is not a discarded notion that a canonization of another junior branch may occur with commercials, as has happened with many other genres in the past. As a matter of fact, commercial festivals are held every year and DVDs are sold with fairly creative works, in which the commercials themselves are separated from the
product that they advertise and judged in terms of creativity, just as music is nowadays separated from labor, in conjunction with which music originally emerged (Bücher, 1923, p. 173, in Vygotsky, 1971, p. 245).

A concrete example of an object that was created as part of a publicity campaign but became art is the Osborne bull figures on Spanish roads. These billboards were originally placed on the top of hills close to roads to advertise cognac by the Osborne Winery Company. These billboards, unlike the regular type of billboard, were not square, but were in the shape of the black silhouette of a bull, which is the Osborne emblem (the Osborne family also raises bulls for bullfighting). Laws were eventually passed in Spain that forced the removal of all ads related to alcoholic drinks and tobacco products from the media, magazines, roads and highways. Much controversy arose around the removal of the Osborne bull figures, as people began to perceive them as something other than commercial artifacts. They saw them as part of Spain’s artistic-cultural heritage, on a par with any other artistic object. An exception was then made for these billboards and there are currently about ninety bull figures along Spanish roads.

The bull billboards might have become artistic artifacts because they drew attention to their form rather than to the brand and the commercial purpose for which they were intended. This attention was gained by the simple presence of a striking, huge, black, lonely, powerful bull silhouette on top of hills along roads in the context of the socio-historical meanings of the bull in the Spanish culture. The whole scheme has tickled the public’s imagination, and this figure has been ‘read’ with different meanings: a symbol of a lonely, arrogant Spain during Franco’s dictatorship, marked by tragedy, beautiful and fierce at the same time, isolated from the rest of Europe; a symbol of the strength and resilience of a blooming country with a young democracy in the 1980s; or the soul of the country dwelling perennially in the landscape, mysterious, intricate,
sinister, heraldic, passionate, distinct at heart in spite of the country’s rapid changes and new alliances. Whatever sense a traveler makes of this silhouette, it is because its form has been able to transcend its original purpose and immediate context to convert it, in Widdowson’s words, to a “revered icon of self-enclosed significance” (1992, p. 188, note 4). (However, the fact that travelers, even those from different cultures, may identify the figure of the bull as some kind of artistic artifact, does not imply that they will all find it meaningful or even worthy of artistic praise. As it was pointed out earlier in the present chapter, the construction of sense will depend on specific sociocultural histories, on what Vygotsky called *perezhivanie* or “lived emotional lives.” Just as it is not very likely that foreign travelers or people from different generations in Spain will make sense of the bull in the same way, it is not likely that a particular work of literature will carry the same meaning for every student.)

This view of art, of literature, specifically, as a type of discourse that attracts as much attention to its form as to its meaning is congruent with Vygotsky’s, Bruner’s, and Cook’s views of literature. Vygotsky emphasized that form destroys content; Cook underscored that the evocation and refreshment of world schemata was initiated by the text’s formal aspects (Cook, 1994, p. 198); and Bruner connected subjunctivity to specific lexico-grammatical usages that kept meaning open and performable.

Therefore, while a reader may or may not find a literary text cathartic, significant, disruptive, schema-changing, or rewritable, s/he may still be able to recognize it as literature. Thus, it is the personal sense that each reader obtains from literary texts, and not the notion of literature itself, that needs to be made dependent on each individual reader. The notion of representation not only contributes to the defining part of this equation, but also to the argument for personal meaning. According to Widdowson, “the very fact that the poem is dislocated from social context gives license to readers to
locate its meaning in their own individual experience” (p. 1992, 188-189, note 4). By being intangible, or evocative rather than referential, literature becomes susceptible to explanations in terms of how it means rather than what it means (Widdowson, 1992, p. 71). In support of this view, other perspectives provide similar rationales for the search of personal significance versus an exacting meaning in the literary text. Gadamer’s hermeneutic position coalesces with this view, for literature’s “detachment both from the writer or author and from a specifically addressed recipient or reader gives it a life of its own” (1995, p. 392). Similarly, Bruner remarks that the process of literary creation as subjunctivizing reality is not congruent with the purpose of attempting “to evoke a standard reaction but to recruit whatever is most appropriate and emotionally lively in the reader’s repertory” (Bruner, 1986, p. 25).

In conclusion, the three sets of theories that have been discussed in the preceding sections have been useful for realizing the full scope of how literature works as discourse. The first set of theories by Vygotsky, Bruner, H. Widdowson, and Cook proposed the inclusion of the reader in the conceptualization of literature and the overcoming of approaches to literature that were narrowly centered on text, the reader, etc. This group of theories also was central to determining how literature creates rather than presupposes certain types of mentation, thus emphasizing how literature is a really personal experience that taps into and restructures each reader’s inner world in different ways. The second set of theories (by Eagleton, and P. Widdowson) presented how the concept of literature is tied to the value judgments coming from cultures, ideologies, economic forces and power. This view encourages us to deal with literature in conjunction with other social discourses and in interaction with diverse ideological prisms. It invites us to be critical of the works that are forced into or out of the notion of “literature,” for which the reader will have to develop his/her own reflective judgment and
criteria. Finally, the third set of theories (by H. Widdowson, Carter, McRae, and Walker) provided a viable answer to the question of what allows a literary text be recognized as such. They also provided grounds for establishing connections between representation and personal significance, and for advocating a language-based pedagogy in conjunction with other discourses that are in contiguity with literature (see next chapter).

At this point, some primary reasons for the teaching of literature in the foreign language curriculum could be derived. However, the idea emerging from Chapter 2 and part of the present chapter that literature is not the epitome of language use, that it cannot provide L2 learners with linguistic resources different from everyday language, that it is not the only type of discourse that alters the mind, etc. calls for a sharpening of the rationale for the inclusion of literature in the curriculum. I address this issue in the final section of the chapter.

3.5 Why do we need literature in the foreign language curriculum?

“A school that eliminates lessons in literature is bound to be a bad school”
(Vygotsky, 1971, p. 256)

To start with, although the pedagogy of literature proposed in this dissertation does not attempt to banish non-literary discourses from the classroom (quite the contrary), the view here is that literature is the ideal field to dissolve the divides that were discussed in Chapter 2. As described in the previous chapter, in literature, more than other types of text, it is possible to find all types of registers, genres, social and geographical varieties, and topics (Carter and Walker, 1989, p. 6; Maley, 1989, p. 12). The authenticity of literature as discourse does not limit itself to the domain of the written, even if literature is most often presented in a written medium. The divide
between the oral and the textual is especially shaky in literary discourse, as we can find texts that were written to be read aloud (poems and short stories) or silently (novels) or performed (plays). Even when some literary works are written to be read silently, there are still dialogues that follow the speaking conventions of cultures, communities of practices, and social groups, or breach their rules in quite prominent ways. Thus, in literature texts, more than in conventional textbook audiotapes, we are able to find authentically motivated oral speech ruled by sociocultural conventions, versus oral speech that was created to illustrate a linguistic point, with always perfect, cooperative, non-conflictual speakers and contexts.

Literature allows readers to explore the equilibrium between convention and originality, between the critical and the creative. As Cook (1994) remarked, part of language learning is to know the rules, but another more fundamental part that is not so much emphasized or even allowed in the error-shy foreign language classroom is to break rules, limits and conventions:

Schemata, genre conventions, prototypes, and lexical chunks are all socially conditioned and conditioning constraints, limiting possibility not only of language but of thought. To understand them is an essential first step in the use of language; but a second step is to move beyond them, to change and alter them (p. 253).

McCarthy and Carter (1994) also explain how knowing a language involves appreciating how and why linguistic conventions can be broken or creatively manipulated, which makes literature a peerless arena for language learning. As there is a subtext behind virtually every utterance in “normal” communication that compels us to ‘read between the lines’ (Vygotsky, 1968; Vygotsky, 1962, p. 150; Markova, 1979, p. 80; McCarthy and Carter, 1994; Carter, 1997, p. 155), the more linguistic devices (especially those that are traditionally assigned to literature) learners are able to handle, the greater
the variety of subtexts they will be able to deal with (Markova, 1979, p. 80; McCarthy and Carter, 1994; Carter, 1997).

This exploitation of linguistic devices is at the core of literary discourse, and, furthermore, it takes place in linguistically patent ways that have consequences for changing the perspective through which we look at the world. Schultz (2002), drawing on McPeck’s concept of “reflective skepticism” (1981) and on the work of Bourgeois and Nizet, discusses the notion of “critical thinking” as a way of questioning norms, perspectives, cognitive modes and conventional ways of doing things (p. 10), where conflict is the key for the reconfiguration of the learner’s experience. Literature, especially foreign-language literature, is particularly suited to play this role because of its potential for engaging people in “the game” (p. 13). In this sense, literature becomes a “freeing” activity, an instrument of both reason and imagination (Bruner, 1986), which allows us to ponder the world that we know, though from a different light, but also on worlds that do not exist but on the paper that captures our imagination.

Because of this power to enact fictive worlds that affect one’s personal vision of reality, literary texts very effectively “construct experiences or ‘content’ in a non-trivial way, which gives voice to complexities and subtleties not always present in other types of text” (Carter and Walker, 1989, p. 6). In contrast, in standard textbooks, social and cultural issues tend to be presented in the form of oversimplified, general, and factual material that in some cases may reinforce rather than challenge students’ views of the other culture. The “motivating and stimulating source of content” that can be found in literature possesses the potential for involvement that textbooks may not have, “because it [literature] deals with ideas, things, sensations and events which either form part of the readers’ experience or which they can enter into imaginatively” (Maley, 1989, p. 12). In this respect, Kern highlights how narratives can exert as much influence in our schemata
as direct experience (2000, p. 99). Because it is a discourse that is embedded in specific sociohistorical circumstances, literature becomes a unique medium to study culture, not because it reflects the society from which it emerges, but because language constructs a world through relatable particulars that complies with or resists cultural forms of viewing the world in ways that are intended to engage the reader’s attention. The struggle between cultural convention and personal significance are made visible through the language in the fictive work. Additionally, in literature, topics are not dealt with in an artificial way – the issues that it discusses really mattered to the author. In this respect literature is authentic in ways foreign-language textbooks are not (Maley, 1989, p. 12; Collie and Slater, 1987, p 3). Unlike the factual transmission of cultural knowledge in textbooks, in literature human experience, feelings, and passions are not merely transmitted to the reader, but transformed and metamorphosed:

Just as artistic creation produces a transfiguration of the material of which the work of art is composed, it also causes a metamorphosis of feelings. The significance of this metamorphosis is, in Vygotsky’s view, its transcendence of individual feelings and their generalization to the social place […] to reveal something new and pertinent to man on a higher level of truth.

(Leontiev, 1971, p. vii)

Finally, literature attracts attention to its form while making meaning ambiguous, indeterminate, suggestive, engaging, and associative; few words may generate diverse interpretations and amplify meanings. This creates multiple opportunities for discussion and unique reactions about how texts come to mean in addition to what they mean (Walker and Carter, 1989, p. 6; Maley, 1989, p. 12). According to Walker and Carter, (1989, p. 6), literature is “intrinsically interesting,” for the topics that it deals with relate to the human experience and the treatment of these topics is devised to engage the readers’ interest. Along the same lines, Maley (1989, p. 12) remarks, in support of this
argument, that literature, either in oral or written forms, seems to be present in all cultures. Sometimes, common themes exist across cultures even if the treatment of these topics may be different. It is possible that the elusiveness and highly complex heteroglossia of literary texts may be an ally in foreign-language education for challenging learners to view the same world under different prisms and to perform alternative meanings.

In conclusion, in this chapter then I have discussed how language and literature can be defined and understood as discourse and how this concept had consequences for issues of personal significance, exegesis, reader’s roles, and relevance of literature in the curriculum. In the next chapter, I present the principles and practices of a pedagogy of literature informed by the perspective established in this chapter.
Chapter 4
Teaching literature through language (I): the theory

“Don't let the fear of what is difficult paralyze you”
(Freire, Paulo, 1997/1921, p. 27)

4.1 Introduction: the democratization of the literary experience

“No one else can read a literary work for us. The benefits of literature can emerge only from creative activity on the part of the reader himself”
(Rosenblatt, 1966, p. 1000)

In 1966 Rosenblatt claimed that “reading is of necessity a participation, a personal experience” (p. 999), and complained that the quality of literary courses seemed to depend on the amount of “great works” and on the technical complexity of the readings, rather than on “the quality of actual reading experiences” (p. 1002, italics in original). Even today, the way content is conventionally used in literature courses does not usually facilitate the learner’s personal experience with the literary text. As learners are apprenticed into reasons why others appreciate a particular piece of work, the prevalence of content displaces and marginalizes the common reader’s role in the construction of discourse, that is, the possibility of enacting his or her own meaning. In fact, the association between literature and content has become so strong that in extreme, but not unusual cases, content has replaced texts and the reader’s experiences with literary works altogether.

In Chapter 3, literature was defined as a type of representational discourse that liberates language from the deadening dictatorship of referential context by provocatively attracting attention to form and, thus, evoking and highlighting diffuse meanings. This
attention to form is what imbues literature with its evocative power and its “potential for multiple significance” (Widdowson, 1992, p. 24). Therefore, ignoring the dialectics of form and meaning in literary discourse by looking for the “literal” or “referential” meaning of a literary work goes against the “unbounded” nature of poetry (and by extension of any type of art) (Widdowson, 1992, p. 60). To suggest that readers do not understand the meaning of a literary work is “to suppose that it [the meaning] is in the text itself, put there by the writer” (Widdowson, 2004, p. 137), only decipherable to the critic or legitimate reader. With no intention to downplay the role of literary criticism and content in the study of literature, one must remember that the word on the page is the “primary datum” (Hall, 1989, p. 31). The prime substance of literature is language. Therefore, a discourse-based pedagogy is an optimal starting point for meaningful literary experience and for developing sensitivity to language use, especially in the case of non-native learners (Carter, 1997, p. 155). Analysis and content are undoubtedly integrated in this approach, but they follow and complement language-based activities (pp. 84, 86, 88).

Another reason for rejecting the domination of content in the traditional literature classroom is the fact that the prevalence of content does not necessarily lead to “a more responsive reading or to a fuller interpretation of a text” (Carter and Long, 1991, p. 4) or “bear any systematic relation to the development of language skills in students” (Carter and Walker, 1989, pp. 4-5). Content becomes knowledge for its own sake, only tied to the context of assessment. Then, far from turning into the critical skill of an autonomous learner, ‘literary competence’ becomes concerned with the reproduction of meanings that have already been established by the academic establishment:

It is by such means that the teaching academy can maintain an appearance of stable and consensual interpretations and, more crucially, of interpretive procedures for it is these same procedures which both limit and control –often by formal and informal modes of examination and
assessment - the ways in which individual subjects in that community are allowed to interpret.

(Carter, 1997, p. 113)

This search of consensus among the academic authorities is further reinforced by formal assessments (Mantero, 2002, p. 63; Cook, 1994, p. 174; Carter, 1997, pp. 113, 222-223, and Durant, 1995, p. 54), and hinders the democratization of literature. The replacement of the notion of “literary competence” with that of “discourse literacy” is in order. Carter describes discourse literacy as “a competence fluently and accurately to read and write extended texts” which “also involves a capacity for active reconstruction and deconstruction” (Carter, 1997, p. 74). For Carter, discourse literacy implies a capacity to see through language to the ways in which we can be manipulated and in varying degrees controlled by the language; and a capacity to see through the language in the more active and dynamic sense of creating a vision in and with language, a capacity for constant vision and revision which empowers the user to engage with and, where necessary, to redirect society’s discourses and to articulate one’s personal position as a subject within those discourses

(1997, p. 74)

In addition to Carter, a group of researchers have advocated a discourse-based pedagogy of literature whose aim is to develop active readers and improve the quality of the students' literary experiences based on the notion of literature as representation discussed in Chapter 3. This pedagogy of literature is based on a series of principles that question the traditional focus on content and on 'pure' interpretative and analytical skills with language assistance limited to vocabulary and grammatical fixes at sentence level.

---

It has to be remembered that by “reconstruction” Carter implies the transformation, rewriting, performance and recreation of discourse, while by “deconstruction” he refers to the analysis and commentary of the text.
In the following sections, we will consider the content and principles of this alternative pedagogy of literature as discourse. Further, the claims of this pedagogy will be interpreted in the light of Sociocultural Theory. Along with this interpretation, some examples and models from the study course will be presented. Reference will be made to some students by pseudonyms that correspond to well-known literary characters:

- **Alice** (from Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in the Wonderland*)
- **Darcy** (from Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*)
- **Dorothea** (from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Hermann and Dorothea*)
- **Dulcinea** (from Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*)
- **Emma** (from Jane Austen’s *Emma*)
- **Ernest** (from Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*)
- **Gulliver** (from Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*)
- **Jane** (from Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*)
- **Juliet** (from William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*)
- **Lara** (from Boris Pasternak’s *Doctor Zhivago*)
- **Ophelia** (from William Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*)
- **Scheherazade** (from anonymous *One Thousand and One Nights*)
- **Ulysses** (from Homer’s *The Odyssey*)

The teaching units implemented in the course instantiating this pedagogy will be presented in Chapter 5.

**4.2 Towards an alternative and integrative pedagogy of literature as discourse.**

“In grasping the constraints which regulate and guide us, we also grasp the resources of our own creativity”
Many scholars, including Widdowson (1975, 1992), Nash (1986), McRae (1991), Durant and Fabb (1990), Schulz (2002), Carter (1997), McCarthy and Carter (1994), Carter and Nash (1990), Carter, Goddard et al. (2002), Rob Pope (1995, 2002), inter alia, propose a pedagogy that focuses on students’ active engagement in the “game” of meaning construction in literature through tasks that involve the reconstruction, rewriting or recreation of literary texts. For the purposes of this pedagogy, the literary text needs to be presented in an incomplete or disarranged fashion, posing some kind of problem that makes it susceptible and open to the student’s participatory intervention. The text is, then, altered, reconstructed, rearranged, completed, parodied, performed, or rewritten in search of a particular effect by the learner. Different versions are compared and contrasted. The consequences for meaning are assessed and accounted for. The transformation of texts can vary: from altering punctuation, intonation, sound, word order, or syntactic structure, to rewriting the text by altering the time, place, participants, medium, ideologies, point of view, or even to recasting texts in terms of genre, structures or patterns.

It is essential to emphasize that although attention is drawn to the linguistic means of the literary work, language is not the goal in and of itself in the above tasks. In other words, this alternative framework is not about teaching the preterit and the imperfect, for instance, and then using these tasks as ‘practice’ activities as happens in a PPP model (see Chapter 2). The goal of these transformation tasks is to create meaning in the context of language-in-use or discourse (not only at sentence level). For that matter,

... teaching literary texts should result in literary experiences and the work undertaken on the language of the texts should not be an end in itself but should service literary goals.
Carter (1997) discusses two main principles underlying these language-based tasks for literary texts: the activity and the process principles (p. 155). By virtue of the activity principle, the students participate in making the text mean by interacting with the text and transforming it, instead of relying on the instructor and textbooks for the ‘right’ interpretation. According to the process principle, students are more likely to appreciate and understand literature if they “intervene” (in Pope’s parlance) in a text that is not a complete artifact or product carved in stone, because interpretative processes are closely connected to processes involved in the construction of meaning (Carter, 1997, p. 155). Therefore, with the application of both principles, not only creative skills are likely to be enhanced, but also skills in interpretation (Carter, 1997, p. 155).

The idea that original texts can be known better if they are displaced and transformed clearly draws on Halliday’s concept of language as social semiotic and meaning potential (Carter, 1997, p. 84). One could compare meaning potential to the phenomenon of color in that it is constituted not only by the light absorbed by objects, but also by the light that is deflected by them. Like color, the meaning potential of a fragment of speech is also constructed by the choices deflected by the speaker or writer: “it is only by knowing what someone could have meant that we can understand in full the meaning of what they did in fact mean” (Eggins, 1994, p. 217, emphasis in the original).

As concrete meaning materializes in the process of communicating, texts, far from being ironclad, should be treated as dynamic entities, as processes of semantic choices and events (Halliday, 1991, pp. 40-41). Rewriting makes texts open and performable, which allows the externalization of meaning potential to mediate interpretation. Pope, who supports the view of reading as creative-critical re-writing, argues,
The best way to understand how a text works ... is to change it: to play around with it, to intervene in it in some way (large or small), and then try to account for the exact effect of what you have done.

(1995, p. 1)

Along the same lines, Widdowson argues that “[o]nly when a text is unsanctified can it have significance for individual readers” (1992, p. 90) to the extent that “the experience of poetry [and by extension any literary text], and its educational relevance, depend on the reader assuming an author role” (ibid, p. xi). As (re)writing and reading are dialectically interrelated in the activity of making meaning, the best (and perhaps the most inevitable) place to start reading is with one’s own re-writing of a work (Pope, 2002, p. 280). Widdowson proposed,

What the learner needs to know how to do is to compose in the act of writing, comprehend in the act of reading, and to learn techniques of reading by writing and techniques of writing by reading.

(1978, p. 144)

By taking the author’s position and rewriting texts, meaning-making processes are complemented and enhanced (Pope, 2002, p. 262). Reading becomes more meaningful when the readers “have experience in selecting, organizing, and interpreting linguistic clues” (Kern, 2000, p. 20, drawing on Widdowson, 1978), and can better understand “the thought processes that writers go through in the act of writing” (Kern, 2000, p. 171). This, in turn, awakens “a sensitivity to language that makes close analytic reading possible” (ibid, p. 171).

Pope (1995, 2002) provides numerous examples of authoring as reconstructing activities that he calls “textual interventions.” The scope of these transformative activities is unlimited, as they can range from changing texts’ genres and rewriting them from different points of view or for different audiences or with the addition of a new character, to playing with sounds and seeing the effects on the text. Carter (1997) and Carter and
Long (1987) specifically propose activities such as prediction, cloze procedures, summary, forum, and rewriting (p. 180). (For other approaches to literacy that incorporate re-writing and the transformation of texts, see the New London Group's writings on "multiliteracies," 1996; Kourtis and Skourtou, 2004; Cope and Kalantzis, 2000, especially in relation to critical framing and transformed practice).

Additionally, in an earlier work, McCarthy and Carter (1994, pp. 166-168) propose a series of principles for the teaching of language as discourse that underlie and complement the overarching activity and process principles stipulated by Carter (1997). In light of the comparative / contrastive principle, the students are able to understand language operations in texts better when they compare and contrast texts that have some similarities, but present different points of view, genres, registers, and grammatical or lexical choices, etc. The continuum principle stipulates that, since literature and everyday language do not have different formal properties, the teaching and learning of discourse should include both literary and nonliterary texts. According to the inferencing principle, discourse instruction should focus on tools that allow learners to make meaning autonomously even in the event of lacking sufficient cultural information. By virtue of the familiar to unfamiliar principle, new knowledge needs to be built on the students’ previous experiences with contexts and texts (including texts in their native language). Finally, according to the critical principle, knowledge of stylistic choices may assist learners in becoming critical citizens capable of reading ideologies and values that reside between the lines of discourse.

The principles underlying this language-based alternative pedagogy of literature are clearly commensurate with Sociocultural claims on the nature of language, development and instruction. Matters of meaning and sense, the issue of theoretical versus empirical learning, the role of instruction in development, the notion of mediation
and the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development seem to reflect most of the concerns described in the above-mentioned principles.

4.3 Teaching literature through language from a Sociocultural perspective

“We are what we do, especially what we do to change what we are.”

Eduardo Galeano

As was discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the dialectic interrelatedness of the social and the individual in microgenetic, phylogenetic, ontogenetic and sociocultural development (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Lantolf, 2000a; Rogoff, 1999; Scribner, 1985; Wertsch, 1985a, 1985b). According to the Sociocultural perspective, development is the process of gaining control over one’s activity (defined as the interaction of the individual with his/her sociocultural environment) through the internalization of tools, artifacts and assistance by more capable peers or experts as the means of control of future behavior. In other words, development is the process of gaining self-regulation “through the volitional use of cultural tools toward purposeful ends in a socially mediated context” (Smagorinsky and O'Donnell-Allen, 1998, p. 201). That means that not only do tools change the objects to which they are directed –they also reconfigure the individual’s “ways of conceptualizing phenomena in the world” (Lantolf and Appel, 1994, pp. 7-8) as cultural forms of sign-using activity become the source of psychological processes in the individual through internalization.

Language, one the most important mediating tools in human activity, is obviously no exception. It is one of the most notable examples of how tools achieve psychological status. According to the Sociocultural perspective, learning a language does not have much to do with the “acquisition of a new set of grammatical, lexical, and phonological
forms‖ (Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000, p. 155). Second language learning is not a process of assigning “new signifiers” to “already given signifieds” (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 5, italics added), in which the social function of communication (the most important aspect of language) is, if anything, second best (Markova, 1979, p. 42). Rather, the Sociocultural framework considers that the meaning potential of a language is dynamic and takes shape through the interactions of a community of practice:

Cultural meanings are then those intentions/motives/values/perceptions, senses in the Vygotskian view, constructed through interaction that become sedimented in language and that emerge in a community as it struggles not only to understand but to change the material world through specific activities (e.g. labor, education, and play).

(Negueruela and Lantolf, 2005, p. 3)

Therefore, linguistic development is a process of *semiosis* in which cultural meanings and models such as concepts, scripts, schemas, narratives, rituals, and conceptual metaphors, are appropriated (Lantolf, 2006a, p. 85) through *participation* in socially mediated activity (Donato, 2000, p. 45; Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000, p. 155).

In the process of carrying out language-mediated, goal-directed activity, cultural meanings and models are collaboratively constructed by communities of speakers (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 5). This implies that development happens from the outside inward, through internalization or appropriation of what is made socially available. This perspective reverses the innatist path of linguistic acquisition and destroys the schism between nature and culture, as culturally constructed meanings such as concepts become the mediators between activity and psychology (Vygotsky, 1931/1991, p. 88; Wertsch, del Río, and Álvarez, 1995, p. 21; Ratner, 1996, p. 422;
Negueruela and Lantolf, 2005, p. 3). In sum, the Sociocultural framework presents the mind as essentially social:

On one side, concepts articulate the manner in which objects, events, people, and behavior are socially organized. On the other side, concepts guide emotions, logical reasoning, perception of how things appear, motives and needs, how and what we remember, and the kind of personality attributes we have.

(Ratner, 1996, p. 422)

This view of language, the mind and activity has a series of implications for the pedagogy of language and literature. These implications correlate to the foregoing principles proposed by McCarthy and Carter (1994) and Carter (1997), and will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

4.3.1 Sense and sensibility to context: the process and the activity principles.

As discussed thus far, the Sociocultural perspective rejects the idea of encapsulated, pre-assigned meanings residing in an abstract system of language forms. To put it simply, language can become a means of communication *only* when we are actually communicating, i.e., in the context of speech activity (Markova, 1979, p. 16, drawing on A. N. Leont’ev, 1969; Kostomarov, 1965; Myrkin, 1970). That is because language is essentially a tool, a “system of historically elaborated linguistic means” for solving tasks within specific sociocultural contexts (Markova, 1979, p. 15). As explained earlier, meaning potential is constructed collaboratively within sociocultural contexts through the interactions of members of communities of practice in the course of goal-directed, language-mediated activity (Negueruela and Lantolf, 2005, p. 3).

---

It is also through goal-directed activity inside a specific community of practice that meaning potential takes concrete meaning, for one can only communicate through sense (Negueruela and Lantolf, 2005, p. 3), that is, when meaning is actualized by interlocutors in concrete material circumstances. As language users communicate, they dynamically “shape linguistic forms to meet their communicative needs and intentions” (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 9, aligning with Hopper’s position on emerging grammar).

Provided below is an example illustrating how language users constantly add new layers of sense, through their interactions within activities, to the meanings that have become sedimented in a community of practice.

In 2002, the northwest coast of Spain suffered an ecological disaster with the sinking of the *Prestige*, an oil tanker. After the first signs of mechanical failure, there were irregularities in the orders given to the ship by the central government in order to prevent an ecological disaster. There was also controversy with regard to the management of the volunteering campaign and the cleaning companies contracted to remove the ‘*chapapote*’ (the Galician term for ‘oil residue’, which was quickly adopted into the Spanish language) that was left on the coast as a consequence of the oil spill. These controversies indicated the possibility that the disaster could have been prevented or at least more efficiently ameliorated, had it not been for some economic interests at play in the political sphere. Because of this scandal, a series of media declarations denying the existence of residue on the Galician coast fueled rather than silenced public outcry, especially when the constant denunciations of the people living in the affected area screamed otherwise.

Four years later, I was watching interviews of two Galician soccer players from rival teams (*Noticias de Telecinco*, April, 2006). The interviews were conducted separately, but consisted of the same questions. Each player was asked if there was
“chapapote” in the world of soccer. Each player smiled eloquently and answered “sure” with no hesitation as to what the question was aiming at. Certainly, before the Prestige disaster, such a question would have been as meaningless as its literal translation in English (is there any ‘oil residue’ on the soccer world?).

This use of “chapapote” outside the context of the 2002 ecological disaster in Galicia is an example of how one can only get to meaning through sense (Negueruela and Lantolf, 2005, p. 3). It also demonstrates how “the person transforms what is internalized and through externalization potentially impacts the self and the community” (Lantolf, and Thorne, 2006, p. 158). Because of internalization, our words are not neutral, but populated with others’ voices (Bakhtin, 1981) that we, in turn, transform. In the use of the term “chapapote,” we can trace the sociocultural history of interlocutors, their emotional lives, the purposes that they struggle to attain in their communicative interaction, and their personalities. To start with, an unconditional right-wing voter might not have formulated the soccer interview question this way, since it was the right wing that was in office and, consequently, in the eye of the storm, at the time of the Prestige disaster. But, at the time of the interview, the interlocutors’ psychologies moved beyond a blackened northwest strand; the “chapapote” was not only spreading across the Galician coast, but was also finding its way into a wider sociocultural context: The use of this term tells us how sport has become a political economy that uses players as exchange currencies. The question is carefully formulated in a world in which statements shed in the media are legally liable, in which constitutions protect the individual from

---

31 This is not just an isolated, random case. The word “chapapote” has been used ever since in many other contexts that are no longer related to the ecological disaster. For example, in the article “El chapapote económico” by Miguel Ángel Fernández Ordóñez published in El País (a Spanish paper with a marked leftist ideology) on 1/15/2003, chapapote refers to slow economic growth caused by lack of due action by economic agencies. On 4/7/2006, an article in the same newspaper uses the word “chapapote” to refer to the web of political corruption and media manipulation at the mayor office in Marbella (in the province of Málaga, southern Spain).
defamation, and people are the owners of things such as ‘public image’, and ‘right’ to ‘honor’. The term in this context tells us how the accumulation of capital, far from being culturally associated with success, is coupled with social injustice, and corruption. On the other hand, the formulation of the question evidences that matters of corruption and power abuse increase the viewing audience. In the midst of all these material circumstances, the reporter understands that, in order to obtain the confirmation of the existence of hidden agendas and economic interests in soccer clubs, it is essential to formulate the question in such a noncommittal way that the players would have no reservations answering it.

In addition, because of different intersubjectivities constructed with each player in each of the communicative contexts, the same question certainly brought different meanings into each of the players’ consciousness (see also reference to Hanks’s notion of intersubjective contracts among interlocutors in Chapter 2 and to Cole’s concept of co-weaving in Chapter 3). For example, the question for one player might have been seeking confirmation of the controversial contract renewal of an unproductive teammate, while for the other player the question might have aimed at the opposite sense: the unjustified, undeserved imminent cessation of his or other teammate’s contract.

This example shows that words are not meaningful signs *per se*, and that, in order to understand somebody’s speech, one also needs to understand his or her motivation (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 151). Utterances are always directed at someone; they have “addressivity” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 95), which demands a “responsive understanding” (p.125). That “responsive understanding” is dialogically constructed by the interlocutors (ibid; Wertsch, del Río, and Álvarez, 1995, p. 23); that is, in Rommetveit’s words, a constant “attunement to the attunement of the other” (1992, p. 21). The interlocutors’ “temporarily shared social reality” or intersubjectivity “scaffolds the process of intention-
If this notion of meaning is taken seriously, then we cannot expect anything but radical implications for the concept of literacy and the pedagogy of literature. In the first place, one must concede that literature does not belong either to authors or to a select group of ‘intended’ readers. “A sign is always a sign to someone,” that is, “it is used for a social purpose” (Kramsch, 2000, p. 137) and functions dialogically (in Bakhtinian parlance); but that does not imply that that social purpose is “exhausted in the original intention of the sign maker” (Kramsch, 2000, p. 137). Signs are not signals; they are used “to be interpreted, contested, inferred from, adjusted to [their] and our previous life experiences” (Hall, 1989, p. 31, drawing on Bakhtin). As Stetsenko and Arievitch (2004) have argued,

the most vivid creations of social practice, such as language and art, are the products and carriers of practice and human subjectivity but only when re-enacted (or re-constructed) in new rounds of ever-expanding cycles of practice by real people in their real lives.

(p. 491, italics in original).

Furthermore, in literature, signs are purposefully separated from their original referential context by directing attention to their form, thus stimulating meaning-construction in their recontextualization and actualization by the contemporary, common reader. In the externalization process of artistic creation, the context-dependent sense of the writer “unfolds its meaning as symbol-for-others” (Kozulin, 1996, p. 109, drawing on Vygotsky, 1962), as a means of socializing emotion (Vygotsky, 1962). This implies that even if one could assert that the author really had such and such intention that “does not mean that readers are bound by the intention or that any other reading is invalid” (Widdowson, 2004, p. 137). Inhibiting the variety of subject positions that can meaningfully interact
with literary texts contradicts, in fact, the very nature of literature. Widdowson specifically discusses this point:

since poetic meaning is, of its very representational nature, unbounded, there can be no criteria for what counts as a valid reading. People with different linguistic and literary experience will read different meanings into a text. If we do not identify an expression as a literary citation or allusion, then we cannot, obviously, interpret it as such. But then we will simply interpret it in another way.

(Widdowson, 1992, pp. 59-60, italics in original)

This lack of one-to-one correlation implies that texts do not have one 'logical' meaning; they are never completed or finished (see reference to Bakhtin's notion of 'carnival' in Chapter 3), and are, therefore, rewriteable. The alternative pedagogy of literature proposed by Carter, McCarthy, Pope, Widdowson, Brumfit, McRae, Maley, Simpson, et al., focuses on the process of creating meaning rather than on committing set meanings to memory. One focus in this pedagogy of literature as discourse is the emphasis on meaning-making or compositional processes, which allows reading between the lines, not only in literary discourse, but also in every instance of communication, as all types of texts are susceptible to actualization, transformation and contestation.

A second implication of the Sociocultural view of meaning concerns the unproductive, unnatural separation of writing and reading in the traditional teaching of literacy. It could be argued, though, that even in the most traditional of curricula writing is used in tandem with reading, especially in literature courses: writing is typically used to provide responses to written texts in the form of essays or commentaries, to reply to comprehension questions, summarize plots, etc. However, throughout these practices, writing and reading continue to occupy separate rooms despite of living under the same roof—writing is not made part of reading, and vice versa. In spite of the increasing
literature that rejects this dichotomous view of literacy, reading, for the most part, still appears as a receptive, reproductive, passive “skill” (paired with listening). In contrast, writing and speaking are traditionally reified as constructive, creative, active ‘skills’. As a result of the separation of writing and reading, texts appear to be written in stone, which in literature courses usually translates into a shattering emphasis on “reading strategies,” close reading, analysis and commentary as the only ways of interacting with and interpreting the literary text.

In accordance with the foregoing notion of language-in-use or discourse in the Sociocultural perspective, reading either written or oral texts is not very different from rewriting them, as meaning is “continually in a state of becoming” (Langer and Flihan, 2000, p. 118), never complete or finished during communication. On the one hand, readers and listeners (not only writers and speakers) also construct the message (Smagorinsky 1991, 1995a; Smagorinsky and Coppock, 1993, 1994a, 1994b; Smagorinsky and O’Donnell-Allen, 1998) by recontextualizing signs according to the consciousness shared with the interlocutor. The example from the soccer interview above shows how each of the soccer players may have possibly constructed different intersubjectivities with the reporter and, as a result, even opposite senses of the word “chapapote.” On the other hand, the reporter formulated the question oriented by the senses that he considered the term would attain in each case. Therefore, intention-attribution processes do not only underlie the activities of reading or listening (conventionally associated only with interpretation), but also the activities of writing and


Another argument in favor of the integration of writing and reading in the literature class is that composing tools (such as linguistic concepts, schemas, and conventions) may become available to students in the meaning-oriented, tool-mediated, goal-directed activity of rewriting. This is congruent with the Sociocultural concept of development, the source of which is the person-acting-with-mediational means (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 157; Wertsch, 1998; Wertsch, 1995, p. 64; Wertsch, 1991, p. 119).

Writing more than reading places students in the position of needing to control linguistic resources to produce certain meanings (Di Pietro, 1987, pp. 107-108). This control, or agentive position, oriented to meaning allows the learners to master meaning composing operations that are also involved in reading. In other words, rewriting allows students to engage in the “game” of literature and appropriate tools and actions (speaking figuratively, projecting specific viewpoints over events, etc.) that become essential in the creation and, therefore, in the interpretation of literary texts. As it should be in any discipline, knowledge becomes a by-product of the authoring game in which students engage. Gee expressed this idea through the metaphor of biology and videogames.

A science such as biology is not a set of facts. In reality, it is a “game” that certain types of people “play.” These people engage in characteristic sorts of activities, use characteristic tools and language, and hold certain values; that is, they play by a certain set of “rules.” They do biology. Of course, they learn, use, and retain lots and lots of facts—even produce them—but the facts come from and with the doing.

Left out of the context of biology as activity, biological facts are trivia.

(Gee, 2005, p. 34, italics in original)

By focusing on literary, authoring games instead of on specific meanings agreed upon by critics, students may be liberated from the constraints of the ‘literary facts’.
Tools are by definition generative, motivated, and *instrumental* in culturally organized activity. However, in both traditional language and literature teaching, among other disciplines, tools have been treated as products and content items, and have been thus doomed to empirical domination and limited cognitive transcendence (Kozulin, 1998, pp. 86-87). This would explain one of the classical complaints by instructors that students seem to be able to apply certain knowledge at specific instances (for example, while doing textbook exercises), and then fail to apply that knowledge to other tasks (for example, while reading (literary) texts or in spontaneous usage). Students simply do not know how to ‘play’ the game of language and literature in all contexts.

In the next two sections, this point will be expanded. As the process and activity principles imply that students need to learn to *do* literature, these principles are essentially interrelated to the inferencing, the contrastive and the familiar to unfamiliar principles.

### 4.3.2 Giving language the tool treatment: the inferencing and the contrast principles.

“*[A]n insistence on preserving old and unsatisfactory rules may well be tantamount to committing linguistic suicide.*”

(Bull and Lamadrid, 1971, p. 455)

According to the inferencing principle, interpretative procedures should be taught overtly so that students are able to make sense of texts, of “cultural and literary meanings” with greater *autonomy* (McCarthy and Carter, 1994, p. 167). Carter emphasizes,

in addition to interpreting language use they [students] need to be aware of how they have made interpretations and to reflect on interpretive
procedures, learning, in other words, how to learn better to interpret and engage with such texts as a result of more conscious operations.

(Carter, 1997 p. 169)

Carter emphasizes the need for “some overt and explicit reflection on processes of textual understanding” (p. 169, italics added) with the goal of enabling one “to deal with new texts and contexts” (ibid, italics added), given the impossibility of teaching “all the cultural facts necessary for interpreting discourse in a second or a foreign language” (ibid). In addition, McCarthy and Carter (1994), and Turner (1996) advocate more systematic grammatical explanations that account for the so-called ‘exceptions’ to the ‘rules’, and that allow language users’ to express their subjectivity.

This advocacy of student autonomy by overtly instructing the learner in general interpretative procedures that can be applied to multiple contexts clearly resonates with the principles of theoretical instruction (in contrast with empirical instruction, which fails to provide learners with abstract, generalizeable and functional principles, subsequently tying students to specific contexts and types of activities). Therefore, despite the fact that the term “inference” may resonate with standard pedagogical practices, such as inductive grammar, in my view, McCarthy and Carter’s inferencing principle clearly reflects dissatisfaction with the domination of empirical knowledge in the classroom, and seems to encourage a type of learning that is congruent with the principles of the theoretical instruction in that it does not rely upon others’ permanent regulation or specific concrete circumstances.

Examples of this traditional empirical domination are found in certain forms of content-orientated instruction that tie students to cultural facts and do not furnish them

33 We need to remember that inductive grammar, proposed in the most popularized versions of the Communicative Methodology, encourages the ‘inference’ of rules or generalizations based on the directly observable qualities of instances of use.
with interpretative tools for independent meaning-making (as, for example, in traditional literature and culture courses). In other cases, learners are provided with the necessary concepts, but these are in the form of content; that is, they are presented as declarative knowledge without the means of proceduralization (Karpov and Bransford, 1995, p. 62). An example of this is theoretically laden introductory courses in Spanish linguistics for undergraduates who aspire to use their second language more efficiently, rather than to become linguists.

Perhaps the most common form of empirical domination in the foreign language curriculum is textbook grammatical explanations based on rules of thumb, which are tied only to certain contexts. These rules of thumb, as most empirical knowledge, result from a generalization based on the most common observable characteristics of compared objects (Karpov and Bransford, 1995, p. 62), instead of on the essential properties as in theoretical or scientific learning. As Kozulin explains, “lack of coincidence between empirical appearance and theoretical essence is the norm and not an exception” (1998, pp. 55-56). As a result, many textbook rules of thumb present incorrect or narrowly circumscribed information (see Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Negueruela and Lantolf, 2005; Negueruela, 2003; Whitley, 2002; Whitley and González, 2000; Celce-Murcia, 1999; Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Bolinger’s and Bull’s articles on the semantic grammar of Spanish and English). For example, if the contexts of use of the preterit and the imperfect in Spanish are compared, one may find that weather conditions and age are usually described with the imperfect. However, any generalization based on this superficial observation banishes equally valid counterexamples to the no-man’s land of ‘exception’ (for instance, “piensas que no te comprendo, pero olvidas que yo también tuve 15 años,” in which preterit is used with age). Therefore, such a rule about the use of the imperfect would be tantamount to the idea that mercury is not a metal because it is
liquid and most metals are solid, whereas what makes mercury a metal is not the directly observable quality of the phase of matter, but the type of bonds that exist among its atoms and its readiness to form certain types of ions.

A last example of empirical domination is provided by some pedagogies inspired in the Sociocultural perspective and focused on exploratory activity to the detriment of the role of instruction. These pedagogies capitalize on notions of apprenticeship, participatory appropriation, situated practice and guided discovery (see Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wells, 1999; Rogoff, 1998, 1999). From a Vygotskian perspective, apprenticeship and participation alone (such as immersion), though adequate for certain types of activities, are not necessarily the most efficient ways of learning a language for adults (as will be remembered from Chapter 2, Vygotsky’s claim was that foreign languages are learned as a scientific concept). Exploratory activity alone is likely to yield a type of everyday knowledge that is tied to the empirical and connected to cognitive abilities that already exist in the adult (Kozulin, 2004, p. 4). Although education needs to connect with the students’ experiences outside class, the real purpose of instruction should be learning activity leading (instead of trailing behind) development, that is, theoretical or scientific (versus empirical) learning/teaching (Vygotsky, 1978, 1987; Miettinen, 1999; Carpay 1996a, p. 156; Hedegaard, 1990, p. 355; Karpov, 2003, pp. 74-76; Zuckerman, 2003, p. 179; Schmittau, 2003, pp. 226, 244).

That does not mean that it is impossible to develop scientifically through exploratory activity alone. However, it would actually take a considerable amount of time invested on starting from an unnecessarily very naïve, ‘pre-historic’ point by means of trial and error, since such process would follow the course of cognitive ‘evolution’ rather than the course of cognitive ‘revolution’ (Holzman and Newman, 1993). It has to be remembered that Vygotsky viewed schooling (with the development of scientific thinking)
as an event of enormous cognitive transcendence for the child (Vygotsky, 1978; 1987).
In his view, writing and grammar offered a turning point in the child’s development of
insufficient and suggested its complementation with certain forms of overt instruction.

Thus, in contrast with the most popular methodologies, the role of teaching in the
classroom from the Sociocultural perspective should not replicate processes at work in
the everyday world. It should be distinct from this world but it must at the same time
present knowledge that impacts on and can be integrated with knowledge obtained by
learners from this world. Unlike everyday experience, the classroom affords control of
exploratory activity, which in turn allows the construction of the essence of objects and
liberation from the domination of the empirically given in everyday experience. One thing
that happens in the classroom and that rarely happens elsewhere, in this regard, is that
attention is refocused from the content to the means of communication (Moll and
Whitmore, 1993; Minick, 1987). In addition, classroom students can be presented with
problems and tasks that contain the fundamental conflicts and relations of a
phenomenon. Tasks that focus on transformation of the conditions of the activity
highlight the effects of the change and allow discrimination of essential features from
This provides learners “with the resources to develop the capacity to consciously
manipulate and voluntarily control crucial sociocultural symbolic systems” (Moll and

Because of these affordances, the classroom presents a potential for generating
a type of knowledge that is abstract, generalizable, meaningful, systematic, and
functional (Negueruela and Lantolf, 2005, p. 7; Negueruela, 2003; see also Karpov and
Bransford, 1995, p. 64, and Kozulin, 1998). The possibilities that the classroom offers for
the proceduralization of this knowledge in operations towards the accomplishment of a
certain action, to solve a certain range of problems, dissolves the dualism between
theory and practice. Galperin believed that theory, planning or verbalization was the first
step in mastering a concept, but that the theoretical concept needed to become
functional by growing “downward into the domain of the concrete, into the domain of
personal experience” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 220) through the learner’s activity. In
Vygotsky’s view, developing implied learning to act with tools, but these tools, which are
“new forms of mental functioning and the new modes of valuing embodied in them”
(Carpay, 2001, p. 6, italics in original), could not be transmitted as inert knowledge (as in
the instances of content-oriented instruction mentioned above).

As explained earlier, mediating tools (such as language) are meaningless outside
the culturally organized activities for which they are instrumental. They are functional
and become available for appropriation only in the activity in which they play a mediating
role (Kozulin, 1998, p. 87; Smagorinsky, 1995a, p. 163; Wertsch, 1985a, p. 207; Lantolf
and Álvarez (1995) emphasize the active nature of mediation:

The first point about mediation … is that it is an active process. While the
cultural tools or artifacts involved in mediation certainly play an essential
role in shaping action, they do not determine or cause action in some kind
of static, mechanistic way. Indeed, in and of themselves, such cultural
tools are powerless to do anything. They can have their impact only when
individuals use them. The point of all this is to remind us that the study of
mediation and mediated action cannot focus solely on the cultural tools
involved. Even the most sophisticated analysis of these tools cannot itself
tell us how they are taken up and used by individuals to carry out action.
Instead, mediation is best thought of as a process involving the potential
of cultural tools to shape action, on the one hand, and the unique use of
these tools, on the other.

(p. 23, italics in original)
This implies that learning should be a matter of acquiring not only domain-specific declarative knowledge, but also the domain-specific activity itself “in all its complexity as a product of cultural-historical development” (Giest and Lompscher, 2003, pp. 269-270). Development, then, is the gradual expansion and improvement of students’ repertoire of new mental actions (Galperin, 1992/1978; Arievitch and Haenen, 2005); it involves “expanding the potential for meaningful action” (Wells, 1994, p. 84) with “resources for acting, speaking, and thinking that enable the learner to participate effectively and creatively in further practical, social, and intellectual activity” (ibid.). According to Galperin, these mental actions start as material and verbal actions (Carpay, 1995, p. 116). In contrast with conventional foreign language teaching / learning, rather than starting with language forms and the ‘rules’ for use of these forms, conceptual learning/teaching starts with the formation or conceptualization of speech intentions. By doing this, learners become oriented by meaning and learn to see the world through the lenses of the speakers of the target language. Although in this case the speakers of a community of practice coincide with the notion of ‘native speakers’, this does not necessarily have to always be the case. The crux of the matter is not about a perfect linguistic ‘competence’ in the Chomskian ideal speaker-hearer, but the ‘default’ ways in which a specific community of speakers views and linguistically constructs reality. Therefore, it could be the case that, because of their practices, non-native speakers are in possession of the cultural lenses necessary to engage in certain types of discourse, while native speakers are not.

According to Carpay, conceptual schemes should be applied first to the students’ native language. Once speech intentions are reconceptualized, then learners can proceed to their formulation in the foreign language (Carpay, 1995, p. 116, 1974; Galperin, 1989/1957, 1992/1978). This concept aligns with Markova’s emphasis on
learning the communicative function first, and, after that, learning the means to carry out such functions (1979). It is also in tune with Carter’s idea that language needs to be learned “in action and in terms of its communicative features” and not in a rote or abstract way (Carter, 1997, p. 195).

4.3.2.1 Acting with language in the study course

In the course under consideration some of the actions on which students worked were describing objects metaphorically, adopting diverse perspectives on events (by seeing from tense and aspect viewpoints), narrating from specific ideological and subjective standpoints and narrative voices, making discourse internally coherent, and reporting speech and thought from different subjectivities. As meaningful action is linked to the creative transformation of objects with tools (Davydov, 1988, p. 30), the content of knowledge emerges in the very activity to which it is directed; this in turn, makes memorization unnecessary (Carpay, 1995). (See related concepts in 2.1.3 in this dissertation and in Cazden, 1981).

The instructor of the course (henceforth referenced as T) presented students with linguistic explanations as necessary in the process of reconstructing texts (which implies that the starting point was a specific speech intention). The grammar explanations were presented in the form of diagrams and charts that focused on the essential traits of objects as they were integrated into more complex systems, rather than isolated from other aspects of language.

For example, Appendix A presents a chart based on Bolinger’s explanation of the meaning of the article (1975, p. 183), which was necessary to refer to the entities in the bullfighting scene of “La cogida y la muerte” by F. G. Lorca (the second teaching unit in
the course). Typical textbook lists comprise rules based on as varied categories as seasons, personal titles, affiliation, religion, social status, proper names, names of places, streets, monuments, works of art, ordinals, proverbs, appositions, etc. Instead of providing a list of about thirty rules explaining the “uses” of the definite and indefinite articles, their omission, in addition to the so-called exceptions to these rules, the three essential meanings (particularization, generalization and partition) underlying all uses and the omission of the article were explained and presented to the students in the chart. I will focus on six of these rules of thumb to illustrate how the function of the Spanish article is misconstrued in standard instruction, and how it can be taught more meaningfully.

Traditional textbooks dictate the use of the definite article with 1) days of the week, 2) names of languages, 3) abstract nouns, 4) nouns that refer to known entities, and 5) nouns used in the general sense. On the other hand, the indefinite article is to be omitted with 6) names of occupations, professions, affiliations, social class, etc. In this way, learners find the explanation and an initial sense of logic for sentences such as these:

1a) _El viernes es el mejor día de la semana._
2a) _El español está de moda._
3a) _La dignidad debe ser un derecho de todos los seres humanos._
4a) _Los niños juegan en la calle._
5a) _La verdura tiene vitaminas._
6a) _Merrill es Ø lingüista._

Although in this case rules and examples coincide, they only do so on the surface. Counterexamples are easy to find and they are as numerous and valid as the examples that seem to confirm the above rules:
1b) Hoy es Ø viernes, no Ø jueves.

2b) Hablo Ø español.

3b) Amnistía Internacional pide Ø dignidad para los presos de Guantánamo.

4b) Juegan Ø niños en la calle.

5b) Como Ø verdura.

6b) Merrill Swain es una célebre lingüista.

On the face of counterevidence, textbook writers have reacted by adding multiple notes with amendments, nuances, attenuations and exceptions. For example, the indefinite article is supposed to be omitted with occupations, but only after ‘ser’, and when professions are not accompanied by adjectives. Examples 6b) above, and 6c) and 6d) below conform to the ‘exceptions’.

6c) Deja que te tinte yo el pelo. Un peluquero te cobraría demasiado.

6d) En la casa ahora mismo hay un fontanero y una electricista.

In 6b) the article is not omitted after ‘ser’ apparently because there is an adjective accompanying the profession. In both 6c) and 6d) it would seem that the article cannot be omitted because, although there are no adjectives accompanying the profession nouns, these are not used in conjunction with any form of ser. Again, this coincidence between exceptions and examples is true only on the surface. Perfectly common examples such as 6e), 6f) and 6g) below do not conform to the so-called rules and exceptions for use of the indefinite article with professions.

6e) Ana Belén, Ø versátil actriz e infatigable cantante donde las haya, ha sabido ganarse al público de todas las edades.

6f) ¿Es Ø buen actor aquél que logra identificarse con el personaje o el que, por el contrario, no se deja cegar por las emociones en el escenario?

6g) Ha sido un peluquero el que me ha hecho este desastre en el pelo.
To start with, 6e) shows that the indefinite article can be omitted even if no form of *ser* is involved and an adjective is used to qualify the profession. This example would contrast with 6a) (with ‘ser’ and no adjective); however, in both instances the article is omitted. In addition, the rule and its exceptions fail to shed any light on the difference in meaning between 6e) and 6e’) below, the reason why adjectives should then be in postnominal position and “*a la par que*” used in 6e’):

   6e’) *Ana Belén, una actriz versátil a la par que una cantante infatigable donde las haya, ha sabido ganarse al público de todas las edades.*

Still, conventional textbook writers could argue that these profession nouns are not preceded by any form of *ser*. Still, they could add yet one more exception about the use of the indefinite article with nouns in apposition—a rule that, nonetheless, would find counterevidence in sentences like 6e’), for which they would have to come up with another set of exceptions, and so on and so forth *ad infinitum*.

This example shows how exceptions are often devised *a posteriori* to temporally cover the ever-increasing flaws of unsystematic, non-essential rules and their increasing cohort of particulars. However, the last two examples contradict the above-mentioned exceptions for use of the indefinite article with professions. Unlike 6e), in both 6f) and 6g) a form of ‘*ser*’ appears before the profession noun; however, according to the rule and its attenuations, the indefinite article should be used in 6f) (but it is not), since the profession noun is used with an adjective. Conversely, in 6g) no adjective appears with the profession and yet the indefinite article is used. Again, esoteric exceptions could be devised to justify why the rule does not work in these sentences (for example, the conjunction of nominalized relative clauses or cleft sentences or certain adjectives such as “*buen*,” postponed or too long subjects).
Rules of thumb and their corresponding exceptions are the result of unsystematic, superficial overgeneralizations based on direct observation of linguistic samples. However exhaustive these may aspire to be, rules and exceptions fail to reveal anything relevant and significant about the meaning of the article. On the other hand, investigators interested in semantic explanations of grammar have researched the meaning and function of the Spanish article (see Bolinger, 1954, 1975; Bolinger et al. 1960; Bell, 1982; Whitley and González, 2000; Whitley, 2002), providing essential and meaningful explanations. Below I present one of these semantic explanations to account for the above examples, which does not resort to the pretext of exception.

According to Bolinger (1975), determiners are used to particularize, generalize and partition entities. One can particularize an entity that is new in the discourse by using the indefinite article, as in 6b), 6d), 6g) and 6e’). On the other hand, one can signal an entity as known by particularizing it with the definite article, as in 2a) and 4a). In addition, speakers can generalize entities and classes of objects, and one of the typical ways of doing this is with the definite article in the plural form (for example, 4a) could be read also in this way), but there are other ways of generalizing in Spanish. One can generalize about a class by emphasizing either each individual member within that class, as in 6c), or an entire mass or collectivity, as in 1a), 3a) and 5a), or the essence of a class of objects, as in 1b), 6a), 6e), and 6f). In the first case of generalization, the indefinite article in the singular form is used. In the second type of generalization, the adequate choice is the definite article in the singular form. In the third case, what is generalized is a quality of a class, not the quantity; therefore, the noun functions almost as an adjective and no article is used. This would explain why this type of noun appears in apposition to other nouns without a definite article (unless a different effect is pursued
as in 6e’) and why these nouns denoting quality rather than quantity can be modified by certain adverbs (“es muy actor, siempre lo dramatiza todo”).

Finally, one omits the article when the noun is a partitive, that is, when one speaks about an indefinite number of members of a class or about an unspecified quantity. This meaning is similar to the concept of the “partitif” in French, which is marked instead by the allomorphs du, des, de la and de l’. Examples of partitives from the above examples are 2b), 3b), 4b) and 5b), all without article.

Because they lack systematicity in addition to generalizability, rules of thumb fail to explain the pragmatics of the article and, as we have seen with 6e’), and how it relates to other aspects of speech (e.g. word order, adjunction, coordination, stress, intonation, and punctuation). In contrast, linguistic concepts were not presented in isolation in the course. For example, word order was taught in conjunction with punctuation and other emphasizing and deemphasizing linguistic devices such as intonation, clefts and pseudo-clefts in Spanish and in English. As far as aspect was concerned, T introduced it simultaneously with tense as it also is of paramount relevance to understanding perspective on events. Not only was the preterit contrasted with the imperfect, but also with progressive forms (Whitley, 2002, chapter 7). The future tense was compared with the verbal periphrasis ir+a+ infinitive construction (be going to + infinitive) in terms of the modality expressed.

T attempted to describe the system of tense and aspect in literary terms in order to match the conceptualization of mind and language as literary that was argued for throughout the course. Because of this, T decided to present tense and aspect as grammaticalizations of viewpoint and focus (Turner, 1996, p. 161) by adapting Turner’s (1996) parabolic explanation of these concepts. T gave the class verbal definitions of tense and aspect in terms of the perspective that speakers want to adopt when talking
about the time in which events occur and about the part of the structure of the event on
which they want to focus. T decided to use Turner’s parabolic system of coordinates,
which is based on the moment of speaking (the speaker-narrator’s present), temporal
perspective (the point in time from which the speaker-narrator chooses to describe or
narrate) and temporal focus (the object or event that is being talked about) (see
Appendix B). After defining tense and aspect, T used clipart and drawings to represent
graphically all the perspectives from which a Spanish speaker can view the event of
“running” and the linguistic means that expressed those viewpoints.

In this system of coordinates, speakers, independently from their moment of
speaking, make subjective decisions about the temporal perspective that they want to
adopt with respect to focus. In that way, if the speaker-narrator chooses a temporal
perspective that is simultaneous to the focus, then s/he is likely to use the present. If the
chosen temporal perspective is anterior to the temporal focus, then the future will be
used, etc. The conditional and the perfect forms have at least two foci and two temporal
perspectives (the conditional perfect, the most complex form, was represented with three
foci and three temporal perspectives). For example, in the conditional narrative structure
(Figure 4.1), e.g. (María said) she would run, the focus (F1) precedes the viewpoint or
perspective (P1), but, in turn, the focus (F1) contains a viewpoint or perspective (P2) that
precedes its own different focus (F2). That means that, from the point of view of the
temporal focus in the past (when María spoke), the running was a future event. These
schemes proved to be useful in assisting learners with visualizing perspectives in
reported speech.
Just like tense, aspect is also a question of perspective. Salaberry and Shirai (2002, p. 3) drawing from Smith (1991) explained how aspect is determined by both situation aspect (verb with internal and external arguments and adjuncts) and viewpoint aspect (marked by the overt grammatical morpheme, in the case of Spanish the preterit or the imperfect form inflections). Thus, the choice of grammatical aspect can override the lexical aspect of the verb (Salaberry and Shirai, 2002, p. 3). For example, while *estar* [to be [at a place]] is *per se* a stative (non-dynamic, durative, and atelic) according to Salaberry’s categorization of lexical aspect based on Vendler’s (1967), the same verb becomes a telic event in “*Estuvo en Montevideo en cinco días*” [It took-preterit him/ her five days to get to Montevideo] (specifically, an accomplishment, that is, dynamic, durative, and telic) (example extracted from Salaberry, 2000, p. 27). In other words, the speaker’s perspective (and not lexical aspect alone) determines the aspect of an event.
In the course, preterit and imperfect were represented as having two foci and two temporal perspectives. Similar to the conditional, the first perspective places initial focus on the past. This focus contains a second perspective. If the chosen focus of this second perspective is the beginning or the end of an event, or the whole encapsulated event, then the preterit is to be used (Figure 4.2). Therefore, unlike with rules of thumb, it follows from the ongoing discussion that both forms can be used when discussing age, time, weather or a habitual action.

**PRETÉRITO** (Jazmín corrió -- Jazmín ran-preterit)

A las 5 / esa tarde / en ese momento corrió hacia la estación de trenes
Ayer esa tarde corrí

A las 5 esa tarde en ese momento se sentó

Ayer esa tarde corrí
El año pasado corrió todos los días. Corrió en un equipo de atletismo por dos años.

**Figure 4.2:** The aspectual meanings of preterit.

If one chooses to focus the second perspective on the middle part of the action, that is, on its ‘ongoingness,’ as it is unfolding, then one would use the imperfect (**Figure 4.3**). In other words, as the second perspective coincides with the second focus, the imperfect is similar to an ongoing action in the present viewed from a future temporal perspective (Whitley and González, 2000; Castañeda, 2006a, 2006b, drawing on Langacker’ notion of present imperfective (2001); see also Langacker, 2007) (which explains why present may translate into both the present and the imperfect in reported speech when the reporting verb is in the past).
IMPERFECTO (Jazmín corría ? Jazmín ran)

Ayer/ en ese momento/ esa tarde corría

Ayer/ en ese momento/ esa tarde corría
El año pasado Jazmín corrió todos los días
Sandra era una persona con mucho entusiasmo, pero ahora vive completamente amargada.
Aquella tarde Jazmín corrió.
Jazmín corrió a las 5.
Juan está muy contento. Esta tarde comió en casa de los padres de su novia y les pidió la mano de ésta.
Esta mañana ya se sabía los resultados de las elecciones.
Esta tarde había una fiesta, pero no sé qué habrá pasado al final/ la han cancelado.
Quería hablar contigo.
Tengo tanta energía que ahora mismo corrió 2 kilómetros.
¿Tienes un minuto para hablar? Bueno ... emm ... iba a salir ahora.

**Figure 4.3**: The aspectual meaning of imperfect.

(See Chapter 11 for an additional chart for teaching aspect).

The second focus (F2) in the above graphics is comparable to Bull's recalled period (RP), which is also involved in Whitley and González's (2000) description of aspect (see also Whitley, 2002). In addition, Castañeda, who has proposed definitions of tense and aspect grounded in Cognitive Grammar, has designed primary and secondary
centros deícticos [deictic centers] (abbreviated as CD [DC]) (Castañeda, 2006a) to distinguish the speaker’s present time from the imagined temporal space of a state of affairs as subjectively reconstructed in the communicative event. Similarly, Doiz-Bienzobas (2002), De Mulder and Vetter (2002), and De Mulder (2004), also grounded in Cognitive Grammar, talk about aspect with respect to the projection of subjective mental spaces.

Students used the model in Figures 4.2 and 4.3 in addition to versions of the graphics in Whitley, 2000 (pp.118-119) to choose the aspect of verbs in different fragments of a short story by Cortázar, which was the first instructional unit in the course (see Chapter 5). Students had to explain in visual terms what part of the action was depicted by each of the aspectual choices. Occasionally, students were asked to imagine the development of an event as a comic strip and to consider which part of the strip was highlighted in their discourse. This pedagogical metaphor is similar to Castañeda’s use of film graphics in which only certain movie photograms corresponding to certain aspects of an event are in focus (2006a, p. 135; 2006b, p. 25).

The original intention of T was to present a briefer chart of tense and aspect, similar to Bull’s explanation of tense (see Appendix C), but a way of combining Turner’s coordinates in that model could not be constructed. The final chart in Appendix B presents some drawbacks that will be discussed in Chapter 11. At least, the aspect and tense schematic clearly depicted the idea that the human mind has poetic license and that aspect, if we are talking about the weather or about habitual actions, is a question of the choice of perspective, and not a matter of right or wrong.

In this exercise, the concepts of tense and aspect were mediated through the visual metaphor in order to create a Zone of Proximal Development in which the students would be able to perform with the instructor’s guidance. In the following section,
the concept of the ZPD is discussed in relation to McCarthy and Carter's (1994) familiar to unfamiliar principle.

4.3.3 Solving problems in the ZPD: the familiar to the unfamiliar principle and the contrast principle.

Authoring activities are connected to other Sociocultural constructs. Rewriting/co-authoring a text can be an effective way to solve the meaning-making puzzles that a text poses. The advantage of rewriting/co-authoring in comparison to simply reading is that, in the activity rewriting, composing operations happen materially on a piece of paper. This allows re-mediation through (new) tools, and the assistance of peers and experts. The meaning-making operations involved in reading literary assignments usually occur invisibly and individually in our heads, and, therefore, these processes may not be adequately mediated. This implies that in rewriting there is a greater potential for mediation within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development. McCarthy and Carter's familiar to unfamiliar principle (1994, pp. 167-168) aligns with the notion of the ZPD.

As will be remembered from Chapter 2 (see 2.1.3.), the Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD is the activity space between independent problem-solving and problem-solving that requires the assistance of experts or more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). When students are given a literary text to read at home or to comment on in class, the instructor may be assigning them an activity that lies outside their zone of actual performance (that is, what they can do by themselves). In addition, a zone of proximal development may not be established between the text and the student due to lack of appropriate mediation. The provision of content and the elucidation of the
vocabulary and sentence-level grammar of a text are not sufficient for full comprehension of a text. In addition, the traditional way of providing content turns the activity of constructing meaning into one of finding a specific meaning in a text. Text analysis is not an appropriate starting point because, in the activity of analyzing a text, students dissect a final product, which does not tell them anything about how the product was constructed and in what other ways it can be rewritten. Instead, instructors should endeavor to convert a literary text into an activity to be mediated within the students’ ZPD. This can be achieved by having students participate in the authoring process rather than in an analysis, in the how rather than the what of a literary text. By enacting and performing texts, students will be more likely to relate to them as vehicles for expression of meaning. In contrast, the activity of analysis alone does not convey the semiotic pulse of literature. An unmediated text in which meanings (even if multiple) are to be found may be a flat, inert, one-dimensional product which lies outside of the students’ ZPD—a fossil that just remotely and vaguely can evoke life and meaning.

On the other hand, by participating in making the text mean, students enact the operations through which meaning is constructed in a text. By transforming a text, learners are invited to participate in problem-solving situations within the context of discourse in the same way as writers encounter problems and evaluate alternatives in the activity of composing meaning. Researchers in the Sociocultural venue have stressed the idea that learning activity needs to start with a problem for which previous solutions are inadequate and that can be solved only through the introduction of new methodological tools (Giest and Lompscher, 2003, p. 278; Schmittau, 2003, p. 230; Davydov, 1988, pp. 30-31; Talyzina, 1982, p. 9, and Markova, 1979, p. 3). A problem-solving situation in the text restores language to its instrumental dimension and offers an interesting paradox—a motive for collaboration among students and experts in order “to
change objects according to some intended result” (Haenen, Schrijnemakers and Stufkens, 2003, p. 252; Arievitch and Haenen, 2005, p. 158, drawing on Galperin, 1992/1978) (although it does not warrantee motivation). In these transformations, students “discover a general procedure (or principle) that can be used for the solution of a whole range of individual concrete problems of a particular class” (Davydov, 1988, pp. 30-31).

Authoring activities allow both the discovery and the concretization of general, abstract composing procedures, thus connecting meaning potential to the learners’ own experience. Instruction should not negate students’ everyday concepts, but should make them visible and elevate their cognitive status as they are brought into contact with formal scientific concepts. Everyday concepts do not only comprise L1 concepts, but also students’ intuitions about the L2, unfocused actions, vague impressions about L2 texts that students may not able to justify verbally, the learners’ own everyday experiences outside the classroom and their experiences as students and readers of other texts –including texts in their L1. By means of the transforming activities proposed in this pedagogy of literature as discourse, texts become anchored to everyday concepts, and to a whole system of meaning provided in the classroom (Gallimore, and Tharp, 1990, p. 195). In this scheme, literate ‘skills’ (traditionally dispensed in segregated inventories) emerge as necessary operations integrated into goal-directed action (Donato and McCormick, 1994, p. 456; Langer, 1993, p. 31). As new forms of problem solving are systematically mastered (Arievitch, 2005, p. 158, drawing on Galperin, 1992/1978), this expanded repertoire of meaningful action may become the orientation to direct learners’ own subsequent problem-solving tasks in a “spiral of knowledge” (Rueda, 1990, p. 404; Wells, 1999; cf. Galperin’s spiral model).
A way of posing a problem in a text can be as simple as comparing the work with another text or with another version of the same text. Contrastive cases can be designed as active transformations that allow the isolation of general procedures and critical properties from other features that are irrelevant (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1984, p. 177; Markova, 1979, p. 53). For example, comparing equally correct imperfect and preterit versions of the same story showed students in the course that aspect is not a question right-or-wrong, or dependent on contexts of use, such as age, weather, etc. Contrasts mediate the discovery of these essential features as an “awareness of similarity requires a more advanced structure of generalization and conceptualization than awareness of dissimilarity” (Vygotsky, 1987, p. 88). The notion of contrast is in alignment with the contrastive principle proposed by McCarthy and Carter (1994), according to which, the awareness of the operation of language is better stimulated by comparing or contrasting different texts, or different versions or transformations of the same text (p. 166).

Contrasting texts proved to be extremely valuable activity in the course under study. For example, students had to create a coherent text out of a list of jumbled segments of speech (see exercise 1 in Chapter 5). Different groups of students experienced diverse ways of putting the fragments together. Only one of the groups was allowed to include linking words and phrases. As they effected this transformation, the group had to determine the relationships underlying propositions and to make them explicit with the choice of a connector. Consequently, the relationship among different ideas became less ambiguous with external cohesion in their version. Originally, students held certain empirical notions about coherence, such as the idea that external coherence was more appropriate for academic genres and scientific texts (such as articles, essays, articles and papers) than for literature. In contrast, the students believed
that internal coherence was more typical of literary works (an irrelevant feature, which is not necessarily true, based again on the overgeneralization of the observable traits of a sample of texts). By transforming the text and contrasting the new version with the connector-less counterpart, students were able to experience how external coherence makes the ideological relationships among propositions unequivocal. Because of this, external coherence is more likely to be found in genres in which this feature is valued (for example, in some types of news, but also in literary texts in which this effect is pursued, as in Benedetti’s “El sexo de los ángeles,” see exercise 16 in Chapter 5).

In addition to being useful for establishing an awareness of dissimilarity, problems in literary texts de-automatize routine operations, which under normal conditions would be invisible and below our level of consciousness. This is because in order to solve the problem, students are forced to turn their attention to certain linguistic clues that would otherwise go unnoticed (for example, in the jumbled text activity described above (exercise 1 in Chapter 5), agreement markers, word categories, and the semantic relationship among propositions became salient for the students). By means of mediators, spontaneous, intuitive impulses or “initially unfocused learning actions” (such as arranging sentences in a particular way just because “for some reason they sound better”) are adjusted and transformed into higher-order mental processes, “including strategic orientations to problem solving” (Donato and McCormick, 1994, p. 456). Operations that were executed intuitively and were not controlled by the student in all contexts (e.g. using punctuation or the proper word order or describing figuratively) are externalized and can be re-mediated with the appropriate tools (see exercise 19).

A remaining question is then how the ZPD, a highly fluctuating concept across tasks and students, can be determined. The appraisal of both the collective and the individual ZPDs of students was carried out in several ways. The first step was to
determine the students’ actual level of development, on the one hand, and their potential level of development (i.e., what they may need assistance with), on the other. T had taught all the levels of Spanish between novice and the course in the curricular sequence. She already had experience from previous semesters with some of the students; specifically, nine out of the eighteen students originally enrolled had taken the previous language course in the curricular sequence (intermediate and intensive grammar and composition) with T. Seven out of these nine students were participants in the study: Ernest, Scheherazade, Jane, Dorothea, Juliet, Emma, and Lara. T was also at that time the coordinator of the previous course in the curricular sequence and had taught it for several semesters, providing her with a good idea of the typical student that moved on to the next level. In addition, a diagnostic questionnaire was administered to the students on the first day of classes. Seven questions required an elaborated written answer in Spanish describing their previous language experiences and their expectations for their future Spanish. This questionnaire and the essay allowed T to spot the points at which students will need assistance, from specific recursive linguistic problems to beliefs about language, texts and literature (for example, the idea that written texts, specifically literature, are not part of communicative or ‘real’ language).

Furthermore, there were online ways of assessing the students’ ZPD. For example, T evaluated students’ responses to reconstruction activities in class, observed the dynamics of group work, interviewed students in office hours, read their reflections in their portfolios and worked with them individually on their compositions. Based on her observations, T decided when and how to intervene. For example, when faced with expected instances of ingrained misconception of aspect, she provided multiple counter examples from different types of discourse to create a conflict in the students’ knowledge. Then, she provided a handout with a more semantic explanation of tense
and aspect to aide students in a more meaningful reconstruction of Cortázar’s short story. Students also received assistance from their peers, who provided different perspectives and varying abilities in the reconstruction and analysis activities within groups. Most activities were finally discussed as a class, or written down in the form of reflections in the students’ portfolios, and/or published on an online forum available to all students.

In the following section, we will discuss how developing theoretically through the solution of problems in literary texts relates to the issue of personal style ...and why every student should be encouraged to develop a personal style in a foreign language.

4.3.4 Making personal sense and the continuum principle

“Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.”
(Scott Adams)

According to the continuum principle, “language development is best supported when students are exposed to both literary and non-literary texts” (McCarthy and Carter, 1994, pp. 166-167). The continuum principle reflects the idea consistently emphasized in this dissertation that “an awareness of the linguistic potential is not distinct from a sense of literary effect” (Widdowson, 1992, p. 101). (For example, exercise 11 in Chapter 5 shows the manipulation of the imperfect on TV news is comparable to the use of aspect in Cortázar’s short story. Exercise 7 focuses on the comparison of the manipulation of tense in literary texts, ads, jokes, chronologies, headlines, etc. Exercises 12 through 15, and 17 engage students in diverse literary and non-literary concretizations of speech figures). If literary and everyday discourses indistinctly draw on the meaning potential of a language, one can expect that the richer one’s repertoire of discourse styles and
devices is (including the literary ones), one can maximize one's expressive abilities. Secondly, if learners are to be capable of making sense at all (and not only of producing grammatically “correct” sentences), stylistics and semantics must be inseparable components of grammar.\(^\text{34}\)

Traditionally, students think of style as either the hair-splitting minutia that can be added to make a text sound more sophisticated or the professional writer's *signature*. In any case, style seems to be something that only authors, gifted students and native speakers can achieve, but not L2 learners. However, style is *not* part of a text’s optional ‘ornamentation’, only appropriate for the uses of language that allegedly lend themselves more to subjectivity and embellishment, such as literature. Literary style is part of practical, living language to such an extent that a grammar without stylistics is inevitably condemned to useless “scholasticism” (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 12) or to being a linguistic “straitjacket” (Larsen-Freeman, 2002, p. 117). For example, in his only essay on pedagogy, Bakhtin explains how his students were able to recognize, understand and explain the use of paratactic sentences in texts, despite the fact that such constructions were rarely utilized in their own writing (2004, p. 16). In order to correct this situation, the communicative worth of paratactic sentences had to be demonstrated to Bakhtin's students by means of paraphrasing the structures into their hypotactic counterparts and then comparing the effects of the difference between the constructions (2004, p. 14). In so doing, the learners realized that many changes and additions had to be made in the

\(^{34}\) As seen so far, frameworks such as Sociocultural Theory, Systemic-Functional Linguistics, and Cognitive Linguistics conceive of grammar in unity with semantics and stylistics. In addition to the previously mentioned authors whose work focuses on these aspects of language, see also Larsen-Freeman's notion of grammar of choice, 1991, 2000, 2002; Tomasello’s (1998) edited volumes on what he terms Cognitive-Functional Linguistics; Odlin's (1994) edited volume on Pedagogical Grammar; and the writings of Bull, Bolinger, Alarcos-Llorach, and Lamadrid on semantic grammar.
hypotactic sentences in order to come closer to the meanings constructed in their paratactic counterparts.

As seen in this case, a traditional or more narrow view of grammar is only able to inform us about the relative ‘correctness’ of forms, but not about how equally grammatically ‘correct’ choices affect the construction of reality. Only semantic explanations of the stylistics of grammar can account for the “representative and expressive effectiveness of forms” (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 13), for stylistic devices are not only the patrimony of the literary realm but also of the general human sense-making capacity (Gee, 1989, p. 69; see also Chapter 2 this dissertation). Crafted by meaning-makers as they transform the world in the course of their practical activity, grammar presents choices that are moldable to the demands of diverse subjective positions, of new contexts, and, most importantly, of new meanings. In light of this, learning a (second) language is not about acquiring a context-free grammar; it becomes a process of making sense out of experience (anew), a struggle to construct one’s distinct voice in a (different) language (Lantolf, 1993, p. 223). As there is no such thing as a grammar separated from human experience, the notion of ‘accuracy’ cannot be understood but in relation to meaning and appropriateness to the context of use. This concept leads back to the foregoing idea that grammar should be taught through discourse (McCarthy and Carter, 1994; Celce-Murcia, 2002; Larsen-Freeman, 2000, 2002).

Along the same lines as Bakhtin, Markova makes an argument for the value of the stylistic devices for expressing one’s subjective position in speech activity and reflecting one’s own individuality (1979, pp. 86-87), which is part of her curricular project. Just as Bakhtin, Markova does not disassociate artistic devices from practical/functional/ “real-life” speech activity; quite the contrary, she associates the development
of artistic devices with a personal style that would be efficient in achieving the pupil's purposes in his/her functioning in the world:

Our approach in no way rules out the possibility that a child may develop his own speech style in the process of achieving practical mastery of speech; nor does it aim in any way at "uprooting the luxuriance of poetry to plant a utilitarian potato." Rather, our purpose is to cultivate, and later enable the pupil himself to cultivate, a style of speech and to ensure that these objectives are regularly applied in the pupil's practical speech activity.

(Markova, 1979, p. 88)

By instructing students in the stylistics of grammar, the learners' style will become more original, personalized, concrete, emotional, and vivid, and will begin to reveal the writers' own "intonation," and personality (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 23). Markova quotes M. I. Kalinin's similar argument about the teaching of the Russian language:

Do you know what it means to speak in canned phrases? It means that only your tongue or language is doing the work, not your mind and thought! [...] You are afraid that if you try to say something your own way, it will not be so fine and pretty. You're wrong! It will be easier to listen to and easier to understand"

(quoted in Markova, 1979, pp. 85-86)

Additionally, Markova states that maximum vibrancy, expressiveness and perspicuity can be achieved as the individual combines different speech styles (such as a casual conversational tone in an official meeting) to create powerful effects. Markova mentions that these deliberate creative departures from general conventions to apply one's "own standard for using the socially accepted norms of speech" should be studied formally as a school topic (1979, pp. 86-87). Unfortunately, such attempts are usually censored as violations of accepted norms.

In alignment with Markova, the introduction to a variety of styles throughout the literary to the non-literary continuum was a goal in the present course (see exercises 6, 7, 11, 13 through 17). Following a discussion about how multiple genres could be
embedded in a text following exercise 16 (see Chapter 5) students were asked to incorporate a different style in their last composition. In this exercise, students classified a number of literary texts as genres other than those assumed to be part of the literary domain. The works included in exercise 16, for example, integrated non-literary genres. Despite the evidence that these texts provided that multiple literary and non-literary genres can be embedded in texts, students’ only attempted to incorporate general stylistic devices with which they already had had ample experience (and therefore, what they might perceive as ample endorsement) from previous compositions (e.g., metaphors, which are not specific of any particular genre). None of the students risked incorporating other genres (e.g. ads, news, etc.) to their compositions. Alice wrote a narrative that started with the image of army troops being harangued. By the end of her composition, it turned out that she had been talking about her graduation ceremony in high school. She was allegorically viewing her colleagues and herself as part of an army marching into an intimidating unknown future, as if they were at war with the adult world. Another student, Darcy, used a NASA-like countdown in bold to create suspense about a nerve-racking situation in high school. Lara constructed the feeling of a panic attack before a violin performance with the use of short utterances, (deliberate) incomplete and choppy sentences, metaphor, repetition, direct speech, free direct speech, and stream of consciousness.

However, one course alone cannot be expected to develop the full creative potential of students. A unified view of discourse must permeate an entire curriculum so that creativity is promoted and enhanced throughout a full course of study. It is not unusual in traditional curricula for students to be discouraged from experimenting creatively with their new language. Bakhtin (2004) describes how the youngest students write with extreme expressivity and liveliness in their native language despite their poor
written style. This is because there is not a sharp distinction between their written and oral styles yet (p. 23). Later on, their written style becomes more formal, depersonalized, bookish, and clichéd, although more formally correct. At this point, not only is a lackluster attachment to canonical models usually valued academic programs, but also any imaginative flight into originality ends up being something to fear by most students. Bakhtin’s opinion is, I think correctly, that the students’ ignorance of stylistics makes this depersonalization of the learners’ written style even more pronounced and lifeless. This lack of personal style and creativity to depart from standards, far from being a tribute to propriety, becomes the indelible mark of a half-accomplished writer (Bakhtin, 2004, p. 24). Students have an opportunity to regain the lost freedom to create when they study a foreign language (Lantolf, 1993, p. 227; Dunn and Lantolf, 1998, p. 427).

A close reading of academic texts reveals that effective papers and even scientific works may benefit from lyrical enhancement (Markova, 1979, p. 87). Let’s take Vygotsky’s writings, for example. The Russian psychologist deploys a highly lyrical style that shows how his sense-making repertoire was enriched (rather than eroded) by his profound love of literature. For many accustomed to the sterile style of Anglo-centric scientific writing, Vygotsky’s writing often comes across as too flowery and ‘unscientific’ to be taken seriously. On the other hand, a literary work may be devoid of lyricism. For example, Benedetti indulges in telling us how “fucked up” he feels in one of the most traditionally lyrical genres—poetry: “estoy jodido y radiante” [I’m fucked up, and radiant]. The fact that fragments of H. G. Well’s War of the Worlds could be confused with a radio news bulletin and cause a wave of panic about an imminent alien invasion seems to be proof that meaning-making resources do not come in properly labeled airtight jars, but in bulk, for everybody to use as it most fits.
Creativity and expressivity should be regained, but not from the linguistically ignorant and naïve place from which students departed in the first grades, but from "a higher level of cultural development" (Bakhtin, 2000, p. 24). For example, Gulliver described a bicycle ride in a way that any traditional grading criteria, regardless of academic grade, would imprint with the word ‘regression’, as the composition was marked by “choppy sentences” and “temporal incoherence.” Gulliver moved from imperfect to present perfect to present to shorter and choppier sentences to a phrase to describe his coming near to a hole and his falling into it, bicycle included. Paradoxical as it may seem from a traditional perspective, this apparently careless style was the result of careful (pre)meditation as the interview with him showed (see Chapters 7 and 8). With the initial fear of doing something that had been previously penalized, this student experimented with some of the discourse manipulations that had been catalogued as “mistakes” in previous semesters (choppiness, incomplete sentences, repetition, etc.), and found not only that they were not wrong, but that, on the contrary, had enormous communicative value. This return to original expressiveness is the result, in my opinion, of mastery, of an emerging much deeper, theoretical understanding of how language works.

In the following section, we will see how asserting one’s style and one’s meaning relates to the critical principle and to the notion of prospective education in Sociocultural Theory.

4.3.5 Prospective education and the critical principle

“Without new art there can be no new man”

(Vygotsky, 1971, p. 259)
The idea of rewriting and transforming texts is related to yet one more principle and to another Sociocultural notion. The critical principle puts emphasis on critical language awareness so that learners are “able to see through language to the ideologies and values which particular stylistic choices encode” (McCarthy and Carter, 1994, p. 168); but at the same time, critical awareness and analysis are not enough for achieving discourse literacy, and would create only passive readers “focused only on the words on the page and not beyond” (Carter, 1997, p. 86). Students need to be able to create, to respond actively, and transform discourse by creating counter-texts “against, with or across the grain of the original” (ibid, p. 84). This notion leads back to the idea that communicating in a language is not about the transmission of neutral or objective information in ideal contexts. Language is rather about “communicating perspectives on experience and action in the world, often in contrast to alternative and competing perspectives” (Gee, 2001, p. 716).

For Van Lier and others, critical language awareness goes hand in hand with the idea of actively intervening and transforming the world. Van Lier (1995) advocates critical language awareness as a way of “noticing the language around us and examining it in a critical manner” (chapter 1, p. 8) so that “we gain control over language by understanding it” and so that “in that understanding we can use language to control our environment rather than have it slip out of control.” (chapter 6, pp. 5, 11-12). Van Lier’s notion of critical awareness is also in tune with Freire’s concept of conscientização, although the Brazilian pedagogue perceptively emphasizes the concomitance of language and concrete material activity in the notion of transformation. Freire’s concept of conscientização entails a type of reflectiveness committed not only to reading both the word and the world, but also to “the exercise of a profoundly transforming action upon the determining reality” (Freire, 1998, p. 500), thus overcoming
not only our biology, but also revolutionizing or ‘rewriting’ our culture. This indissoluble unity of “consciousness of and action upon” determining reality is part of the transforming essence of the human being by means of which s/he grows into a historical, social being (ibid.). This notion is much in tune with the Sociocultural view of human ontogenesis, as both perspectives stem from Marxist philosophy.

The interpretation of the critical principle as awareness and action in the world is also in alignment with Vygotsky’s view of prospective (versus retrospective) education. According to some researchers in the Sociocultural and Activity Theory venue (Franks, 2004, p. 168; Lindqvist, 2003, p. 250; Daniels, 2001, pp. 44-45; Engeström, 1999, pp. 32-35, 231; Vygotsky, 1995/1950; Kozulin, 1993, p. 262), prospective education should lay greater emphasis on externalization than on internalization. That is, more stress on the solution of problems that do not exist yet, on creativity, transformation, innovation and personal meaning rather than on the reproduction of society.

This call for more emphasis on externalization aligns with the gaps that Stetsenko critiques in the writings of the canonical branch of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory, largely represented by A. N. Leontiev (Stetsenko and Arievitch, 2004; Stetsenko, 2005). While both Stetsenko and Arievitch acknowledge Leontiev’s contribution to “conceptualizing material social practice as the foundation of human subjectivity” (Stetsenko, 2005, p. 80), they criticize Leontiev’s focus on the internalization of the cultural-historical experience of previous generations at the expense of underscoring the role of individuals’ contributions to this experience (Stetsenko, 2005, p. 35).

---

35 As we have seen earlier, internalization is creative; it does involve transformation. My argument here is that transformation should not be denied in education. Innovative, creative departures from canonical models should be accepted and fostered, not feared, in the classroom. By placing an emphasis on externalization, for example, by (re)writing (not only reading), the innovation generated in the process of internalization can impact others (see Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 158).
As a result, this emphasis on internalization has worked to the detriment of the elaboration of the concept of externalization in the theory, and has contributed to an insufficient depiction of the impact of personal sense and goals in shaping social and communal meaning and motives (Stetsenko, 2005, p. 77).

Internalization and externalization are “essentially interdependent and mutually constitutive mechanisms” that carry out “transitions among various planes of activity” (Stetsenko and Arievitch, 2004, p. 492; Stetsenko, 2005, p. 84). These processes are not reproductive, but creative. Stetsenko and Arievitch emphasize that people involved in activity do not just *participate* in or *perpetuate* social practices—they actually *contribute* to them in agentive ways, “changing something in and about the world (including in oneself as part of the world)” (Stetsenko and Arievitch, 2004, p. 494). Thus, throughout cycles of activity, the individual is not only shaped by his/her culture: the individual is also able to shape, impact and transform the world through his/her contributions.

This stance is concomitant with a conceptualization of the self as leading activity (Stetsenko and Arievitch, 2004), which involves a vindication of the role of individual agency in producing, creating, and making “a difference in social practices” (Stetsenko, 2005, p. 78). The self is then viewed as an agentive actor capable of generating social change, novelty and transformation through his/her personal senses and goals “within the continuum of unfolding activity processes” (Stetsenko and Arievitch, 2004, p. 492).

In line with this emphasis on externalization as creative contribution, Wells claims that writing affords innovation more than reading (although both writing and reading are necessary in any activity system) (1999, p. 287). Writing allows new ideas to come into dialogue and to be preserved for criticism and for further development (*ibid.*). With writing, new genres and registers of discourse are developed and, along with them, new
ways of engaging in activities become available (ibid.). In this way, rewriting actualizes and transforms literature, thus granting students the opportunity of finding contemporary relevance in works that were written decades, maybe even centuries ago. Rewriting allows one to contest and to innovate discourses, to pose conditions on the texts that never existed, which in turn allows the exploration of alternative worlds. The principles underlying prospective education in Sociocultural Theory blur the dichotomy between the creative and the critical (see Pope, 1995; Woods, 2001; Chapter 2 this dissertation), as the alternative discourse-based pedagogy that is proposed here demonstrates.

In sum, the view of creativity presented in this chapter (and, by extension, in this dissertation) is possible thanks to a genetic view of the mind as a cultural process. In contrast to the nativist mind, in which ‘creativity’ is reduced to a limited range of possibilities hardwired in our brains (Sampson, 1997), the cultural mind is able to rise above the original blankness and lower-orderness of the brain, to transcend biology, and come to solve unpredictable problems with unforeseeable novelty, groundbreaking originality and uniqueness (p. 151). Rather than a program allowing a determined number of permutations, the mind is

a hack artist producing stereotyped responses to stereotyped stimuli; yet another captain of industry commissions yet another boardroom portrait, and what he gets is no more than a numerically distinct example of a familiar genre. But from time to time experience poses a novel, unexpected problem, and the mind can rise to the challenge by formulating genuinely novel conjectures: episodes of real creativity punctuate an otherwise humdrum artistic career.

(Sampson, 1997, p. 148)

Therefore, to foster creativity and boundary-breaking transformation in the classroom is to pay service to humanness—it is to act according to our species’ sophisticated, cultural, non-material mind.
Given all these principles about teaching literature through language, what is then the place of content, the role of experts’ exegesis? The next section deals with this topic.

4.3.6 The place of content

“What bugs the general public is often not the work itself, but what the experts say about it.”

(Harris 2003, p. xix)

According to the definition of literature as representation, the pedagogic position proposed in this dissertation aligns with Carter’s idea that “language study should be the first step in an integrated programme” (1997, p. 188, italics in the original). Then, once linguistic sensitivity to texts is heightened with the “pre-literary linguistic basis” through constructing and transformative tasks, students can investigate questions of background, author study, influence and literary tradition; they can raise evaluative questions, compare and contrast works with each other, supply information to supplement the hypotheses and investigations, and so on

(pp. 187-188).

In Widdowson’s view, even when students are not able to reconfigure the incongruence of the work of art into a significant system for themselves, they should be allowed to infer their own “uninformed” response first. Referential information should be provided only when required and “as a way of stimulating alternative interpretations” (Widdowson, 1992, p. 62). In other words, the role of content should not be concerned “with the provision of interpretations,” but “with the process of interpreting” (ibid, p. 60, italics added):
What is important here is not the interpretation itself, but the process of exploration of meaning; not the assertion of effects but the investigation into the linguistic features which seem to give warrant to these effects.

(Widdowson, 1992, p. xiv)

Therefore, the usefulness of content depends on “the extent to which it helps people to make poems [and, by extension, any literary text] their own by individual response” (ibid, p. 60).

There are multiple examples of tasks involving content that can complement the study of literature as discourse and can foster interpreting instead of accepting particular interpretations (see Units 9 and 10 in Carter and Long’s Web of Words, 1987). Di Pietro (1987) uses content (in the form of historical background, for example) at the beginning of a teaching unit to situate the students in a context that will serve them as the point of departure for unfolding a literary scenario. In this case, although Di Pietro provides some content in the initial steps, he does it in a way that positions students in some of the discourse dilemmas and “creative processes experienced by the writer” (p. 112). Thus, the students have to live through characters, make choices with respect to the linguistic means that will impersonate their characters’ roles, agendas, interactions with specific material circumstances and with other characters. In other words, the use of content in scenarios force learners to engage in discourse with contexts and texts, making literature take its “rightful place in vivid human discourse” (p. 112). (For an example of how to teach plays through scenarios, see Appendix Y).

On the other hand, the focus on interpreting rather than on interpretation does not mean that the literature class should fall into exegetic anarchy. Precisely the opposite should be the case. Because of this emphasis on discourse literacy, interpretations will be valid as long as learners are able to justify “their own judgment by making as precise reference to the text as possible” (Widdowson, 1992, p. xii). By
capitalizing on discourse literacy, students should be able to justify or disprove their own and others’ interpretations, even those made by literary authorities. (See, for example, the exercise in Appendix D, in which students have to find linguistic evidence to justify experts’ argument about Lorca’s “La cogida y la muerte”). We could go as far as to ask students to justify far-fetched interpretations. For example, students could provide linguistic evidence or create fake evidence in a text (by making the necessary transformations) to justify the idea that Cortázar’s short story is a critique of videogames, the internet or the realistic fiction or fictional reality presented in reality shows, soap operas and television in general. Texts could be actualized in contexts in which they do not belong in order to see how varying circumstances relate to language and yield different meanings.

In addition, content is useful for enhancing interpreting when it follows the dictates of the ZPD. This implies searching for alternatives to traditional literature syllabi (and even curricula) organized chronologically, according to authors, movements, historical periods, etc. Mills (2004) agrees with Foucault’s view of “the Renaissance, Romanticism or the eighteenth century” as divisions “invented by scholars” rather than as “‘natural' self-contained categories” (p. 22). Carter (1996), Cook (1994), McCarthy and Carter (1994, p. 167) have suggested that texts can organized around related themes. Such themes could be topics, similar effects achieved through different linguistic means or, conversely, the same forms producing differing effects. In conclusion, the choice of texts should not be dictated by authors and periods, but by those who are to have meaningful reading experiences within their ZPD at the time of instruction.

In the next chapter, the teaching units will both illustrate the theoretical claims of this alternative pedagogy and describe how it was instantiated in the study course in an emerging syllabus oriented by the students’ ZPD.
Chapter 5
Teaching literature through language (II): the practice

5.1 Introduction: The Twilight of the Idols and Gods

Bettie: What’s that?

Katherine: You tell me. [Silence]. Carcass by Soutine, 1925.

Susan: It’s not on the syllabus.

Katherine: No, it’s not. Is it any good? [Silence] Uh? [Silence]. Come on, ladies! There’s no wrong answer. There’s also no book telling you what to think. It’s not that easy, is it?

Bettie: All right. No, it’s not good. In fact, I wouldn’t even call it art. It’s grotesque.

Connie: Is there a rule against grotesque art?

Giselle: I think there’s something aggressive about it … and erotic.

Bettie: You think everything is erotic.

Giselle: Yeah! Everything is erotic.

[Laughter].

Katherine: Ladies!

Susan: Aren’t there standards?

Bettie: Of course, there are. Otherwise, a tacky velvet painting could be equated to a Rembrandt.

Connie: Hey! My Uncle Ferdie has two tacky velvet paintings. He loves those clowns!

Bettie: There are standards, technique, composition, color, even subject. So if you’re suggesting that a rotted side of meat is art, much less good art, then what are we going to learn?

Katherine: Just that. You have outlined our new syllabus, Bettie. Thank you. […] Next slide. This is my Mom. Is it art?

Susan: It’s a snapshot.
Katherine: If I told you Ansel Adams had taken it, would that make a difference?

[Silence]

Bettie: Art isn’t art until someone says it is.

Katherine: It’s art!

[Laughter]

Bettie: The right people.

Katherine: Who are they?

Giselle: Bettie Warren. We’re lucky we have one right here.

Bettie: Screw you!

(An instructional conversation from the film *Mona Lisa Smile*)

The above conversation taken from the Mike Newell movie happens among the traditionally educated students of a reputed elitist school in the 1950s and their new Art History teacher. This dialogue reveals the students’ inability to produce critical judgments about the artistic quality of Soutine’s painting when they are deprived of their external appraising sources – their guiding gods and idols: the syllabus, the textbook, and “the right people.”

Students try to find the ‘rules’ that can solve the puzzle: can art be grotesque, erotic, aggressive, personal? Can art take the form of a “rotten side of meat” or of a snapshot? Is art a question of canonical brand-names, such as Ansel Adams? And, if it is, who decides who is part of the canon and who is not? Can common, commercial artifacts such as a velvet painting be art? Can one make that decision by using one’s own gut feeling and taste or should that decision be taken intellectually and under the guidance of a community of experts? If so, who are the experts, what makes them
experts, and what are their standards based upon? Can we also become experts and develop our own standards? How?

Despite the dissimilarity with the current educational and social setting, this fictional instructional conversation captures some of the challenges in the implementation of alternative pedagogies. If, as was concluded in previous chapters, no one can decide what is (good or bad) art for us and content is denied the central role of literature instruction, what else should be taught in literature courses? What would a discourse-based literature course look like if syllabi, textbooks and authorities were not there to tell students what to think and feel about literary texts? How can one apply the theoretical principles of a discourse-based pedagogy of literature to concrete texts in order to help concrete students develop their own standards within a set curriculum? How can students carrying rather traditional language and literature histories into the classroom be helped to develop an agentive, autonomous appreciation and mastery of literary “technique, composition, color” and “subject”? What texts can help students change their language and literature histories and how can these texts be mediated to the students?

This is where a language-based pedagogy for teaching literature can play a fundamental role in the development of discourse. Rather than remaining permanently dependent on exogenous appraisals, students need to develop their own critical standards for both literary and non-literary texts by acquiring a theoretical understanding of language-in-use. As a type of discourse that makes otherwise common linguistic devices formally prominent, literature offers a privileged playground for exploring and mastering the workings of (a foreign) language. The conceptual mastery of linguistic devices allows the recontextualization and contrast of these devices throughout the literary to the non-literary continuum. As students develop their voices in order to intone
their own motivated, original, personal meanings, they become more equipped to hear others’ voices and intonations in critical ways.

This chapter illustrates how a discourse-based literature course can be designed from a selection of texts in order to promote the development of students’ meanings and own standards according to the principles outlined in Chapter 4. I will first present an overview of the course and its organization. Then, I will present two instructional units and sample activities.

5.2 Creating a discourse-based course.

The study course, Spanish 300W, was a sixth-semeter course and was a requirement for Spanish majors. This course took place in the Spring semester of 2004. The section for the study course met on Tuesdays and Thursdays for an hour and fifteen minutes. Most students were working towards either a major or a minor in Spanish, and were enrolled in classes of Hispanic literature and introductory courses of linguistics during the same semester.

The book assigned for the course was Repase y Escriba (‘Review and Write’) and was used as a source for extra-activities. The syllabus was published online before classes on the department webpage. However, this syllabus showed most of the texts collected by T together with the most relevant discourse aspects in each text. The real syllabus was emergent and was guided by the students’ ZPD as announced on top of the schedule: “This schedule will change with all certainty in order to adjust to the learners’ needs throughout the course of the semester” (Appendix E, p. 6). In addition, a second column was included in the schedule so that students could write out the actual syllabus of the course (see Appendix F). Since the syllabus was emergent, the teaching
units presented in this chapter will be accompanied by some of the students’ reactions that forced T to make specific decisions during the course.

T had determined that there would be a limited number of texts, which should be analyzed in depth. A narrative (whether a short novel or story), a poem, and a drama would be the main texts used in the course. In addition, a variety of other literary and non-literary texts would be selected in order complement and enhance these three principle texts. Different literary and non-literary genres (poems, stories, plays, a short novel, in addition to adds, jokes, horoscopes, news, etc) were needed to illustrate how the pedagogical principles that informed the course apply to all types of literary and nonliterary texts.

Despite the apparent simplicity of having just three units, working within the ZPD and with principles that argue for the comparison of texts and the literary continuum involves being as prepared as possible for whatever turns the course of student development may take. The text bank below shows the complexity of teaching in an emergent way.

5.2.1 The text bank

The texts in the bank were chosen in accordance with similar linguistic devices and contrasts of language use and themes. This was done with an eye toward taking account of the likely prior histories and beliefs of the students with respect to language, literature and grammar.

Some literary works shared similar effects; however, these effects were achieved sometimes by vastly different linguistic means. For example, Aura (Carlos Fuentes), Como el toro [Like the bull] (Miguel Hernández) and La Cogida y la muerte [Goring and
Death] (Federico García Lorca) all deal with the topic of fate and predestination. However, Aura achieves this sense of doom by means of the narrator’s particular addressivity (the work is a second person singular narration) and a temporal perspective that precedes the focus, which accounts for the use of future tense in some fragments of the short novel (in contrast with present or past narration, which are more conventional ways of narrating). The effect that is achieved with the future tense narration is that the narrator (apparently, the old woman in the story) can predict (or maybe even command) the young man’s every movement. In contrast, the topic of predestination is most prominently stamped on La cogida y la muerte and Como el toro through repetition (among other aspects). Other works that exploit repetition are El hombre imaginario [The Imaginary Man] (Nicolás Parra), Cansancio [Tired] (Oliverio Girondo), Explico algunas cosas [I Explain some Things], Muere lentamente [Slowly Dies], Queda prohibido [Prohibited] (the last three by Pablo Neruda), No te salves [Don’t save yourself], Táctica y estrategia [Tactic and Strategy] (the two of them by Mario Benedetti), Viceversa [Vice versa] (Oliverio Girondo), He visto hombres [I have seen Men] (Jorge Debravo) and several poems by Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer.

In addition, some works were chosen for topics that would likely enhance the view of language promoted in the course. For example, Continuidad de los parques [Continuity of Parks], La noche bocarriba [The Night Face Up], and El río [The River] (all by Julio Cortázar), provide grounds for questioning the dichotomous line between the real and the fictional, between belief and doubt, between official and officious histories. They therefore enabled discussion and analysis of figurative thinking, construal and language games. La noche bocarriba, Aura, Delantal blanco [White Apron] and La mujer habitada [The Inhabited Woman] (Gioconda Belli) provided splendid examples of distinct narrative voices and ways of constructing paradoxical personas through the
manipulation of language. In *Delantal blanco, Una flor amarilla* [A Yellow Flower] (Julio Cortázár), *El otro yo* [The Other Me] (Mario Benedetti), *La noche bocarriba, Aura, La mujer habitada*, the protagonists have a double or an alter ego.

Some texts were chosen for illustrating and playing with different concretizations of utterances (texts, subordinated clauses, phrases). T’s purpose was to show students that complete thoughts are not only expressed through the sentence (usually the focus in conventional foreign language teaching). *Continuidad de los parques, El río* and *La noche bocarriba* play with the notion of text through the technique of *mise en abîme*, in which two narratives are intertwined in one. In *Continuidad de los parques* and *La lluvia amarilla* [Yellow Rain] (Leopoldo Lugones), the typical narrative structure is violated (the former by having a very scanty orientation and the resolution of apparently another story within the main story, and the latter by providing no resolution of the complicating event). *Delantal blanco* and *Credo* [Creed] (Pilar Alberdi), both of which are plays, exhibit similar control of turns and topic allocation but with opposite effects. In the former, the ‘dominant’ interlocutor oppresses and tyrannizes a less powerful speaker. In the latter, the ‘dominant’ interlocutor, a wife, desperately tries to interest and communicate with her quiet, indifferent husband, who, in turn, thwarts any topic and turn initiation with his silence and his empathy-lacking, non-cooperative, insufficient responses. Using Grice’s terminology, these ‘dominant’ interlocutors violate the overarching principle of cooperation by flouting the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and, in the case of *Credo*, the maxim of manner.

Some works were chosen for playing with syntactic relations. *Donde habite el olvido* [Wherever Oblivion May Inhabit] (Luis Cernuda), *Continuidad de los parques*, and *Monólogo del amor que no quiere amar* [Soliloquy of the Love that does not Want to Love] (Ignacio Anzoátegui) present manipulations of subordination; *Amor unitivo* [Unitive
Love] (Francisco Luis Bernárdez) exhibit the meaningful use of coordination. ¡Todo era amor! [Everything was Love] (Oliverio Girondo) violates collocation. Se miran, se presenten [They Look at One Another, They Feel Each Other’s Presence] (Oliverio Girondo) exploits syntactic government. Through use of other texts, it was possible to seriously question conventional ideas about language and literature. Continuidad de los parques (Julio Cortázar), La cogida y la muerte (Federico García Lorca), Con Jimmy en Paracas [With Jimmy in Paracas] (Alfredo Bryce), Nagasaki (Alfonso Sastre), and Aura manifest manipulations of either aspect or tense that highlight the notion that there is no objective time or ways of viewing the structure of action (unlike the beliefs underlying textbook rules of thumb). T was also prepared to make the case that literature may exhibit language uses that are not traditionally associated with the literary. To that end, T selected texts that could be catalogued as ‘atypical’ literary works, including, among others: denominación de origen [origin denomination] (David González), Mulata [Mulatto Woman] (Nicolás Guillén), Los Santos Inocentes [Holy Innocents] (Miguel Delibes), and El sexo de los ángeles [Angels’ Sex], Lingüistas [Linguists] and Viceversa all by Mario Benedetti

Everyday texts from an array of non-literary discourse that exploited similar uses of language or created similar effects were collected and incorporated in the text bank. These texts included TV news transcripts, journal news, sport reports, soap opera transcripts, horoscopes, jokes, chronologies, emails, slogans, mottos, commercials, ads, conversations, shopping lists, movies, sayings, lexical manifestations of conceptual metaphors, songs, comics, etc. In addition, a selection of these texts will be incorporated into the figures and appendices of the exercises in the teaching units below.
5.3 The teaching units

As the syllabus was emergent and became dependent on the students’ ZPD, the only text that was predetermined was the first: Cortázar’s *Continuidad de los parques*. The reasons for choosing this short story will be provided below. The first unit was followed by a unit on figurative language in diverse texts finally centering on Lorca’s poem *La cogida y la muerte*. (A third unit could not be implemented in class for lack of time. See Appendix Y for this sample instructional unit on how to use drama performance in the discourse-based literature classroom). During the first two units, a vast amount of time was devoted to disproving the empirical beliefs of students and those that were formed as a consequence of students’ empirical mode of thinking (e.g. the manipulation of aspect and tense is only typical of literary texts, literary texts beautify reality, texts in news and other discourses are neutral, etc.). Challenging such beliefs required both insisting on the abstraction, essentialism and generalizability of models, and presenting more satellite texts from either everyday or literary discourse that could be transformed through such models.

Let’s turn now to the specific discourse-based activities that comprised the core of the instructional units and mediated the texts for the students according to the pedagogical principles outlined in Chapter 4. These activities are presented in an approximate chronological order. Most activities took several days and even weeks to be completed; some were simultaneous to other activities, interrupted and continued later. In addition to the activities given below, there were other activities, which for reasons of space are not included in the discussion.
5.3.1 Continuidad de los parques by Julio Cortázar

In this section, I will first provide a summary of the plot along with a description of the use of language in Cortázar’s story. This overview of the work will reveal its instructional potential as well as and other reasons for choosing this text for the initial teaching unit. Then, I will present the discourse-based activities that mediated the students’ exploration of Continuidad de los parques. Selected student reflections will be included along the way to show the rationale behind the choice of certain complementary activities and texts.

A businessman is on a train ride home. He had started reading a novel some days before, but had to put it aside due to an emergency having to do with some property he owned. Both the man and the book are presented as known entities: the definite, not the indefinite, article is used from the beginning of the story; the subject is null from the first sentence that describes the man’s activities, as if this character had been introduced or at least mentioned previously in the text. It is only known that this character is a man from the agreement markers, as all the information that we obtain about him emerges as a byproduct of the ongoing plot, not as a result of having some kind of orientation or background about him in the story (except for his having started the novel some days before).

While on the train, the businessman feels the irresistible urge to continue reading the novel. Once back at his magnificent estate, he takes care of some minor issues with his butler and with his representative, then locks himself in a room and sits on his green velvet couch to read without interruption. In front of him, through the window, he has the charming view of a park in which he can hear and see the playful autumnal breeze rocking the arms of the old oaks. The businessman grows increasingly involved in the
novel and progressively disengaged from the room in which he sits. This disengagement is linguistically constructed in the story with complex sentences in which a long subordinated adverbial clause referring to the man’s businesses or surroundings in the room is placed at the beginning. The main clause, referring either to the man’s sensations about the reading or the plot of what he is reading, is placed at the end of the sentence. The order in the complex sentence frames reality with the grey, adverbial hues of background, at the same time as it foregrounds his inner world, where the action is really happening. His thoughts and sensations progressively occupy the main stage as the man gradually slips into a state in which colors, sounds, words and thoughts from the characters, the narrator and the man, and images from both the real world and the novel’s world hazily mix through stream of consciousness.

We are told that the man witnesses the furtive encounter of two lovers in a log cabin. From this point on, we access the rest of the novel’s plot and dialogue through the businessman’s free direct thought. The first to arrive is the woman, and then her lover follows (again people are presented as if they were known). At this point in the story, a series of short, indivisible actions are narrated in the imperfect, which makes one suspect that the businessman is able to see the action unfold because he is either psychologically or physically close to the scene. The options are that he is either dozing and dreaming, or awake and completely absorbed by the events in the novel’s plot or, somehow, hiding in the fictional world of the second story, and spying on its characters. The boundaries between the intradiegetic and the extradiegetic worlds have begun to blur thanks to Cortázar’s masterful manipulation of aspect and reported thought.

When Cortázar’s story begins, the businessman’s story is at the intradiegetic level, that is, in the fictional world in which the narrated events occur. The narrator of the businessman’s story is not (at least not apparently) a participant in the intradiegetic or
fictive world of the narration. This narrator (who could be the author or a fictive persona constructed by the author) is at the extradiegetic level, that is, s/he is at a higher narrative level and external to the fictional world that is narrated in the story. Therefore, s/he belongs to the world of narrative’s telling, closer to the world of ‘reality’. However, once the lovers’ novelette unfolds in the imperfect aspect and as free direct thought, a new intradiegetic space is disclosed. The ‘ongoingness’ of the imperfect gives access to this second fictional cosmos only as it unfolds in the businessman’s consciousness. Now, the businessman’s story is extradiegetic with respect to the embedded fictional world of the two lovers, and intradiegetic with respect to an upper narrative level (the world of the ultimate narrator). The extent to which all the diegetic levels are connected becomes a puzzle. The businessman’s free direct thought has become the peephole into the lovers’ intradiegetic cosmos—but from which side of the door is he looking?

In this moment-by-moment way of the imperfect aspect, we are told that the woman’s lover presses a knife against his chest. He announces that “the moment” has arrived: he will kill her husband that evening. The dialogue continues to be embedded in the plot in the form of free direct speech, which mixes with the description of the action. This makes one wonder about whose perspective the lovers’ story is narrated through: a third-person narrator, who is both in the intradiegetic and the extradiegetic levels and is able to narrate the lovers’ story with no intermediaries, as the action unfolds? A third-person narrator, who is in the extradiegetic level and is only able to narrate the lovers’ story through the businessman’s free direct thought? The businessman alone? All of the above? It is impossible to distinguish between the extradiegetic and intradiegetic narrative planes (and, hence, between the planes of fiction and reality) because all the voices, both fictional and ‘real’, have merged. In this fashion, the lovers’ story continues
until dusk, when they finish examining their plan, which seems to have been crafted a long time ago.

A new paragraph starts (the only new paragraph in the whole story) to center exclusively on the lovers. The preterit becomes the predominant temporal perspective. For all these reasons, the actual reader of Cortázar’s story starts to feel from the beginning of this new paragraph that s/he may not be accessing the plot through the stream of consciousness of the man reading on the green velvet couch any longer. This other story and its characters seem to have come to life by surfacing onto a higher narrative plane (from the intradiegetic to the extradiegetic level), at the same level as the man’s reality. Finally, we accompany the wife’s lover through his way from the log cabin to the house where he is to encounter the woman’s husband (again, the elements that he finds on his way are referred to as known elements in discourse). The woman’s words indicating the way to her husband, and the lover’s thoughts merge as he starts executing the plan. Once in the house, there are no finite verbs; we are in the lover’s mind, in which the woman’s description of the house merges with his ongoing perception. A series of juxtaposed, asyndetic phrases and a non-finite clause follow, describing how he finds two doors, two empty rooms, the door to the living-room, the head of a man sitting on a green velvet couch, reading a novel. Were the couch and the novel not in the wife’s description of the plan and, hence, new entities to the murderer-to-be? Is the man sitting the same man with whom Cortázar started “Continuidad de los parques” or is he a character in the second fictional story? How can these two narratives be so seamlessly fused and at the same time so implausible? How can Cortázar’s story seem coherent and illogical at the same time?

The main reason for choosing Continuidad de los parques was the integration of two narratives in one. The choice of a work with such a textual puzzle, and the problems
created in the text by T’s manipulation (see exercises below) responded to T’s intention to break from the student’s conventional history in traditional language courses that mostly focuses on isolated, minimal units, such as words and sentences. T’s assumption about students’ histories was based on her own history as a Spanish instructor throughout all levels of Spanish in two different institutions. T’s assumptions were confirmed by student feedback and comments. Some of the students had asked T during the previous semester what else could be learned about Spanish grammar in Spanish 300W (the study course). The students felt that language contents had become repetitious: their fourth semester had repeated the contents of their second semester (articles, prepositions, past tenses, perfect tenses, the future and the conditional) and their fifth semester had repeated the contents of their third semester (paratactic clauses, relative clauses, subjunctive, and conditional clauses). The construction of language was very limited, unsystematic, and composed of piecemeal elements that did not go beyond the complex sentence.

In addition to the possibilities that the story afforded for focusing on the notion of text as an instance of utterance, Cortázar’s short story was an appropriate point of departure because it created a cognitive conflict for the students due in large measure to Cortázar’s manipulation of aspect. The uses of aspect in the story contradicted the conventional rules of thumb provided in the majority of beginning, intermediate and advanced Spanish textbooks. Just as in any instance of ‘authentic’ language, the use of aspect in Cortázar’s story could not be discussed in terms of right and wrong, or justified on a sentence-level basis. As explained before, aspect in conjunction with stream of consciousness was the lens through which it was possible to witness the intradiegetic world of the two lovers moment by moment, a nearly cinematographic concretization of aspect.
As anticipated, some learners began to show little interest in and even concern about the prospect that the course would dwell on issues such as punctuation, paragraph distribution, textual patterns, coherence, word order, and transformation of texts. These are Darcy’s comments questioning the importance of learning about word order and how to reconstruct Cortázar’s text, after a class in which the effects of different clause orders within complex sentences had been discussed:

This class was very, very hard; the board was just cluttered with stuff with which I couldn’t really keep up. We pretty much went from one thing to another today. I can’t wait until we finally configure this story, and I still need to understand the purpose of this story reconstruction and why it is so important that one word comes before another.

(Darcy, Portfolio, Daily Log, February 10, italics added)

According to Vygotsky, the theoretical understanding of a foreign language should improve the visibility and enhance the quality of understanding of an individual’s L1 with the consequence being greater control over and more effective use of the language. Ophelia’s comment below shows how little connection she had established between word order and meaning in her own language before dealing with this topic in the course. She came to this realization through the discussion of word order and through contrasting both languages. Ophelia’s comment also illustrates how little attention is conventionally paid to topics such as meaningful word order, in (foreign) language classes:

We started talking about adverbs today which I though was interesting. I never knew there were specific rules about the placement of an adverb within the sentence – but now it makes sense that the location of the adverb decides the scope of what it will modify:

He gladly cooked –> he didn’t mind doing it.

He cooked gladly –> he was in a good mood while he cooked.
This is an example I thought of after the discussion of adverbs. I keep thinking of more and more like I’ve had an “awakening” of understanding of adverbs. I keep thinking “I can’t believe I didn’t know that.”

(Ophelia, Portfolio, Daily Log, February 10, quotation marks in original)

A final reason for choosing this story was to create one of the most fruitful conflicts that could be created in the course: the idea that literary works only become texts with the readers’ participation. In this respect, the story brilliantly shows how the reader’s experience (both the businessman’s and ours) is not only inseparable from the literary work, but even essential to make the text meaningful –to make the story ‘come to life’. In addition, this story questions the notions of fiction and reality, which connected well with the literary conceptualization of language in the unit.

Below is how Cortázar’s text was manipulated by T in light of her assumptions about students’ views of language and literature.

**Exercise 1: Scrambled texts**

This activity is based on “jumbled texts” or “scrambled texts,” adapted from Carter and Long (1987), and Carter (1997). Cortázar’s story was divided into groups of jumbled fragments (Figure 5.1), each of which consisted of words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and segments that were neither a phrase nor a clause, but contained more than a single word. All punctuation had been removed. Linguistic concepts (utterance, text, punctuation, word order, etc.) were introduced for the reconstruction of the text. After a group of fragments had been reconstructed, the students’ versions were compared among themselves and with Cortázar’s original fragment. Different effects were discussed. This exercise was carried out over nine classes; however, additional activities (guessing, comparing, elastic sentences) were embedded in this particular activity.
Grupo 3) de fragmentos

a) su memoria retenia los nombres y las imagenes de los protagonistas [his memory retained the names and images of the protagonists]

b) sin esfuerzo [effortless]

c) la ilusion novelesca lo ganó [the novelettish excitement won him over]

d) casi en seguida [almost immediately]

e) gozaba del placer de irse desgajando de lo que lo rodeaba [he was enjoying the pleasure of gradually getting torn away from his surroundings]

f) casi perverso [almost perverse]

g) línea a línea [line by line]

h) sentir que su cabeza descansaba en el terciopelo del alto respaldo [feeling that his head was resting on the velvet of the high armchair back]

i) a la vez [at the same time]

j) cómodamente [comfortably]

k) que los cigarrillos seguían al alcance de la mano [that his cigarettes remained within arm’s reach]

l) que danzaba el aire del atardecer bajo los robles [that the twilight air was dancing around below the tops of the oaks]

m) más allá de los ventanales [beyond the large windows]

n) palabra a palabra [word by word]

o) absorbido por la sordida disyuntiva de los héroes [absorbed by the heroes’ sordid dilemma]

p) dejándose ir hacia las imagenes [letting himself flow towards the images]

q) se concertaban [gathered]

r) adquirían color y movimiento [acquired color and movement]
s) *fue testigo del último encuentro en la cabaña del monte* [he witnessed the last encounter at the log cabin on the hill]

**Figure 5.1:** Group of jumbled fragments from Cortázar’s *Continuidad de los parques.*

The objectives of the jumbled text activity were to make salient the fundamental interdependence between lexicogrammar and text, and to bring to light the difference between utterance and sentence. The aim here was for students to use structures that could be considered ‘incomplete sentences’ according to conventional grading criteria, but in a *meaningful, voluntary* way. T presented a definition of utterance as a complete unit of communication in which form, function and meaning converge. She then explained that a sentence was an instance of an utterance, but also texts, phrases, words, interjections, and gestures. Examples were provided (shopping lists, conversations in which interlocutors communicated complex propositions with just one word, etc). T moved on to the notion of text and how texts were not just a bunch of sentences with a common topic thrown together. Texts had to be cohesive, not necessarily because of external linking words, but through other internal means such as punctuation, word order, thematic and lexical cohesiveness, patterns, the relationship among propositions across the text, referencing, etc.

Students worked in groups to confer texture to the unconnected, jumbled fragments. T circulated among the students to provide help, and to detect unfocused actions that would demand grammatical explanations. T reviewed with students the components and relationships of a complete sentence and what parts of speech could
serve each function. The relationships of subordination, coordination, juxtaposition, government, agreement and collocation were discussed. This explanation was adapted from Markova’s model of the sentence (1979, pp. 101-102). Appendix G presents some of the models that students constructed in their logs. Not all students created a complete chart and none included the diverse lines that were modeled in class as indicators of different relationships among the different elements (government and agreement). T also discussed subject-drop in Spanish and the markedness of not dropping the subject. The issue of subject dropping was also connected to ways of organizing information in the text, such as thematic and sequential linking. Students had been instructed at the beginning of the course in how to use corpora to check lexical collocations. The two corpora used were the Mark Davies online corpus, and the Real Academia online corpus.

In addition to sentence structure and collocation, students were given assistance with word order because they were not considering the consequences of different word orders with regard to meaning construction. T asked students what the difference was between “Ayer comí” and “Comí ayer.” Students were unable to reply even when T asked them leading questions such as if they could match each of the above statements with each of the following questions: “¿Cuándo comiste?” “¿Qué hiciste ayer?” Then, T also offered explanations on word order based on the accounts of Whitley (2002); Wallis and Bull (1950), and Bolinger (1977/1955, 1954, 1952).

Explanations of punctuation were also necessary as T asked the students the difference between using stronger or lighter punctuation or no punctuation in the fragments that the students were reconstructing, to which the students were unable to respond satisfactorily. One of the many misconceptions was that punctuation related to intonation, the natural pauses of spoken language and other prosodic aspects, instead
of being connected to the ways in which the syntactic relations of discourse are organized and structured. T then presented definitions of each sign mostly based on Montolío (2000, vol. III, pp. 77-149), who attempts to give brief, essential, meaningful explanations of punctuation instead of never-ending lists of rules for each sign. T provided these brief, essential definitions and modeled a diagram on the chalkboard showing how punctuation structured texts by organizing the themes, the sub-themes within each paragraph, the relationship among the different ideas within each paragraph, the relationship among clauses, the syntactic relationships of elements within a clause, etc.

Different ways of punctuating Cortázar’s text were compared throughout the rest of the reconstruction of the story and their meaning consequences were discussed in groups and as a class. For example, the comma indicates that the following element does not qualify, modify, define or restrict syntactically the element immediately preceding it. Therefore, taking an example from the jumbled text, the difference between “primero entraba la mujer recelosa” and “primero entraba la mujer, recelosa” was that in the first example we can have more than one woman (a fearful one and a bolder one) in the story, while in the second example “recelosa” (or fearful) does not qualify “mujer” (woman). Therefore, “recelosa” does not specify a subset of “mujer” in the second example: it provides further characterization of the woman, of the state she was in when entering the cabin log.

Unfortunately, not many students included either the model of punctuation presented in class or a personalized version in their portfolio, and, if they did, it was too sketchy and without complete definitions (see students’ models in Appendix H). Some did at least include brief notes about the lesson but nothing resembling a functional model that would frame punctuation within a text. The relevance attributed to the model
and to punctuation in language learning by the students could be partly the responsible for this situation (see Chapters 8 and 10).

Finally, by manipulating the short story into jumbled fragments and posing a textual puzzle, the textual dimension of lexicon and grammar became deautomatized and salient to the students’ conscious awareness. For example, not only the more stable meanings of words became the focus of attention, but also their sense in combination with other fragments in the text. For instance, the meaning of “desgajarse” as getting more and more involved in something (the novel in this case) to the point of literally losing touch with or separating from reality could only be worked out and completed when in use with other words and actualized in this specific communicative context. This sense of “desgajarse” is not listed in the dictionary, where the closest meaning provided is, “the result of banishing somebody from the community or place in which s/he lives”\textsuperscript{36}.

**Exercise 2: Elastic sentences**

This activity, also based on Carter and Long (1987), involves constructing sentences as short or as long as possible. A group of students had to arrange a group of the fragments similar to those in the previous exercise into the longest sentence(s) that they could construct. Another group had to make short sentences. A third group had to arrange the fragments in whatever length they wanted, but they had to express explicitly the semantic relationship among sentences with linking words or connectors. The different results were compared.

Making short sentences forced the introduction of object pronouns and demonstratives, the repetition of noun phrases and verbs, and the dropping of subject pronouns, among other changes. Students associated long sentences with rambling and babbling, with a confused flow of thoughts, impressions, feelings, etc. In contrast, short

\textsuperscript{36} *Diccionario de uso del español* by María Moliner (1990).
sentences seemed to accelerate the narrative tempo, as “short sentences are read more quickly, facts come quickly, ideas change quickly” (Juliet, 1/27 daily learning log entry).

The group of students that had to include connectors did not like the result, since, in their opinion, the resulting fragment had a tone of argumentation. As explained earlier on, the relationship among propositions had to be made explicit and unambiguous, making information exceedingly clear in this case. As students seemed prone to establishing empirical associations between external coherence and formal texts on the one hand, and between internal coherence and literary texts, on the other, T planned to bring literary texts that sounded like ‘formal’ texts (see exercise 16). Students were also introduced to other ways of making texts coherent: thematic and sequential linking; partial, explicit and null reference; chronological order, and patterns (problem-solution, as in adds; preview-detail, as in news, etc.) (see McCarthy and Carter, 1994; Markova, 1979).

**Exercise 3: Drawing an illustration.**

The use of drawings is one of the many ways of mediating the reading of (foreign) language texts (Sinclair, 1996). In fact, Smagorinsky and Coppock (1993, 1994a, 1994b) argue that interpretative texts can be in the form of multimedia texts such as dance or graphic representations. Before students arrived at the point of inflexion in the story, it was important that they had a clear picture of what they had read about the situation of the man in the room, so students were asked to draw an illustration. This exercise was done twice: at the point when the man was apparently reading comfortably and either dozing off or slipping into a reading reverie, and at the end of story, when students were asked to complete the first drawing or make another one representing the end.
This activity was not completed by all students, most likely because it was considered irrelevant, and unrelated to language (practice). Some students protested and alleged that they could not draw. Ernest scribbled a line with a deep curve as if he were mimicking abstract art, then he stabbed the paper with a sharp object and jokingly captioned his work as “Artistic representation of the deeper meaning of the text” (see Ernest’s drawing in Appendix I). The piece of paper that he composed at the end of the story could have actually been an excellent interpretative text had he not had done it in mockery of his own drawing abilities and comprehension of the text. Stabbing the piece of paper instead of drawing a stabbed character moves fiction outside the fictional realm of the drawing (the intradiegetic level) and into the narrative level of the drawer and the observer (the extradiegetic level), as if the perpetrator could be around us, just as in Cortázar’s short story.

Most drawings, except for some notable exceptions, were sketchy, black and white, seeming to have been scribbled, and showing a happy-smiley-faced man with a book in his hands. Some of them showed captions, such as “the table,” “the book,” “the window,” “the door,” similar to the pictures that illustrate vocabulary in Spanish textbooks. On the other hand, most illustrations placed the man between the window (at the front) and the door (at the back), which was a very significant composition of the scene, since this detail in the text contributes to its main fiction-reality dilemma and as such has significance for the title. Most of the windows in the students’ drawings showed the trees of a park. In general, it seemed that students had only drawn the ‘content’ or ‘facts’ of the story, but they had not known how to represent the subtext. Most of the other drawings were made after T announced that she would be collecting the portfolio soon and after insisting that the drawing was not an ‘optional’ or ‘complementary’
activity, but a valid language exercise. Other illustrations were made at the end of the story.

In view of the students’ appraisal of the drawing activity, T decided to show how a drawing was an interpretative text in and of itself and how drawing could mediate reading. As with all sorts of texts, the students were presented with all the possible choices for drawing the illustration and their consequences for meaning. They were shown how choices in the drawing related in no trivial way to the language and the hypotheses that could be formulated about the text. All these connections were sketched on the chalkboard as T discussed every possible choice.

To start with, why should the man be smiling at all (as in most of the students’ drawings – and probably as most people in textbook illustrations as well)? Could his face be serious, interested, focused, oblivious of everything else in the world…? Could he even not have a face or have his face covered by the book? What would this imply and what does the text say to support this view? How is the man’s identity established in the text? Is he introduced as somebody who is un/known, as somebody whose identity is taken for granted? By whom? How much information is given about him? (At this point, because students’ answers were hardly based on the meaning of determiners in discourse, T decided that the next unit would be on Lorca’s *La cogida y la muerte*, in which determiners and the way they particularize entities play a fundamental role in the poem).

As for the novel that the man is reading, is it in front of the man’s face partially overlapping the landscape that can be seen through the window, or is it lower? If lower, how is it possible that, according to the text, the man can see the wind playing with the oak leaves as he reads or is it the narrator who sees the leaves and tells us about them? How many voices can be distinguished in the narration? Who is the narrator? How much
can(‘t) s/he see? What is s/he hiding from the reader? What about the man reading the book, what is he hiding and showing?

When dealing with colors, the story mentions that the sofa is green. Does one know the colors of other items in the room? How would one know or ignore that? What about the colors of the park through the window? If one could color some elements in the picture and leave everything else monochrome, as if penciled with grey graphite, what elements would be chosen to have color? What color(s) would be chosen? Why? Should all contours be drawn in the same way? Does one find reasons in the text to background some object or entity with a *sfumato* effect, for example? What other effects could one use and what would they imply?

T did not provide answers to the above questions, but merely showed the students the kinds of choices that could be made while drawing, and how these choices related to the clues in the text, to information that had not been provided yet, and to their own interpretations. In the end, drawing was comparable to performing detective work on the text and then composing or ‘rewriting’ meaning with other graphic signs. The same activity of drawing was assigned at the end of the story (also in Appendix I), and although fewer students engaged in this activity, some drawings showed more elaboration.

In conclusion, diverse ‘texts’ do not only mediate interpretation by concretizing meaning potential in striking form, but they also offer the possibility to expand the students’ meaning-making repertoire or improve the cognitive status of some aspects of the repertoire that they already possess. The more types of discourse (whether literary, nonliterary or graphic) a student has significant experiences with, the more meaning s/he will be able to make out of other texts. Ophelia’s comments in her personal log is an example of how meaning can be enhanced as a result of grouping texts of similar
themes but using either a different medium, or written by authors of different periods and movements:

Semana de 3/14/04

En la clase de español 253 (la literatura) estamos leyendo “El Túnel” de Ernesto Sábado [sic, Sábato]. Me gusta mucho esta cuento por su tema de existencialismo. Es un poco similar al cuento que hemos leído en nuestra clase sobre el hombre en el sillón de terciopelo verde. Por todo el tiempo Castel, el protagonista, está fantasiando en su mente pero también es narrador del cuento. El lector nunca sabe que es la realidad ni que está ocurriendo dentro de su cabeza. Por eso es un poco cómico pero también nos da una moral importante, que en realidad no sabemos mucho de la vida antes de experimentarlo. También nos enseña que todo es sujeto, no hay objetividad en la realidad por que todos interpretamos diferente a las mismas cosas.

[3/14/04 Week.

In Spanish 253 (literature) we are reading “El Túnel” by Ernesto Sábado [sic, Sábato]. I like this short story because of its topic of existentialism. It is a little similar to the story that we have read in our class about the man on the green-velvet couch. All the time, Castel, the protagonist, is fantasizing in his mind but also he is the narrator of the story. The reader never knows what is reality or what is occurring inside of his head. Because of that it is a little comic but it also gives us an important moral, that in reality we do not know much about life until we experience it. It also teaches us that everything is subjective, there is no objectivity in reality because we all interpret the same things differently.]

(Ophelia, Portfolio, Weekly Journal, Week 10, March 14)

Exercise 4: Guessing and web forum

In conjunction with the drawing, students were asked to publish their predictions of what was going to happen next, in an online web forum that could be accessed by all students (see Carter, 1997, for more examples of guessing and forum exercises). This first prediction exercise focused on what was going to happen after the man started to read his book and disengaged from reality (see Appendix J to read students’ webforum posts on both prediction exercises). The students were also asked to predict what was
going to happen next in the story with the introduction of the two lovers. In this type of exercise, students are asked to form their predictions based on linguistic clues.

**Exercise 5: Comparison and contrast**

Students were given different versions of sentences from the Cortázar text in which the order of the clauses had been altered (see Figure 5.2A and Figure 5.2B).

1. **Mira estas dos oraciones. ¿Sobre qué es cada una de estas oraciones, es decir, cuál es la información en primer plano (on the foreground) o el punto de información en cada una de ellas? ¿Cuál es la información en segundo plano (on the background)?**

   [Look at these two sentences. What is each of these sentences about? That is, what is the topic/theme and what is the comment/rheme/information point?]

   1. a) Esa tarde, después de escribir una carta a su apoderado y discutir con el mayordomo una cuestión de aparcerías, volvió al libro en la tranquilidad del estudio que miraba hacia el parque de los robles.

   [That afternoon, after writing a letter to his representative and discussing a sharecropping issue with the butler, he returned to the quiet of the studio that faced the oak park.]

   1. b) Volvió al libro en la tranquilidad del estudio que miraba hacia el parque de los robles esa tarde, después de escribir una carta a su apoderado y discutir con el mayordomo una cuestión de aparcerías.

   [He returned to the quiet of the studio that faced the oak park, that afternoon, after writing a letter to his representative and discussing a sharecropping issue with the butler.]

2. **¿En qué orden cronológico hizo el personaje lo que se describe en 1.a) y 1.b)? ¿Qué efecto produce cada uno de estos fragmentos con respecto al paso del tiempo? ¿Y con respecto al transcurso de la acción?**

   [What is the chronological order of the actions described in 1.a) and 1.b)? How does each of the above fragments affect the representation of time and action?]

**Figure 5.2A:** Two exercises asking the student to compare two versions of the same sentence in which word order had been altered.
Students had to discuss the consequences of each version of the sentence in terms of emphasis or de-emphasis of information, and background and foreground. These points had been dealt with in the discussion on word order. T also drew the students’ attention to the fact that in the sentence 1. a) (Figure 5.2A) the ‘real’ action expressed by the finite verb came after a long temporal subordinated non-finite clause. Therefore, the concrete, temporal action had been dragged to the end. The students and T discussed how this could relate to the impression that the man was either dozing off or falling into a reading trance with the novel—an idea that students had justified in the forum.

4. De nuevo, ¿cuál es el efecto de los distintos órdenes en estas oraciones?

[Again, what is the effect of each of the two clause orders in this sentence?
4. a) Arrellanado en su sillón favorito, de espaldas a la puerta que lo hubiera molestado como una irritante posibilidad de intrusiones, dejó que su mano izquierda acariciara una y otra vez el terciopelo verde y se puso a leer los últimos capítulos.

[Lolling in his favorite armchair, back to the door that would have disturbed him with the possibility of irritating intrusions, he indulged in caressing the green velvet over and over again as he began to read the last chapters.]

4. b) Dejó que su mano izquierda acariciara una y otra vez el terciopelo verde y se puso a leer los últimos capítulos arrellanado en su sillón favorito, de espaldas a la puerta que lo hubiera molestado como una irritante posibilidad de intrusiones.

[He indulged in caressing the green velvet over and over again as he began to read the last chapters, lolling in his favorite armchair, back to the door that would have disturbed him with the possibility of irritating intrusions.]
The most significant part of this contrasting exercise was that the students decided that 4. a) (see Figure 5.2B) and the ensuing sentences in the text should have to follow the pattern in 1. a). When T asked why, some students volunteered that whether the man was falling asleep or into a reading reverie, the parallelism of that structure across that portion of the text would contribute to a hypnotic effect. This was a significant choice on the students’ part as they were relating syntactic features and word order meaningfully within the text.

**Exercise 6: Comparing and contrasting**

Students compared the script of a soap opera (see Appendix K) with the fragment in the Cortázar story in which the two lovers meet in the log cabin (for more examples of comparing and contrasting exercises, see McCarthy and Carter, 1994; Carter, 1997, and Cook, 1996, p. 158). The intention of this contrast was for students to see the differences between free direct speech (the soap opera) and free indirect speech (embedded in the stream of consciousness in which the meeting of the lovers and their dialogue is described in the Cortázar story). Additionally, students were taught to transform free direct speech into direct speech and indirect speech, and compare the results in terms of the number and distinctness of perspectives and voices heard in each version. The stream of consciousness in the story mixed the voices of the narrator, the reader (who thus became another source of perspective) and those of the lovers. The students were asked to underline the propositions in the story that may be the main character’s own thoughts or words, and, therefore differed from those of the narrator or the lovers. This mixture of thoughts, words, images and sensations within the same narrative plane through stream of consciousness contributed to the difficulty discerning what was fictional and what was real.

**Exercise 7: Comparing and contrasting**
T drew students’ attention to one of the lines that had just been reconstructed in the story: “Primero entraba la mujer, recelosa; ahora llegaba el amante, lastimada la cara por el chicotazo de una rama” [“First, the woman entered-imperfect fearfully; now, the lover arrived-imperfect with his face slashed from an encounter with a branch”] 37 (bold added). T asked why the imperfect was used with two short actions (entrar [enter] and llegar [arrive]) in the past that were clearly terminated. The intention was to create a conflict with the students’ existing knowledge of the Spanish imperfect and preterit, and make them feel the need for a different type of knowledge to solve this puzzle. Students replied that they had not noticed that the imperfect was used at all until it was mentioned by T. Then they volunteered that imperfect may have been used because entering the room and arriving at the log cabin were habitual actions of the lovers. T rejected this possibility because the events were unique to that particular afternoon, then students suggested that perhaps those instances of imperfect were exceptions or cases of poetic license. After all, it was a literary text.

T then asked students to say all the rules of the preterit / imperfect that they knew, together with examples of these rules. T wrote down these rules and examples on the chalkboard. She provided counterexamples for each of the rules assuring the students that these were not exceptions but instances of the use of aspect that were as valid as the conventional examples in textbooks. T explained that the part of an action or event that a speaker chooses to view (aspect) was a subjective matter. T provided students with examples from everyday interactions in which people change

37 Traditional rules of thumb would dictate that both “entered” and “arrived” be in the preterit as they are both “finished actions in the past.” In fact, entering and arriving are such short, indivisible, non-cyclic actions, especially as they refer to entering the log cabin in particular, that the default perspective would seem to view them as finished, or from beginning to end (not in their middle part). But that does not mean that we may not choose to see the middle of the action instead of the whole action. This latter case is Cortázar’s choice.
perspectives; for example, we can say “quiero un café” [I want a coffee]/ “quería un café” [I just wanted a coffee] “querría un café” [I would like a coffee] to a waiter and still talk about a present wish in the three cases. One can distance oneself from the present moment by adopting different perspectives, and thus conveying different degrees of forcibility in our requests. Anticipating students’ answers about tense (in addition to aspect), T had prepared a handout with texts that exhibited tense manipulation and asked students to underline the verbs and identify what tenses were used (see some sample texts in Figure 5.3A, Figure 5.3B, and Figure 5.3C).

El flamenco de José Mercé deslumbra en Londres

LONDRES.- “Lo que se hace con sentimiento, llega,” dijo el cantaor jerezano José Mercé después de su apoteósica actuación en el Flamenco Festival de Londres, que dejó sin aliento a la audiencia y confirmó el lenguaje universal de su arte. Allí interpretó algunos temas de su nuevo álbum 'Lío'.

Figure 5.3A: Piece of news: headline in the present and text body in the past.

38 Source: http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2004/02/10/cultura/1076378408.html
Un tío que iba todos los días a un bar, siempre pedía tres cervezas.

¡Déme tres cervezas!

Al día siguiente la misma cosa:

¡Tres cervezas, por favor!

Como el camarero estaba algo extrañado le pregunta:

Oye, ¿por qué siempre que vienes pides tres cervezas y te las bebes del tirón?

y el tío le responde:

Es que yo tengo dos hermanos, uno en Suecia y otro en París, y como siempre bebíamos juntos, pues yo bebo por ellos.

Dice el camarero:

Ah, bien, bien...

Al día siguiente el tío llega al bar y dice:

¡Dos cervezas!

El camarero extrañado le pregunta:

Y eso, ¿es que se ha muerto un hermano o qué?

Y dice el tío:

¡No, es que yo he dejado la bebida! 39

**Figure 5.3B:** Joke: shift from past tense to present after the background

---

39 Source: http://www.chistes.com/LosMejores30Dias.asp
Hijas,

Por que no me recordasteis que la clase era a las 3:35? Fui corriendo porque pensaba que la clase empezaba a las 3:25. Llego allí y veo a una señora (ni idea) y pensé que me había equivocado. En estado de pánico llamo a X preguntado donde era la clase de Y. Ella me dice en 318 Willard como había pensado pero a las 3:35 y no a las 3:25. Por que no cuidáis mejor a un compi tan despistado? Debéis pensar que me volviendo tarumba.

Z

**Figure 5.3C:** Email message from department colleague (people’s names have been substituted by letters): anecdote narrated from a future perspective, orientation in the past tense with shift to present tense in the complicating events.

These more prosaic texts, the authors of which did not seem to enjoy poetic license, showed how tense was used in ways that were not congruent with the typical rules of thumb. Other texts were given in the students’ first language, in which they recognized perfectly normal uses of tense in English. The texts began in one tense and changed to another a few lines later. T explained that there were no objective accounts of time or of the internal unfolding of events. Instead, there is always a literary perspective projected onto events and actions (see Appendix B). T explained Labov’s model of oral narratives and how tense could be used to shift from the orientation to the complicated event(s) (see Appendix J) (2/26).
T asked students to think about why they thought the narrator was choosing to focus on the middle of the action in Cortázar’s story. Later on in this unit, as the students were doing exercise 10 (interpreting the text and giving it a title) in groups, Ernest, Scheherazade, and Ophelia insightfully argued that the imperfect could be linked to a dream, to a fictional world unfolding before the man’s eyes, while the preterit related more to the narrative plane of ‘the real’. Similarly, Lara explained the imperfect as indicating that the man is dreaming because in a dream things happen, in her own words, “moment by moment” (see Appendix M), which was a very perceptive understanding of the visual impact of imperfect aspect. Unfortunately, some students derived some rules of thumb from this discussion such as “in general, we use the imperfect to talk about dreams” (see Dorothea’s interpretation in Appendix M).

**Exercise 8: Gap-filling exercises**

These exercises were used with the second half of the story by Cortázar and focused on the aspect of verbs and on the lack of main clauses at the end of the story. A fill-in-the-gap activity involving verbs may not seem particularly innovative. However, this exercise differed vastly from the traditional cloze procedure with the preterit and imperfect that can be found in conventional textbooks (for examples of gap-filling exercises, see Carter and Long, 1987, p. 88). As Carter and McCarthy (1994), and Celce-Murcia (1999) among others remark, aspect and tense have a textual dimension. For that reason, the exercises were not constituted of isolated, unconnected sentences, but of a fragment within the context of a whole text, which forced students to make choices in relation to the clues and the subtext of the short story. In addition, there were no right or wrong answers, but different ways of seeing the same action by applying the model given in class to the verbs in the gap activity.
As different options implied various consequences for the way of perceiving actions, students just had to be able to explain their rationale in making their choices and comment on the textual elements that became salient in their decisions. For example, Lara wrote in her personal learning log the following conclusions:

3/16 Hoy terminamos [mas o menos] el cuento misterioso. Cuando llenamos los espacios blancos con verbos, debatimos la forma del verbo apropiada. Por ejemplo, numero 17 dice ________ (empezar) a ________ (anochecer). Hay dos formas de empezar que son correctas, pero cada forma significa algo un poco diferente.

Empezó a anochecer tiene una perspectiva de distancia más remota. Empezaba a anochecer tiene un sentido que el lector está dentro de la acción y el lector o narrador ve todos los segundos. No hay reglas exactas para el uso del imperfecto ni del pretérito. La diferencia es que el significado es diferente.

[3/16 Today we finished [more or less] the mystery story. When we filled in the blank spaces with verbs, we discussed the appropriate verbal form. For example, number 17 says ______ (start) to ______ (get dark). There are two forms of ‘start’ that are correct, but each form means something somewhat different.

It started-preterit to get dark has a more remotely distant perspective. It started-imperfect to get dark has a sense that the reader is inside the action and the reader or narrator sees every second [of it]. There are no exact rules for the use of the imperfect or the preterit. The difference is that the meaning is different.]

(Lara, learning log, 3/16 entry, square brackets in original)

In addition, there were gaps in which the students had to insert the phrases and the non-finite clause at the end of the story. Students decided that these phrases and the clause had to be ordered according to the chronology of the imminent crime since their purpose seemed to be to accelerate the narrative tempo in order to hurry us to the final room. T offered the alternative possibility that these phrases could represent the lover’s consciousness more than his actions. That is, the murder-to-be’s mind has become our hidden camera and we are reading what he sees and becomes aware of: the steps, a corridor, two doors, an empty room, another empty room... Whoever the
narrator is, s/he is limited by the lover’s perspective and cannot see his actions, just passing objects.

**Exercise 9: Paragraph intervention**

The rest of the original text had been given to the students (written as one paragraph) and all choices of the text had been compared. At this point, T asked students to decide how many paragraphs the story could be composed of and why. Answers greatly varied: some students thought that the whole story should be one paragraph, while others decided to form multiple paragraphs every x number of sentences. The rationales provided for justifying their decisions were vague and based on intuitions; it seemed that either division would not have significant consequences for the story.

T asked students to recall the model of punctuation and the structure on the text (as will be remembered, this model was based on Montolío’s (2000) essential explanations of punctuation in Spanish and was barely reflected in the students’ logs). Specifically, she wanted them to recall the function of “punto y aparte,” period with a new paragraph. T took the transparency with the story, marked the point at which the new paragraph started, and asked them what that could possibly mean for the story. As students could not make sense of the difference, T reminded them that while a period within the same paragraph finished an idea that was within the same subtheme, a full stop with a new paragraph indicated that a new independent idea started which was not subordinated to the previous paragraph subtheme. T offered that this could provide more foundation for the idea that the lovers coming out of the log cabin had become real characters with an existence independent of the man’s stream of consciousness (the previous paragraph). Although students had not been able to make their own sense of
this paragraph division in the story, this idea was welcomed with a general “Oh!” of understanding in the class.

**Exercise 10: Constructing interpretations, giving the story a title.**

At the end of the reconstruction work on Cortázar’s story, students offered different titles and interpretations in class and in the electronic forum (see Appendix M) (3/18). One group of students decided that the man was reading his book in the real world, and then he falls asleep and enters into a fictional realm in which he is part of the novel that he was reading. According to this group of students, this showed that there is not much difference between dream and reality. Another interpretation was that nothing in the story was entirely fictional or real, representing how there is not a clear-cut distinction in life either. A third possibility discussed by some students was that the whole story was true, not fiction, so the man actually is killed by his wife’s lover in the end. According to a fourth interpretation, everything was the result a hallucination because the man was ‘high’ on some kind of substance. These students claimed that the man had caught the train to collect a box, which was full of drugs. However, the students responsible for this last interpretation were not able to further support it with linguistic evidence and it was consequently discarded by the class. Most students emphasized not only the use of imperfect but also the use of commas (versus stronger punctuation such as periods and semicolons) in the story. According to the students, the commas pointed to the idea that the man was gradually and seamlessly getting wrapped up into a fictional world or slipping into a dream. As students were reconstructing the story, they had chosen to create shorter sentences, which contrasted with the original fragments that had been provided for comparison. This was one of the first times when students related punctuation to meaning.
Some titles that were proposed for the story by the whole class were “De espaldas a la puerta” [“Back to the door”]. “Terciopelo verde” [“Green velvet”], “Una vista del parque” [“A view of the park”], *“A caras del parque” [corrected as “De cara al parque,” i.e. “Facing the park;” *“Comienzo o fin” [corrected as “Comienzo o fin,” i.e. “Beginning or end.”] Something to be noticed in these titles is the recurrence of elements in the story’s scene such as the window and the door, which are very significant for the dilemmas involved in the two first interpretations above. Finally, T announced that the story’s actual title was “Continuidad de los parques.” The students unanimously decided that the second interpretation seemed to suit the real title best because it captured the idea of a blurred line between reality and fiction in the notion of “continuity”: “this [the real title] signifies the two worlds coming together as one world” (Ulysses, learning log, 3/18 entry). The idea of continuity links the objects in the students’ pictures: the door, the sofa, the book, and the window showing a view of a park. After this class, some students completed the first drawing by adding a man with a knife behind the reader, which in turn completed the fiction/reality continuum (see Appendix I).

The task of giving a story a title shows how a word can contain a universe of significance, or, in Vygotskian terms, a microcosm of consciousness. After working on meaning-oriented activities that were designed so that students would have a participatory experience with the text, words became so saturated with sense that they were powerful enough to prove or disprove the interpretation of a story for the students, as is the case of “continuity.”

**Exercise 11: Comparing and contrasting (based on Carter, 1997):**

A fill-in-the-gap exercise was performed on a TV news item describing a political meeting in which the imperfect was also used to talk about what textbook rules refer to as actions completed in the past (Figure 5.4) (3/23). T had two reasons to make
students compare the story with the piece of news. First, despite insistence throughout the course that literary language was not different from everyday language and the non-literary texts used in class, Ophelia wondered whether the linguistic notions that were being discussed in the context of this story applied to other contexts as well. Second, T wanted to present a non-literary example demonstrating the same manipulation of aspect in a type of text that is traditionally conceived of as highly ‘objective’ and non-literary as is news. The full transcript of the news clip is shown below (Figure 5.4). The bold verbs highlight uses of the imperfect that contradict students’ previous rules of thumb, just as in the Cortázar story.

---

**Fragment of Telecinco News, 5/29/2001**

_Hacia quince meses que no se repetía esta escena: dirigentes de Partido Nacionalista Vasco y Partido Popular alrededor de una mesa para dialogar. Más tiempo, hacía que Jaime Mayor Oreja no pisaba la residencia oficial del Lehendakari: 5 años, desde el 1996. En aquella ocasión, Mayor Oreja acudía al palacio como miembro de la mesa de Ajurienea. Hoy lo ha hecho como principal líder de la oposición del futuro gobierno vasco. También han cambiado desde entonces los temas a tratar. En esta ocasión, el líder de los Populares Vascos llegaba para trasladar a Ibarretxe su intención de no presentarse como candidato a Lehendakari y de suavizar su posición si Ibarretxe toma como prioridad de su gobierno la lucha contra E.T.A. Mientras tanto, compás de espera. Así lo manifestaba hace unos instantes Jaime Mayor Oreja._

*Figure 5.4:* Transcript of TV news reporting the meeting between the right-wing and the Basque Nationalist Party.
To further enforce the idea that there were no differences between literary and non-literary texts, T invited students to find literary figures in this text. Some of the tropes that were discussed were the notions of ‘table’ and ‘round’ (e.g. “negotiation rounds”) as symbols of dialogue.

The idea of the literary continuum required further emphasis in the ensuing instructional unit. In the next section, I will present the rationale for using Lorca’s *Cogida y Muerte* for the second instructional unit together with the activities that mediated this text.

**5.3.2 La cogida y la muerte by Federico García Lorca**

In chapters 2 and 3, we mentioned that Lorca’s poem describes the afternoon in which Lorca’s close friend and famous bullfighter, Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, was killed by a bull. Several features are striking about the poem, the most notable being the repetition of “a las cinco de la tarde” (“at five o’clock in the afternoon”) in almost every other line. This line together with other features in the text creates a sense of inescapable doom. Entities are referenced as if they had already been mentioned or were known to the rest of the world, as if they had been previously set in some fatalistic plan. The inanimate elements of a scene that normally serve as background (clouds, the wind, the color of the arena) become action events (see Chapter 2) narrated in the preterit, as if they had come to life to lay an irreversible mortal trap. The duel between the bull and the bullfighter is seen as unequal, predetermined, as a battle between a dove and a leopard, and metaphors in the Surrealist venue leave the poem full of disturbing, cold, blank, lifeless images.
As the poem advances, one can feel Lorca’s distress stamped on a spiral of flashbacks that do not follow the laws of ‘objective’ time and space. One can see how the temporal and spatial perspectives alternate as the poet slips into the perspective of a person in the arena audience, a companion in the infirmary, a wanderer on the street begging for news, or somebody who is in a physically (though not emotionally) distant time and space. From this place, the poet experiences the ‘ongoingness’ of the dramatic event, with the past, growing realization that a tragedy had started to unfold, mainly expressed through imperfect aspect. At times, memories are so intense that events seem to occur over again, and are narrated in the present tense. At that point, the poet remembers how everything had been settled, as a trap, as a series of irreversible steps wrought in time by ironclad preterits and by a procession of eventless images (phrases and non-finite clauses) that do not present a temporal dimension susceptible to change, as the unalterable negatives of pictures.

These manipulations of language made the text ideal for the next unit to be presented. It allowed the introduction of determiners, as they contributed to construct the feeling of predestination in the poem. T could have dealt with this issue in Cortázar’s story, but that would have implied examining too many aspects in just one text. Secondly, T wanted to continue with the notion of metaphoric language, at which she had only hinted in the beginning of the course. T’s intention was to study the cline between unnoticed conceptual metaphors and the formally salient metaphors influenced by Surrealism in Lorca’s poem. Additionally, the notion of conceptual metaphor connected with the ongoing discussion about the nature of literary and everyday language. Lastly, this poem offered a context in which the concepts of tense, aspect, internal coherence, and different instantiations of utterance could be anchored to new personal experiences.
Exercise 12: Teaching through the literary to the non-literary continuum

Earlier on, T had asked students about their expectations for the course and their opinion about learning foreign-language literature. Students expected to learn linguistic contents that would be highly functional in an immersion situation. They did not associate these linguistic contents with literary language, which they thought to be too formal, archaic, ornate to be practical and functional. T asked students if there were metaphors in everyday language and students provided negative answers, although expressed their suspicions of the question that the contrary argument was going to be made. Then T discussed some examples (*silky hair*, *right on the money*, *you are so money*, *spend / waste time*) with the students. They were then given a few days to write a list of everyday metaphors from their L1 and post it on the class webforum. As can be seen in Appendix N, most metaphors are sayings or fixed expressions or instances of figurative language coming from types of discourses that are supposed to be creative. One of the metaphors comes from a song by Jimmy Hendrix. Another example, “a sea of troubles,” reminds us of the lines of Hamlet’s famous soliloquy: “to take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them” (*Hamlet*, Act 3, scene 1, italics added). Other examples are instances of creative discourses such as logos, and commercial mottos: “chiseled abs,” “tolerance is the window to peace.” There are, however, a few examples that are closer to invisible everyday uses of figurative language such as “I see what you mean,” which is a synesthesia.

One of the purposes of this unit was to attach the students’ notions of tropes (which were for most part tied to the literary context) to a scientific notion generalizable to diverse (literary and non-literary) contexts. The brief exercise about everyday metaphor in English and comments in other activities had just given students an
incomplete awareness of everyday figurative language, and had not changed their control of it. T was prompted by comments like the following from a student portfolio:

[Addressing the class dealing with the soap opera script in the previous unit] We also learned about Hyperbole, which is an exaggeration of a certain topic in writing or speech which we do all the time. Anaphora is the repetition of the first couple of words and then the continuation of it, making a nice flowing and passionate rhythm. By examining these in the soap opera that we are doing, we can easily see how we can speak these things without us knowing it. […]

Preguntas [questions]: It is still hard for me to recognize in free speech of everyday how we use these poetic principles of hyperbole and anaphora. I know that I use them all the time, but I need to recognize them.

(Darcy, learning log in portfolio, 2/19 entry)

Thus, students were presented with essential definitions of ‘literary’ figures of speech or tropes and with diverse (non-literary and literary) concretizations of figurative language both in Spanish and English. These concretizations comprised figurative elements in sayings, fixed expressions, commercial language, political discourse, horoscopes, conceptual metaphor in everyday language, common literary figures and literary figures in the Surrealist tradition (in which it is more difficult to retrieve the source term involved in the comparison because of a slim similarity between the source term and the target term).

After reminding students that they had already discussed very briefly everyday metaphor at the beginning of the course, T announced that they were to continue with the discussion of literary and everyday language (3/25). T provided a verbal definition of each figure of speech and distributed a handout with an example of each figure not only from literature, but also from everyday language. The handout presented examples both in English and Spanish, although there was a prevalence of Spanish examples. The following is a sample from the handout (Figure 5.5).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NON-LITERARY EXAMPLES</th>
<th>LITERARY EXAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **SIMIL [SIMILE]**    | Como el toro he nacido para el luto y el dolor  
(Like the bull, I was born for mourning and pain)  
(Miguel Hernández) |
| • Bio Slim Silueta atrapa la grasa como si fuera un imán y consigue que ni siquiera llegue a depositarse en el cuerpo.  
[Bio Slim Silueta bonds to fat like a magnet and prevents it from storing in your body] |
| **METONIMIA O SINÉDOQUE [METONYMY OR SYNECDOCHE]** | Sevilla a voces me llama el Burlador, y el mayor gusto que en mí puede haber es burlar a una mujer y dejalla sin honor.  
(El Burlador de Sevilla, Tirso de Molina) |
| • Mesero, botones, herrero, velero  
[Waiter, bellboy, blacksmith, sail boat] |
| • Moncloa / la Casa Blanca/ Washington ha declarado esta mañana ...  
[The Spanish prime ministerial house at the Moncloa suburb / White House / Washington has declared this morning ...] |
| • Somos almas gemelas  
[We’re soul mates] |
| • Tiene pluma fácil  
[S/he has a mighty pen] |
| • Traicionó la bandera  
[S/he betrayed the flag] |
| • Dame un klinex  
[Give me a kleenex] |
| • Compré un Picasso  
[I bought a Picasso] |
| • Motes/sobrenombres: el “ricitos,” la “ricitos”  
[Nicknames: ringlets-masculine, ringlets-feminine.] |
| • Así tengo que ganarme el pan  
[That’s the way I have to earn a living] |
| **HIPÉRBOLE [HYPERBOLE]** | Érase un hombre a una nariz pegado: érase una nariz superlativa; érase una nariz sayón y escriba; érase un pez de espada muy barbado.  
[Once upon a time there was a man stuck to a nose; /  
Once upon a time there was a superlative nose; /  
Once upon a time there was a gown-shaped nose, like those of scribes] |
| • Con Eau Dynamisante, Clarins creó el Eau de Toilette de Belleza más excepcional.  
[With Eau Dynamisante, Clarins created the eau de toilette of the most exceptional beauty] |
| • Clinique « Anti-gravity» |
| • A partir de ahora, le perderás el miedo a la báscula. Con una alimentación sana y Bio Slim Silueta, el absorbe grasa, conseguirás controlar tu peso como |
siempre soñaste. [From this moment on, you will lose your fear to the scale. With a healthy diet and Bio Slim Silueta, the fat magnet, you will succeed in controlling your weight as you always dreamed.]
- This cake is to die for. (Francisco de Quevedo)

**Figure 5.5:** Literary and non-literary examples of literary figures.

Although learners had been handed out similar documents on figures in the literary courses that they were taking simultaneously, according to students’ accounts, none of these documents had applied the notion of figurative language beyond the realm of literary discourse or supplied examples of everyday language.

In addition, T showed how many deverbal compounds enclosed a metaphor, an action-event or a metonymy: for example, abrelatas [can-opener; literally ‘openscans’], asalta-cunas [cradle-robber], salvavidas [lifejacket], paraguas [umbrella; literally, stopswaters], etc.

**Exercise 13: Comparing metaphors.**

After discussing the list containing figures of speech, students were asked to find instances of figurative language in the horoscope section of a popular Spanish magazine (see Appendix O) (3/25). The class discussed how figurative language allowed the meaning of horoscopes to remain open enough to be applied to the varying circumstances of multiple readers. The metaphors of horoscopes were compared with those in articles on politics, as, through figurative language, politicians launched
accusations, made impressionistic statements, or downplayed their errors to audiences shielded by lack of precise reference (see Appendix P).

**Exercise 14: Figures in sayings and fixed expressions.**

Students were provided with a list of sayings and fixed expressions in Spanish similar to those that they had posted on the class web forum in English (Figure 5.6). They had to explain the figure of speech involved in each expression and guess the meaning of each of them (4/6).

---

**Intenta averiguar qué significan estas expresiones idiomáticas y refranes.**

Decide qué tipo de tropo son (símil, una metáfora, una alegoría, paradoja, personificación, metonimia, sinécdoque, etc).

[Decide what these idiomatic expressions and sayings mean and what type of ‘literary’ figures of speech they are (simile, metaphor, allegory, paradox, personification, metonymy, synecdoche, etc.)]

1. *No hay mal que por bien no venga* [Every cloud has its silver lining.]
2. *Ojos que no ven, corazón que no siente* [Out of sight, out of mind]
3. *Si se/ te pica/s, ajos come/s* [If the shoe fits, wear it.]
4. *Chúpate esa.* [Take that.]
5. *Está como una cabra.* [S/he’s nuts.]
6. *Me desternillo de la risa.* [I split my sides with laughter.]
7. *Aguántate/ jódete/ fastidiate.* [Suck it up.]
8. *Estoy hasta los topes de trabajo.* [I’m up to my neck in work / I’m really busy with work.]
9. *Estoy hasta la coronilla de esa situación.* [I'm fed up with that situation.]

10. *Estoy harto de tanto trabajo.* [I'm fed up with so much work.]

11. *El tiempo es oro.* [Time is money.]

12. *Voy a mirar mi correo.* [I'm going to check my email.]

13. *Hay que bajarle los humos a [alguien].* [We have to take him/ her down a peg or two.]

14. *Ya veré.* [I'll see.]

15. *No cuela.* [I don't buy that / Good try.]

16. *No me lo trago.* [I don't buy that.]

---

**Figure 5.6:** Literary figures in sayings and fixed expressions

---

**Exercise 15: Invisible metaphors.**

Finally, to show students that figurative language existed in even less expected places, not only in texts that were supposed to be creative and in fixed expressions, T provided students with common lexical manifestations and asked them to trace the conceptual metaphor (4/8). **Figure 5.7** below combines the exercises of a handout and a transparency. Students had to find the Spanish conceptual metaphors underlying these lexical manifestations. For example, people say things like 4.a) “someone has crossed the line,” 4.b) “there’s no limit to somebody’s generosity,” or 4.e) “somebody is out of her/ his mind.” Therefore, the underlying conceptual metaphor is that behaviors are enclosed in delimited places.
1. LA MENTE ES ____________________
   a) No logro meterme esto en la cabeza
   b) Quitate esa idea de la cabeza

2. Metáforas espaciales: ARRIBA SIGNIFICA _____________, ABAJO SIGNIFICA ____________.
   a) Después de la euforia, siempre me da un bajón.
   b) Cuando uno se siente en la más profunda tristeza ...
   c) Tengo un subidón de energía
   d) Tengo la moral alta / baja
   e) He tocado fondo.
   f) Está rebosante / henchido de alegría
   g) Estoy bajo de ánimos.

3. EL DEBATE Y LA DISCUSIÓN SON ________________. LOS ARGUMENTOS SON ____________.
   a) Esgrimir / combatir / defender / atacar / apoyar un argumento.
   b) Tenemos que presentar nuestros argumentos de una forma estratégica.
   c) No sé de qué parte está. Desde luego, no está en nuestro bando.
   d) Hay que tener cuidado con las tácticas que usa para defender su punto de vista.

4. LAS CONDUCTAS SON __________________________
   a) Se ha pasado de la raya.
   b) Su generosidad no tiene límites.
   c) Esto se sale fuera de lo normal.
   d) Se pasa de simpático / gracioso / amable
   e) Se ha salido de sus casillas.
5. LA IMAGINACIÓN / FANTASÍA / EMOCIONES / SUEÑOS SON ________________
   a) Hay que darle rienda suelta a la imaginación / fantasía / emociones / sueños.
   b) Tiene una imaginación desbocada.
   c) Perdió los estribos.

6. EL TIEMPO ES ________________
   a) El tiempo corre / vuela / pasa.
   b) Volver atrás en el tiempo
   c) Adelantarse a su tiempo

**Figure 5.7**: Everyday metaphors.

---


As T discussed with students in class and read their portfolios and composition logs, she realized that they had derived absolute and occasionally contradictory empirical generalizations about texts. Some of these generalizations were that literary texts embellish reality, literary texts use formal and written styles, argumentative texts use external coherence and literary texts use internal coherence because they do not need to make information clear. T decided to present a group of literary and non-literary texts (4/8) that did not have the stereotypical characteristics of their genres, and that could contradict other empirical generalizations made by students (see **Figure 5.8** for a sample of these texts). For example, 4), 9) and 12) below are poems (presented in the form of prose for the activity’s purposes), but 4) by David González, mimics a dictionary entry; 9) by Mario Benedetti, does not exhibit the lexicon stereotypically associated with
literature, and 12) by Nicolás Guillén reads as a transcription of colloquial spoken language or the lyrics of a song (as many students volunteered). The formulaic beginnings of the sentences in 10) have all the air of an argumentation or an academic paper (just as the version of the Cortázar fragments reconstructed by students by means of connectors). However, the formulae in 10) are part of Benedetti’s highly lyrical short story *El sexo de los ángeles*. Initially, students had to guess what type of texts these were, and they had to justify their predictions with linguistic evidence. After students’ predictions, the complete original texts were read and the effects of the mixture of styles and genres were discussed. This exercise contributed to the unit’s purpose of presenting features stereotypically attributed to literature (one of which being figurative language) in relative terms.

[David González’s poem given below is written in the form of dictionary and thesaurus entries. Colloquialisms such as “clink,” “pokey,” “cooler” and “slammer” are also used.]


[In this poem Mario Benedetti makes use of colloquial lexicon and discourse organization and markers that are typical of synchronous, face-to-face communication: (what) I mean, in a nutshell, fucked up, etc.]

9) ... o sea, resumiendo, estoy jodido y radiante, quizá más lo primero que lo segundo y también viceversa.
[Benedetti’s short story below exhibits the formulae typical of formal or academic texts: … in relation to… a non-confirmed datum … another viable version suggests, etc.]

10) Una de las más lamentables carencias de información que han padecido los hombres y mujeres de todas las épocas, se relaciona con ...
El dato, nunca confirmado, de que ..., quizá signifique que no ...

Otra versión, tampoco confirmada pero más verosimil, sugiere que si bien ..., (por la mera razón de que carecen de los mismos) lo celebran en cambio con palabras, vale decir con las adecuadas.

[Nicolás Guillén’s poem puts in writing the syllabic linking and the consonantal gemination that are typical of spoken Caribbean Spanish.]

12) Tanto tren con tu cueppo, tanto tren; tanto tren con tu boca, tanto tren; tanto tren con tu sojo, tanto tren.

**Figure 5.8:** Fragments of ‘non-literary-sounding’ literary texts.

---

**Exercise 17: Metaphor and construal.**

After the discussion in the previous exercise, we moved on to the role of metaphor in constructing ideologies and points of view. Students read two ideologically divergent articles on the Iraq war in Spanish (4/13). Working in groups, they had to underline all the words that seemed to belong to the same lexical family and find the underlying conceptual metaphor in each article. The students concluded that in one of the articles the metaphor was “THE IRAQ WAR IS A CRUSADE FOR FREEDOM,” while the less heroic choice in the other piece was that of the Iraq war as an invasion. They thought it would be easier at first to show how lexical choices constructed representations of the world with a topic that would not leave students indifferent. The
idea that something so devastatingly real could encapsulate a metaphor was an invitation to reflect about what else might be constructed in similar terms.

One of the students, Ernest, rejected the idea that “THE IRAQ WAR IS AN INVASION” was a metaphor. He said it was “just true.” Ernest was a student that was very interested in politics and involved in the Gay, Lesbian and Transsexual Organization on campus. In the two semesters that he had taken Spanish with T, he had overtly expressed his disapproval of conservative politics in his compositions and during office hours. T replied that there was no objective, neutral language, and that metaphors had nothing to do with truth or falseness, but with ways of constructing and making sense out of our experience in relation to our personal histories, which are in turn constrained by our culture. As our mind cannot apprehend reality directly and experience is always filtered through schemes, figures, narratives, etc., there were no ‘literal’ propositions. T explained how the Iraq war could be coherently described in totally opposed ways: a holy crusade, a conflict, an intervention, an invasion, a violation of human rights, a holocaust, a genocide, an act of supremacism... Each of these terms tinted the same events with different hues, and downplayed or highlighted their magnitude. T’s goal was to make students consider the issue from both sides, through different lenses, in relative terms, and see the consequences of metaphors, construal and lexical choices for each view.


At this point, it was the students’ turn to express their ideology through everyday metaphors. The students had been working on an article on bullfighting. Following this, the class watched a clip from Almodóvar’s movie Hable con ella, which connected well with the topic in Lorca’s poem (4/13). The movie clip presented a scene in which Lidia,
one of the main characters, was bullfighting in a reckless way in order to attract her ex-boyfriend’s attention. In this intense scene, there were many close-ups and images played in slow motion at the most critical moments, as if time were suspended, building up emotion and apprehension of a doleful denouement. The bullfighting moves were graceful, ceremonious, loaded with the invisible energy of drama and trepidation. Vivid colors provocatively saturated every element of the scene. The background music was piercingly melancholic and nostalgic. The fiercest opponent of bullfighting may be placed in an ambivalent position because of the emotional and aesthetic force of this scene; at the same time, the most devoted bullfighting defender could not deny the ferocity of the ceremony, the blood shed, the torture inflicted on an innocent animal.

After watching the clip, students were invited to take a stance with respect to the bullfighting scene. Was what they had just witnessed an instance of art or of utter cruelty? To develop a response, the class was divided randomly into two groups and was asked to produce a written description of the clip. The two divergent points of view were expressed through two divergent conceptual metaphors: “BULLFIGHTING IS ART” and “BULLFIGHTING IS TORTURE” (see Figures 5.9A and 5.9B). Students used semantic map blueprints to produce the vocabulary related to both metaphors (similarly to the way they had identified the terms that were related to the conceptual metaphors in the texts on the Iraq war).
Figure 5.9A: semantic map blueprint for metaphor “BULLFIGHTING IS ART.”
In addition, copies were provided of the pages with the bullfighting entry from a Spanish Thesaurus and from the English-Spanish *Oxford-Duden Pictorial Dictionary* so that students could refer to bullfighting elements in the scene with the appropriate terms (e.g. *muleta, capote, traje de luces*, etc). The students were expected to have a highly emotional experience with the bullfighting scene so that they would move from the expression of that emotion through everyday metaphor to a more literary type of representation, as will be seen in the next exercise.

This is what the art metaphor group wrote (text after grammatical mistakes were corrected in the class):

*El baile empieza en la rica tradición de España. Ella lleva el traje de luces con orgullo. Su respeto por el toro y el arte del toreo se muestran en sus movimientos elegantes. Es matadora. Su lienzo está pintado por los gritos de la multitud y el espíritu del toro. La corrida es una batalla eterna*
entre los hombres y las bestias, pero esta vez el hombre es una mujer y esta vez el toreo representa la destrucción del machismo.

[The dance starts in the rich Spanish tradition. She wears the bullfighting suit with pride. Her respect of the bull and of the art of bullfighting is palpable in each of her elegant movements. She is a matadora. Her canvas is painted by the screams of the crowd and the bull’s spirit. The bullfight is an eternal battle between men and beasts, but this time the man is a woman and this time bullfighting represents the destruction of machismo.]

It is noteworthy that students went beyond the ‘narrative facts’ and attributed a parabolic dimension to the bullfighting scene: the battle between men and beasts, and, in this particular case, the destruction of gender discrimination. The students’ interpretation of the scene is evocative of Picasso’s view of bullfighting as the fight between masculine and feminine forces, between principles of destruction and principles of creation (these, as will be remembered, are the principles in Widdowson’s notion of art, metaphorically captured in the metaphor of Indian god Siva –see Chapter 3).

**Exercise 19: Word family chart**

In a word family chart, the features of terms of the same or of a different lexical family can be compared. Carter and Long (1987, p. 82) used this type of activity to help students create amusing effects and imaginative combinations. The blank chart in Appendix Q was used as a mediating tool to materialize the sometimes not-so-obvious comparisons involved in literary tropes. This artifact allowed students to both construct their own figures and mediate their understanding of how other tropes had been formed. The chart seemed more suitable for literary language than the semantic map in the previous exercise since the relationships of meaning in literary metaphors are based on more subtle associations than in everyday language, where content, not form, is the focus.
The chart presents a method of describing the bull in the movie clip in more spectacular figurative terms. The bull (the source term at the top of the vertical axis) was compared with other animals (target terms following the source term on the vertical axis) that hold similarities, such as large, wild, dangerous animals. On the horizontal axis, properties or features to be compared or contrasted are listed (see Appendix R). The term ‘properties’ is understood in a broad way, including, for example, verbs describing actions typical of target terms, sensorial impressions, appearance, danger, etc.

Striking contrasts could be created with animals and beings of radically different species such as reptiles, types of fish, insects, birds, animals living underground, and even mythological beings (such as Medusa). The bull could also be compared with inanimate entities, for example, with ones that hold similarities to the bull, such as sharp objects or weapons (barbwire, knives, arrows, spears, guns, missiles, the atomic bomb, corners, etc.), on the one hand. On the other hand, the bull could be paradoxically associated with objects that are contradictory for being round, dull, a symbol of life, motherhood or naivety (e.g. wombs, laps, nests, seeds, eggs, fruit, litters, lairs, dens, mines).

The characteristics chosen and the way they are compared will render different figures. If one compares two entities without using explicit comparison terms, then one constructs a metaphor. For example, in ‘the bull hissed and wrapped around his bifid poison of lunar marble’, one is implicitly comparing some of the bull’s characteristics (such as the ominous air of danger around him, and his horns) with the features of a snake. In order to compare the bull with the snake, one must chose characteristics from ‘ways of moving’, ‘sounds’, and ‘defenses’. One can make the comparison by using explicit terms, resulting in a simile (for example, “the arena coiled around Ignacio like an
inevitable viper*). If the comparison yields a contradiction, then the result is a **paradox** or an **oxymoron** (e.g. the *round* arena was *sharp* with baleful *corners*). Sometimes the target and source terms require modifiers to deepen or further the contradiction (e.g. the *afternoon* was hanging over a *full moon* of *coppery* sadness). If there is an opposition or contrast of ideas expressed in parallel terms, then result is an **antithesis** (e.g. *such dazzling arena* with *such a blackening pit*). If the comparison resulting involves mixed sensorial expressions, the result is a **synesthesia** (e.g. *dusty fear*, *piercing bitterness*, *edgeless hope* and the *suntanned echo* of the arena forever in my blood). If the comparison involves an exaggeration of the characteristics of the source term, then the result is a **hyperbole** (e.g. death was waiting in the *ivory tower on the bull’s forehead*). If the source term is inanimate and is compared to a human target term, then the result will be a **personification** (e.g. the wind was *chewing* sand). If the source term is compared to an animal target term, then the result will be **animalization** (e.g. the wind was *grazing turfs* of sand). For the comparisons, words can be chosen that have specific vowels or consonants in common in order to create **assonance**, **alliteration**, **rhyme** or **cacophony** (e.g. a crescent jellyfish *moon* was *mounted* on his *mauve mane*).

This word family chart or a **lexical chain** (Carter and Long, 1987) can be used to deconstruct and analyze figures, as the characteristics of target terms can be listed to find similarities, or associations with the source term or with other target terms. For example, by listing the characteristics of target terms in Lorca’s poem, students found that most of them share the quality of being white or transparent (white sheet, quicklime, nickel, glass, a dove, snow, lily, etc.), the color of death in the poem (**Figure 5.10**).
The possibility of a hypallage (transfer of qualities among contiguous elements: death is white because of the color of its instrument: the bull’s horns) was discussed in class. On the other hand, the presence of the ‘white sheet’ and the ‘dove’ was reminiscent of Jesus Christ, which infuses the figure of the bullfighter with connotations of purity, sacrifice and redemption. At this point, a little content helped students expand, deepen and enhance this interpretation: Ignacio Sánchez Mejías was a benefactor of a group of artists, a situation that might resemble Jesus Christ with his disciples, fighting against times that challenged the production of art.

Here are some examples of figures created by Darcy and Alice (4/22): *el torero* “sentía la picadura de los cuernos” [the bullfighter felt the sting of the horns, metaphor]:

![Image of handwritten notes with symbols and words related to the text.](image)
“el toro aplastó la tierra con sus patas enormes” [the bull treaded on the ground with his humongous legs, hyperbole]; “los cuernos del toro embistieron al matador como los colmillos de un elefante” [the bull’s horns attacked the bullfighter like elephant tusks, simile and hyperbole].

**Exercise 20: Cloze procedure (based on Carter, 1997).**

Students had to move from the string of metaphors describing the bull or the bullfighter in the previous exercise on Lorca’s poem, which was provided in the form of a gapped prosaic text (4/22). Most determiners had been removed, as well as some verbs (of which only the infinitive form was provided). The remaining nouns were mostly the target terms of metaphors. The bold lines indicated that students had to decide if a determiner was needed in that blank space (Figure 5.11). If so, they had to choose according to the effect they wanted to create. In order to mediate this activity, T provided a chart with three essential meanings of the definite and indefinite and null article (see Appendix A). Students also had to complete the metaphors in the text and decide on the tense and aspect of verbs within brackets. They could introduce words, phrases and clauses in the blank spaces, except for the determiner and verb gaps in which words and phrases were the options. Again, students had to strive to construct a coherent text in which elements were adequately referenced and metaphors held together.
Un niño (traer)
blanca sábana 

espuerta de cal ya (prevenir)
demás (ser)
muerte y sólo muerte 

vento (llevarse) algodones

óxido (sembrar) cristal y níquel . Ya (luchar)

paloma y leopardo

---

**Exercise 21: Rewriting**

Lastly, Lorca’s complete poem was provided to the students, but still in prose form. Since this poem does not rely on rhyme for creating rhythm, presenting the poem in this fashion was useful for engaging students in determining how the poem was patterned. Students divided the excerpt into lines and the whole class described the reasons for making longer or shorter lines, as well as the effect of placing the pervading phrase “a las cinco de la tarde” at the end of a line or in a different line or split in two (“a las cinco/ de la tarde”).

**Exercise 22: Reading aloud** (based on Carter and Long, 1987)
Students were asked to perform the poem in groups (4/29). In one group, one person read the lines while a whole chorus read the refrain “a las cinco de la tarde” line aloud. The other groups had people that simply alternated in reading the lines aloud. The students and T discussed the effect of each type of reading. Some students volunteered that reading the refrain as a chorus seemed to make the poem more solemn, and that it was a good choice to read it that way because it highlighted the persistence of the line throughout the entire poem.

**Exercise 23: Web forum.**

On the final day of classes (4/29), students were asked to post their interpretations of the poem on the web forum together with the linguistic evidence that justified these (see Appendix S to read the web forum posts about the interpretation of the poem). As evidenced in the postings, empirical thinking was still very prevalent in the students’ analyses of the poem. For example, Lara explained that the imperfect and the preterit were used in the poem because the author wanted to describe the events as a news story. This reasoning came from the comparison of Cortázar’s story and the TV news on the meeting of the Spanish government with Ibarretxe in the previous unit. In turn, this activity with the news story had been introduced because some students, like Ophelia, had limited the applicability of the concepts of tense and aspect to the Cortázar’s text. Since Lara had empirically concluded that the imperfect is used when reporting news, then Lorca’s intention had been to produce a poem in a news story fashion.

Due to time constraints, it was not possible to carry out the third instructional unit planned for the course. However, I include a sample of the activities formulated for this unit in Appendix Y.
5.4 Conclusion

As T’s efforts focused on liberating students from the constraints of empirical thinking, the course evolved into a much needed ‘unlearning’ experience. Compositions became filled with traditionally proscribed elements. Incomplete, choppy sentences, temporal incoherence and lack of connectors were used to achieve communicative goals. Diverse styles were found in mixed texts. Punctuation, textual patterning and word order were no longer textual ‘accessories’. ‘Objectivity’ and ‘literality’ had to be abandoned at the altar of construal. Using the L1 was positively deployed as a means of learning the L2. Cognitive conflict rather than comfort zones and harmony had become the engine to drive learning. The gods and idols of literature had died and personal voices began to rise in order to contest, to transform, to make sense.

Much time had to be invested on challenging the validity of traditional rules of thumb that, despite their multiple shortcomings, had served students well for the purposes of conventional textbook practice and traditional assessment throughout most of the foreign language curriculum. But not only had students become attached to these problematic rules, it was still more difficult for them to diverge from their empirical way of thinking represented in the rules. The imperfect became associated with reporting the news and describing dreams; short sentences always accelerated the narrative tempo; explicit connectors were not literary. As with many rules of thumb, students still connected linguistic devices to specific contexts of use rather than to meanings they wished to construct.

This once again illustrates the constraints of empirical thinking, which is neither effective for practical nor for literary contexts. It inhibits students from perceiving literature as a productive discourse type tapping into the same meaning-making
resources as all other discourses. As Bull and Lamadrid warned more than three decades ago, the way grammar is presented as extensive repertoires of rules of thumb is severely hampering students, instructors and (educational) linguists (1971, p. 449). Rather than promoting the development of advanced levels of proficiency, empirical thinking undermines the possibilities of liberating learners from the constraints of concrete circumstances.

On the other hand, this alternative pedagogy started to bear some fruit, as will be documented in chapters 8, 9 and 10. A group of students was able to connect the course material with their compositions, translations and with their readings for other literature courses. Some students concluded that literature and creativity were important components in foreign language learning (see Chapter 10). Most of the students described the course as truly ‘advanced’, with contents that were new, not repetitious and that posed true cognitive challenges.

This chapter has provided an overview of the implementation of a discourse-based pedagogy of literature and of the teaching units of the study course. Both Chapter 4 and 5 have answered the first research question about how literature can be taught through discourse. In Chapter 6, I will present the method of data collection and analysis in the study course. Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 will answer the second and third research questions.
Chapter 6

Data sources and method of analysis

All our science is just a cookery book, with an orthodox theory of cooking that nobody’s allowed to question, and a list of recipes that mustn’t be added to except by special permission from the head cook.

(Aldous Huxley, Brave New World)

Chapters 4 and 5 answered the first research question by laying out the theoretical foundation of a discourse-based pedagogy of literature and by providing examples from the course. Teaching literature through language involves the students’ active engagement in the “game” of literature by participating in making literary texts mean. Students rewrote, transformed and finally analyzed two main literary texts (Cortázar’s Continuidad de los parques and Lorca’s Cogida y muerte), apart from satellite poems, narratives, and non-literary texts. In order to do so, they received extensive instruction in linguistic concepts (such as utterance, text, coherence, tense, aspect, figures of speech), the essential function of each punctuation mark within a text, and how to represent speech and thought from different perspectives.

Chapters 7 and 8 will answer the remaining research questions. The second research question, as will be remembered from Chapter 1, is on the impact of literature-through-language pedagogy on the participants’ linguistic proficiency. The third question is about the impact on the participants’ attitude towards literature and language (learning). To start with, the concepts of “linguistic proficiency” and “attitude” will be defined. Then, I will describe the method of analysis, as well as the sources of data.
6.1 Linguistic proficiency

Education makes machines which act like men and produces men who act like machines.

(Erich Fromm, The Sane Society)

Students that have gone through the beginning and intermediate stages of the traditional foreign-language curriculum (as the participants in the present study) typically have internalized the rigid criteria on which language proficiency is usually appraised. According to typical writing standards, advanced students vary words and structures to avoid repetition and redundancy, are accurate with language forms, and master the most difficult structures in the curricular sequence of grammatical contents—which, in the case of Spanish, are typically preterit/imperfect and subjunctive. However, these standards fail to describe everyday and literary language and even the type of academic writing they purport to characterize.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, PPP and other tool-for-result procedures and pedagogies distribute contents and practices on a scale of frequency and complexity, usually inspired by research on second-language acquisition orders. Influential standards such as the ACTFL proficiency and performance guidelines are grounded in the idea of “preparation” through sequential progression of language topics designed to achieve the ultimate goal of advanced proficiency. For example, according to ACTFL performance descriptors40, students at the beginning level will be able to deploy “a limited range of simple phrases and expressions based in very familiar topics” both in oral and written presentations, and are bound to show inaccuracies, interference and problems in their written production. Students at the intermediate level will be able to “express their own thoughts using sentences and strings of sentences when interacting

40 Available at http://www.actfl.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3329.
on familiar topics in present time.” They will be able to write “short letters and notes.” Pre-advanced students should be able to “understand main ideas and significant details on a variety of topics found in the products of the target culture such as those presented on TV, radio, video or live and computer-generated presentations.” Only at this level, students will be able to move from the presentational and the interpersonal communication modes of the beginning and intermediate levels respectively to the interpretive communication mode of the pre-advanced level, which allows the development of “an awareness of tone, style, and author perspective.” This constructs some texts as purely informational and objective, while others are presented as containing a subtext that only advanced students can decipher.

In addition, the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Writing41 reflect the traditional progression from words to simple sentences to texts. According to these guidelines, students at the novice-low and the novice-mid levels are able to form letters of the target alphabet and copy or transcribe familiar words or phrases. At this level, “there is little evidence of functional writing skills,” which constructs the function of writing as a by-product of mastering ‘the basics’ (i.e. certain linguistic forms), and makes us wonder how and why writing is taught without functional purposes at this or any level. This also reflects the way in which traditional tool-for-result pedagogies ‘prepare’ students at the lower levels for ‘the real thing’ in the more advanced stages by teaching them ‘the mechanics of language’. Then students are expected to apply that knowledge in spontaneous production in order to perform certain communicative purposes –typically, students fail to generalize these principles, which are frequently a source of complaint among advanced level instructors as well as those who teach courses in literature and culture.

Continuing the traditional letter-word-sentence-text sequence, the novice-high level students are able “to recombine learned vocabulary and structures to create simple sentences on very familiar topics, but the language they produce may only partially communicate what is intended.” Only writers at the intermediate-low level are able to meet some practical writing needs, but these are limited. In addition,

Most sentences are recombinations of learned vocabulary and structures.

These are short and simple conversational-style sentences with basic subject-verb-object word order. They are written mostly in present time with occasional and often incorrect use of past or future time. Writing tends to be a few simple sentences, often with repetitive structure.

(ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Writing 2001)

Therefore, simple sentences are expected earlier than complex sentences; conversational style earlier than written style; present tense earlier than past and future tenses, etc. Repetition is conceived of as a purposeless phenomenon in language and as a stigma of the student lacking linguistic proficiency. Again, linguistic forms dominate the curriculum and prevail over functions, whereas in tool-and-result pedagogy functions motivate forms. In addition, this traditional sequence suggests that oral proficiency precedes written proficiency, which in Vygotsky’s view makes little sense as writing allows for the material control of language and for its internalization and application in any contexts.

Finally, the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Writing stipulate that superior writers “use a variety of sentence structures, syntax, and vocabulary to direct their writing to specific audiences.” In addition,

their writing is characterized by smooth transitions between subtopics and clear distinctions made between principal and secondary ideas. The relationship among ideas is consistently clear, evidencing organizational and developmental principles such as cause and effect, comparison, chronology, or other orderings appropriate to the target language culture.
Superior writers, unlike writers at other levels, master punctuation and are capable of narrating “in all time frames and aspects.” As far as vocabulary is concerned, for superior writers’ “vocabulary is precise and varied with textured use of synonyms, instead of mere repetition of key words and phrases.”

This sequence raises many questions. In the first place, why can punctuation not be taught completely at the beginning level? By what mechanism will students finally achieve mastery of punctuation at the superior level, which failed at previous levels? The same question applies to interpreting “TV, radio, video or live and computer-generated presentations,” narrating in “all frame times and aspects,” and other “advanced” or “superior” descriptors. On the other hand, is a student that shows no problems of punctuation at the superior level, even if s/he just started learning the language, or vice versa? What level would better describe a student that intentionally flouts punctuation conventions like e. e. cummings, bel hooks, or Mario Benedetti? Is a student that uses repetition and incoherence meaningfully in a conversation, a speech, or a poem a beginning language user?

The ACTFL guidelines and descriptors seem to suggest that instruction in topics such as punctuation and textual frames can wait until the superior level. From this, one may infer that these aspects of language are not essential for making meaning, and that they are only some type of add-ons that at best result in “fine-tuning” for the advanced language learner.

The ACTFL guidelines reflect a tool-for-result view of language learning and exert an enormous influence on grading criteria and curricular standards from kindergarten through graduate level in foreign-language education. A variety of structures and vocabulary, avoidance of repetition, the use of synonyms and
subordinated clauses, coherence, and smooth transitions (whether appropriate or not) have become the signatures of the excellent writer. Consequently, much in tune with a Saussurian view of language, the notion of text is constructed as an organized, non-redundant container of ideas, hypotheses and information to be unambiguously decoded by the reader. In such a view, there is no room for the liveliness and creativity found not only in literature but in everyday language as well.

Appendix Z is an example of grading criteria that captures this view of language. This grading criteria sheet was used for the two writing courses of the Spanish intermediate sequence that precedes the course under analysis. According to the grading criteria, excellent writers anticipate readers’ questions, have a clear thesis, show “a wide range of structures,” and have no errors involving agreement, determiners, pronouns, spelling, and ser versus estar. On the other hand, poor writers do not anticipate information, repeat a limited number of vocabulary and grammatical structures, make errors involving agreement, determiners, pronouns, spelling, and ser versus estar, and the meaning of their composition remains “confused and obscure.”

When these indicators, predictors, and criteria become inflexible rules for good writing, then guidelines may become misleading, not only for appreciating or for producing literature, but for making sense out of any manifestation of language-in-use. Based on contexts rather than on meanings, rules of thumb and traditional writing conventions seem to preclude agency, personal meaning and subjectivity. This is because they confine language within a set of parameters which language learners then react to when they are prompted by linguistic cues – such as the topic of weather and words such as “nunca” or “siempre,” which seem to automatically and meaninglessly “trigger” imperfect according to most language textbooks.
In this view, language becomes an automatic, reactive, lifeless, impersonal instrument to describe “objective” phenomena – instead of the language user’s personal, subjective views of the world. For example, in conventional foreign-language education, if something is definite, it cannot be presented with the indefinite article; if an event is completed it has to be marked with the preterit; if something already happened, it cannot be narrated in the present or the future, but in past tense, etc. However, from the standpoint of this dissertation, saying that one cannot change, for instance, focus and the perspective while narrating is like saying that one cannot look at the same painting from different distances, angles and lights, or that one cannot focus on different sections of the canvass. Traditional foreign-language education emphasizes one-to-one correlations between meaning and form, and grants prevalence to grammatical structure. However, Vygotsky emphasized the prevalence of meaning in inner speech or sense over grammatical structure. The great psychologist discussed in his final chapter of *Thinking and Speech* how the same grammatical structure could complete entirely different thoughts, that is, construct different senses.

Accord between syntactical and psychological organisation is not as prevalent as we tend to assume – rather, it is a requirement that is seldom met…. A spontaneous utterance wrong from the point of view of grammar, may have charm and aesthetic value. Absolute correctness is achieved only beyond natural language, in mathematics. Our daily speech continually fluctuates between the ideals of mathematical and of imaginative harmony.

(Vygotsky, 1962, pp. 127-128)

The traditional overgeneralizing and rigid view of language, more often than not, hampers the attainment of true linguistic mastery. From the Sociocultural standpoint, development is about gaining self-regulation or control of mediational means in meaningful, purposeful, tool-mediated, goal-oriented activity. In conventional foreign-language education, however, we usually have a very different scenario. Instead of
controlling language for expressing their own personal meaning, that is, acting as subjects or agents of activity, students are object-regulated, that is, they are controlled by language (Di Pietro, 1987; Negueruela, 2003; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). This is because they are trained to react to contextual cues, to stay within the narrow confines of what is ‘correct,’ and to use language for language sake or as an end in itself. As a result of engaging in meaningless practices, learners usually become objects of the instructor’s activity and objects of language – construed as a code of strict, meaningless directives. As linguistic forms are not transferable to contexts where contextual cues do not exist or where several cues prompting opposite forms co-exit students need to perpetually rely on the instructor as a source of regulation. In the end the instructor becomes the ultimate judge that sanctions and rationalizes “exceptions,” “particular cases,” and provides guidance in new contexts, which further deprives students of agency and control over language.

This landscape is very different from the concept of linguistic proficiency proposed in this dissertation. As discussed in previous chapters, in light of Sociocultural Theory, Systemic-Functional Linguistics and Cognitive Linguistics, language is understood as a system of meanings realized by forms. In that perspective, meaning is viewed as choice (Halliday, 1985a), and discourse proficiency results from the appropriation of such a system of choices and the means to materialize such choices. Discourse proficiency is the capacity to both read and write personal visions of the world, create and understand subjective positions, and enact personal sense through language (Carter, 1997, p. 74). Gaining discourse proficiency is especially important for literature learners because as one becomes more adept at constructing one’s voice, style, or signature, one becomes more proficient at “hearing” others’ voices as well. Therefore, in
discourse literacy or proficiency, grammar, semantics, and stylistics merge, and meaning orientation guides the choice of forms.

Thus, the development of discourse proficiency implies the appropriation of a type of systematic, meaningful, essential, abstract, generalizable (rather than reactive, contextual or empirical) knowledge that would allow the enactment of personal meaning or certain effects in multiple contexts. As seen in Chapter 4, this type of knowledge is conceptual/ theoretical/ scientific knowledge and is comprised of linguistic concepts, which, unlike rules of thumb, are based on meaning and the essential (rather than superficial) features of an object. Thus, concepts are at the root of creativity because concepts allow us to create new meanings in different contexts, that is, to recontextualize meaning-making tools (unlike rules of thumb, which are tied to a number of limited contexts). Therefore, learners who have developed linguistically would be able to use language creatively, artistically, or in literary ways in order to imprint the text with their subjective, personal vision of the world, making choices according to their personal sense within the utterance. Learners with discourse proficiency should be able to discuss linguistic resources in terms of choice and contemplate the effect of various options.

The notion of discourse proficiency relates to the dialectic relationship between the creative and the critical, and between reading and writing in literature-through-language pedagogy. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, meaning-making processes are involved in both composing and interpreting discourse. Rewriting literary texts with the purpose of creating specific effects and meanings externalizes composing-interpreting processes and tools and makes them amenable to appropriation, provided the necessary assistance within the students’ ZPD is available. As these composing-interpreting processes and tools (linguistic concepts) are available for appropriation in
the activity of transforming literary texts, they may become part of the learner’s meaning-making repertoire and be used in other texts.

Therefore, as development is defined as the person-acting-with-mediational means (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 157; Wertsch, 1998; Wertsch, 1995, p. 64) in the Sociocultural perspective, the development of discourse proficiency would involve students-engaging-in-language-activity-with-linguistic concepts. In the activity of appropriation of meaning-making processes and tools, learners gain agency –they are self-regulated and oriented by meaning and their own intentionality. As they control language for the expression and interpretation of personal meaning, linguistic forms become a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves. Because of the reorganization of the students’ functional system, agency and the creative-critical continuum, students should be able to articulate their own meanings, evaluate and edit their own writing, and develop their own criteria about texts. That is, they should not only be able to write their compositions creatively, but also they should be able to read them critically by offering and evaluating alternative choices.

6.1.1 Focus of analysis

In the present study, I investigate to what extent students are able to generalize composing-interpretative processes used in reconstruction activities with literary texts to their compositions. Of the many aspects dealt with in the course (utterances, punctuation, coherence, aspect, tense, figurative language, reported speech, etc.), I will focus on the recontextualization of knowledge about texts (genre, choice of genre, shared generic conventions, schematic structure, textual frames and other patterns such as repetition) and knowledge of aspect. The rationale behind focusing on aspect and
texts is that these two topics are the object of some of the most rigid rules of thumb in the conventional foreign-language curriculum.

Literary texts are usually postponed to the advanced or, at most, the intermediate levels. In the meantime, students in the typical intermediate writing course obtain an empirical depiction of what a text is through lists of rules describing formal academic texts (e.g. argumentations and expository texts). Just as with textual matters, aspect is traditionally explained in terms of the uses of preterit and imperfect according to rigid rules of thumb, instead of in terms of general, abstract, essential concepts. Parties involved usually argue on the grounds of tool-for-result reasoning that given the difficulty of conceptual explanations, students should depend on rules of thumb in order to produce less ‘deviant’ texts until they are advanced enough to understand theoretical concepts and literary texts. The following four chapters will address the issue of whether rules of thumb are a genuine aid in bridging the gap between lower and higher levels of instruction and whether rules can be connected with students’ everyday knowledge of language. The chapters will examine participants’ attitude to the change from rule-based, empirical instruction and formal academic essays to abstract concepts, meaning orientation and literary texts.

In addition, the rationale behind choosing participants’ compositions as the focus of analysis is related to one of the most typical complaints made by instructors in advanced level classes to the effect that students continue to make basic mistakes in papers and essays. It seems that students are unable to generalize the grammar that they have learned in previous courses to revise their compositions critically. (As seen in previous chapters, this usually translates into criticisms of the lower-level instructors, usually language instructors). As opposed to tool-for-result activity, in which tools are presented in a predetermined form (e.g. imperfect is for weather, description, or age),
conceptual learning aims at the creation of new meanings in different contexts. Therefore, one interesting aspect to examine is students’ creation of new meanings or creativity in contexts other than the reconstruction activities, that is, their writing assignments.

Furthermore, the internalization of meaning-making tools and processes in literature-through-language pedagogy also offers grounds to dissolve the dichotomous view between the “preparatory” language courses and literature courses in the traditional curriculum, as well as support the dialectics between reading as a form of creative (re)writing and writing as a form of critical reading, and also provide evidence of the connection between the critical and the creative. By demonstrating how students can learn about aspect in text-based pedagogy, as well as textual aspects, which are usually postponed until ‘the basics’ (i.e. grammar in the narrow sense) are learned, I try to demonstrate that both the textual dimension and ‘the basics’ can and should be taught at the same time as part of a synergetic whole.

Composing interviews, composition-learning logs, portfolio-learning logs and journal entries will be analyzed in order to shed light on the composing-editing processes involved in the study-course participants’ writing assignments, and on how language-learning history and new tools play a role in making meaning. These and other assignments will be described in greater detail in the section on data sources later in the present chapter.

In sum, for the purposes of the present dissertation, discourse proficiency is defined as the capacity to meaningfully, creatively, and critically construct a personal vision of the world through linguistic concepts. As students develop linguistically in this process of rewriting texts according to personal meanings, they may as well start to rewrite their own language learning histories, their views of language, language learning,
and the role of literature in foreign-language education. That means that “attitude”
towards language, language learning, and literature is a non-divisible part of
development, as will be explained in the next section.

6.2 Attitude

So complex is the human spirit that it can itself scarce discern the deep
springs which impel it to action.

(Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, The White Company)

Mainstream SLA characterizes attitude, i.e. the learner’s predisposition towards
the learning situation, as one of the so-called affective factors within the learner’s
‘external’ factors. These ‘external factors’ influence linguistic acquisition, which otherwise
follows a psychological path. No matter how influential these factors are in mainstream
SLA, they are still conceived of as independent phenomena exogenous to language
acquisition itself.

However, from a Sociocultural perspective, the human mind is neither an
“epistemological” nor a “psychological organ,” but a “psychosocial and cultural organ”
(Egan and Gajdamaschko, 2003, pp. 84-85). Tools that are internalized through activity
are both cultural and psychological because they are made available sociohistorically in
a specific cultural milieu, and their internalization affords both the appropriation of
cultural knowledge and the construction of certain forms of mentation. Therefore, people
are synergetic functional systems or people-acting-with-mediational-means with the
cultural symbiotically building upon the biological, from the outside inward, rising our
lower-order biologically equipped functions to high-order psychological functions.
Consequently, mediational means or symbolic tools do not only change the objects to
which they are directed in socially organized activity, but they also reconfigure the tool-user’s whole consciousness, thus molding the individual’s very reality (see Kozulin, 1998).

However, this is not a picture of human consciousness subjected to sociohistorical determinism. Individuals discursively and historically appropriate social means (that is, meanings and models such as concepts, scripts, schemas, narratives, rituals, and conceptual metaphors) in their culturally organized activity, but humans are agentive, meaning-making beings, who attach personal meaning or significance to events and to their own actions. Personal sense emerges when social meanings are interpreted in light of the individual’s personality features, history, etc., and directly relates to motivation and emotion, as the individual’s consciousness appears in the forms of interest, inclinations, passion, remorse, and boredom, which indicate the personal significance of the individual’s objective circumstances and actions in his/ her life (A. N. Leontiev, 1978). Therefore, because of their unique experiences within the social, individuals are predisposed towards particular perceptions, actions, and ways of reading the world and themselves, but they also exercise choice in expressing and presenting themselves in local activities and interactions, drawing on the resources available.

(Maybin, 2006a, p. 261)

As individual consciousness develops in this tension between social meaning and personal significance, personality or identity is forged and transformed. In this way, social meanings or concepts do not only articulate the ways in which cultures organize objects, people, events and behavior socially, but they also guide individuals’ motivations, perceptions, needs, memory, emotions, logical reasoning, and personality (Ratner, 1996, p. 422; see Chapter 4 this dissertation). If we apply this notion to second-
language development, L2 learning turns out to be “about much more than the acquisition of forms: it is about developing, or failing to develop, new ways of mediating ourselves and our relationships to others and to ourselves” (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001, p. 145). With meaning at the root of culture and identity, personalities and linguistic development need to be examined as intrinsically and dialectically related phenomena. If we are to understand the human mind and learners’ activity, it is essential “to bring meaning, sense, emotion, expressiveness and with these, culture and history, back into the picture in a central way” (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001, p. 144, drawing on Cole, 1996, and Danziger, 1990, 1997; see also Blanck, 1990, p. 37).

In the present study, the synergetic relationship between learners’ personalities and linguistic proficiency is manifest in manifold ways. To start with, the concept of discourse proficiency is clearly linked with the positioning of the self or the representation of individuals’ identities. Let’s remember that linguistic proficiency is defined as the capacity for constructing one’s own position and meaning in the world – as well as the ability to recognize others’ positions and meanings through the appropriation and transformation of socioculturally sanctioned linguistic means in the L2 (for example, language concepts). That is, discourse proficiency is about constructing and interpreting one’s own and others’ personal meaning, or, to put it differently, being able to (re)write the self and the self’s views of the world. Literature-through-language pedagogy places the accent on the affordance of L2 cultural resources for the development of learners’ own voices, styles, and tones. This is unlike mainstream foreign-language education, which, instead of fostering individuals’ creativity, personal meaning, and subjectivity, tends towards the neutralization of language, the reproduction of conventions, and the homogenization of students.
By virtue of the dialectical relationship between writing and reading, and between the creative and the critical, the synergism between learners’ identities and linguistic development is also manifest in processes of exegesis or the enactment of meaning in (literary) texts. Because of individual personalities (continuously in the process of being molded by experiences, the sociocultural affordances available in those experiences, and the personal significance or interpretations attached to them), learners are predisposed to read themselves, others, and the world in certain ways. Consequently, as learners interact with (literary) texts, cultures, identities and histories emerge in their awareness, selection, and interpretation of linguistic clues.

In addition, foreign-language experiences and practices contribute to create the learner’s *habitus*, which is “a set of socially and interactionally derived generative dispositions” produced by “participation in historical-cultural activity” (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 240, drawing on Bourdieu, 1979, 1984). The learner’s *habitus*, therefore, contributes to the formation of students’ learning personalities, their predispositions towards language, language learning, the significance of certain types of activity (such as reading literary texts), their motives, strategies, and agencies (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 239; Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001, p. 146; Gillette, 1994). As personal sense, goals, and agency are constructed through participation in activity, learners do not only have the option of engaging in institutional practices, but also of resisting them if they do not find them significant to their own personal motives and learning goals. Because of this, Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001), drawing on Taylor (1985), highlight the centrality of learners’ agencies as their capacity of actively engaging “in constructing the terms and conditions of their own learning” (p. 145).

The student that offers resistance to literary texts may not find them significant for communication and language learning as a result of his/her history as a language
learner in a dichotomous curriculum. Or s/he may enjoy literature in private but s/he may
dislike literature courses because they do not connect with their personal sense or their
everyday experiences of literature and other genres. Students may resist a literature-
through-language pedagogy that highlights language potential and creativity for fear of
losing the safety net of black-and-white principles, academic conventions, and rules of
thumb. Resistance is of extreme interest, because, unlike the ‘failure’ view, it does
justice to the agentive, sociocultural dimension of the human being by showing the
interaction, conflict, and contradiction between new mediational means, functional
systems, and language-learning histories. On the other hand, as agency is constructed
through participation in activity –and, therefore, intrinsically related to individuals’
histories and *habitus* - agency can also change and “transform in response to ongoing
and anticipated activity” (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 239), an issue that will be
examined in the next two chapters.

In conclusion, it is not possible to account for development through its breakdown
into parts. Development can only be studied when all the components involved in activity
are present. As participants succeed or fail to express their own meaning or develop
their own discourse in their L2, I will specifically explore changes in the view of language
(right-or-wrong view versus the meaningful view based on choice), literature (regarding
its significance to language learning) and language-learning behaviors (resistance,
preliminary orientation, conscious awareness of language, control, etc). Thus, in
Chapters 7, 8, 9 and 10 I will look at changes in the participants’ second-language-
learning personalities (i.e., learners’ senses, significance, motivations, goals, meanings,
emotions, orientation, agencies, attitudes or dispositions towards language, language
learning, etc.) as synergetic and vital components of the developmental process, and
therefore, of the proficiency picture.
The next section analyzes conventional and other research methods and methods of data analysis and explores which ones capture the synergy of the affective and attitudinal component into the developmental framework most appropriately.

6.3 Approaches to research and data analysis

Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted.

(Albert Einstein)

The Sociocultural view of empirical research defers from the model of mainstream SLA research, which usually draws on formal analytic procedures and is devised to contrast an experimental group against a control group in which a set of variables is manipulated. Groupings artificially construct homogeneity among participants in the same group and differences between control and experimental group participants (Newman and Holzman, 1996, p. 77; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 54). Participants become mere objects of the researcher’s activity in methods based on the natural sciences, since these methods “assume that subjects, like objects in the material world, lack motive and intentionality” (Roebuck, 2000, p. 83). Thus, participants (or rather, subjects in this research design) are assumed to be “homogeneous individuals engaged in the same activity (i.e. doing the same thing) in compliance with the wishes of the researchers” (Roebuck, 2000, p. 84).

However, research informed by Sociocultural Theory emphasizes that students may not necessarily be engaged in the same activity even if they are apparently performing the same task (see Vygotsky, 1978, p. 62; Coughlan and Duff, 1994; Roebuck, 1998, 2000; Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001; Lantolf and Yáñez, 2003; Lantolf and
Thorne, 2006, pp. 234-240). The above section hinted at the idea that learners’ past learning experiences and *habitus* predisposed them to engage in or disengage from certain types of activity according to the significance they attribute to such practices. Chapters 7 and 8 will examine more examples of how participants with diverse histories, goals, motives, may engage in different activities while performing the same task. For example, while instruction on word order was provided in the course, Juliet engaged in activities related to the topic at hand (such as writing different versions of a sentence with varying word orders and reflecting on the differences in meaning). She was largely concerned with the impact of word order on meaning in oral speech. This concern was connected with her impending visit to Spain and her new Spanish-speaking acquaintances. On the other hand, Darcy did not find word order significant and chose to focus on the vocabulary that was discussed while assembling Cortázar’s jumbled text. As Darcy’s comments in the portfolio reflect, he considered vocabulary, idiomatic expressions and figurative language essential for language learning. The student, who was perusing the idea of pursuing a government position in counter-terrorism, was also studying Arabic. The participant deemed adequate linguistic and cultural competence (which for him was extensive and in-depth knowledge of lexical repertoires with emphasis on cultural and contextual propriety) key for achieving a more effective understanding with other nations, especially those in the Middle East. These and other data related to Darcy will be analyzed in Chapters 7 and 8.

Juliet’s and Darcy’s differences with regard to word order is just a small example that illustrates how participants, rather than controllable laboratory objects, are complex, agentive beings with histories, personalities, motives, goals, and perceptions of language, language learning and activity, who attach significance to events and interpret them in light of their own personal circumstances. Lantolf and Pavlenko explain,
From our perspective on agency, we would argue that the motives are about the significance languages and language study have for the individuals in their lives as humans. Without such a perspective, the actions of all those involved in the behavior we call language learning in a given classroom are frequently assumed to be directed at the same goal—learning a language.

(2001, p. 146)

Therefore, Sociocultural Theory and hermeneutic approaches “challenge the assumption that individuals and their activity in tasks can be controlled” (Roebuck, 2000, p. 79).

From the Sociocultural perspective, people are unique, socially constructed beings, and, therefore, human activity is a complex process determined by the sociohistorical setting and by the goals and sociocultural history of the participants (Roebuck, 2000, p. 79; A. N. Leontiev, 1978).

The social and mediational nature of human activity leads us to a second criticism of conventional experimental laboratory research. Research inspired by the hard sciences makes claims on objectivity based on the researchers’ observant, insular, non-intruding position in data elicitation and collection procedures. Additionally, the allusion of the research participant as a “subject” “stresses the view that the participant is an “other” distinct from, and immune to, the mediating effects of the research process” (Smagorinsky, 1995b, p. 204). Smagorinsky (1995b) comments on the “purity metaphor” that seems to underlie the design of experimental laboratory research settings:

Researchers “intrude” through their media and procedures, or worse, they “contaminate” the data by introducing some foreign body into an otherwise sterile field. The assumption behind these metaphors of purity is that the researcher must not adulterate the social world in which the data exist, but rather must work in the manner of the biologist who observes the life in a petri dish without using instruments that might disrupt the self-contained, natural biological processes unfolding in that microsystem.

(Smagorinsky, 1995b, p. 191)
The assumption that the researcher should or even could play the sterile, non-participatory observer’s role in laboratory activity has been extensively criticized by researchers in the Sociocultural venue (Smagorinsky, 1995b; Newman and Holzman, 1996; Bruner, 2004; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006). In this regard, Bakhtin (1986) emphasizes the dialogic quality of intersubjectivity and intention-attribution processes, including research design and data elicitation, collection, and analysis:

The person who understands (including the researcher himself) becomes a participant in the dialogue, although on a special level (depending on the area of understanding or research)... The observer has no position outside the observed world, and his observation enters as a constituent part into the observed object.

This pertains fully to entire utterances and relations among them. They cannot be understood from outside. Understanding itself enters as a dialogic element in the dialogic system and somehow changes its entire sense.

(pp. 125-126, emphasis in original).

Additionally, the Sociocultural perspective, predicated on the ontological notion of the inherent social nature of all human activity, questions the ecological validity of research that is constructed on the premises that cognition can be segregated from the social and that laboratory procedures are neutral and aseptic. Research based on the premise of neutrality or “purity” of laboratory research would ignore the inherently mediational nature of training procedures, the social nature of the laboratory setting, and the cultural-historical dimension of the scientific constructs in the hard sciences (see Smagorinsky, 1995; Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, pp. 53-54, Rogoff and Lave, 1984). The researcher becomes a mediating factor even when s/he does not personally interact with the learner because intervention and assessment tools are non-neutral mediational means. They are “replete with cultural values, and thus represent cognition that is socially distributed” (Smagorinsky, 1995b, p. 201, drawing on Salomon, 1993).
Therefore, from a Sociocultural perspective, “data are social constructs developed through the relationship of researcher, research participants, research context (including its historical antecedents), and the means of data collection” (Smagorinsky, 1995b, p. 192)

In this dissertation, a historical or genetic method is advocated. Humans are meaning-making, tool-mediated, sociohistorical beings full of agency, which is constrained and enabled by their histories, emotions, motivations, goals, and personal significance. As “the method must be adequate to the subject studied” (Vygotsky, 1997, p. 27), the most adequate method for studying human development is one that deals with “real individuals” rather than with “idealized abstractions,” and that approaches its objects of study from an interpretative and historical standpoint (Lantolf and Pavlenko, 2001, p. 143). As mentioned above, “higher functions are historical in origin and in nature,” since “they develop from our participation in socioculturally organized activities and from our experiences with culturally constructed artifacts” (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 27). Therefore, the analysis of data must present a genetic or historical view of linguistic-tool formation (see Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Daniels, 1996, p. 58). Teachers / researchers need to understand the relationship among the mediational tools, their historical cultural uses within the learner’s community, their means of employment in the learning (and research) environment, the intersubjectivity between the learner’s understanding of the learning task and the evaluator’s (teacher’s or researcher’s) understanding of the task, and other factors that make up the interrelated social environment of learning.

(Smagorinsky, 1995b, p. 200)

Thus, the kind of genetic research advocated here turns its focus not on the fossilized products or objects of development, but on its genesis or the processes “by which higher forms are established” (Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 64-65). This is possible by
creating a situation which “provokes” a process of development and by acknowledging the social construction of mediational tools and the teacher/researcher’s implication in the process. Therefore, as Smagorinsky argues, valid research is inherently instructional (Smagorinsky, 1995b, p. 204). Finally, in accordance with Vygotsky’s experimental-developmental method, the researcher must ‘explain’ behavior genetically so that underlying dynamics can be revealed. In the following section, I will discuss how these principles specifically apply to the method of data analysis in the study course.

6.3.1 Method of data analysis

Participants engaged in authoring, composing-interpreting reconstruction activities with literary texts for which tools were provided in the form of conceptual explanations of language. The appropriation and internalization of this abstract, generalizable, meaning-based knowledge should allow the application of creative-critical, composing-interpreting operations to other contexts, for example, their writing assignments. Discourse proficiency in this study is therefore defined as the capacity of recontextualizing such meaning-based, creative-critical knowledge. In order to appraise to what extent students were able to recontextualize such knowledge, they were assigned three compositions throughout the course and the transformation of the first and second drafts: e.g. narrate from a future perspective, convert your story in an intradiegetic story, make your composition more creative and literary, etc. (see section 6.4.2). Then the participants had a composition interview during the week in which the second draft was due, received comments on the first and second drafts, and handed in a composition learning log a together with a final draft. In the composition interviews and logs, students were asked about the intention behind or the effect pursued with their
linguistic choices. They were asked about other possible choices, to contrast, compare, and evaluate all possibilities, and to account for their meaning and effect within the participant’s text. In the course of externalizing meaning-making, creative-critical processes, participants obtained assistance and remediation when necessary from T.

The composition interview and log, in addition to the portfolio logs, were designed to reveal the underlying dynamics in participants’ choices through creative-critical activity (editing, transforming and improving each successive draft). Along with the underlying motivation for choices, interviews, logs and portfolio entries disclosed participants’ orientation towards tasks, personal meaning (or lack thereof), the genesis and history of mediating tools within their specific curriculum setting, their view of language and literature, and the areas where more mediation was needed.

In sum, students’ manipulation of text and aspect will be analyzed not in their fossilized form (participants’ compositions as products), but in terms of the participants’ underlying dynamics revealed in the interviews, composition learning logs, and portfolio entries. The analysis will be genetic and interpretative and will focus on participants’ intentionality, agency, personal meaning, history, understanding of new tools within the curricular context, orientation to task, and view of language. Such analysis cannot separate linguistic proficiency from attitude towards language, language learning, and literature. To summarize the notion of development adopted in this dissertation, the table below (Table 6.1) presents the expected progression from participants’ traditional histories to a developmental telos.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Traditional foreign-language history</strong></th>
<th><strong>Development</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rules of thumb</td>
<td>Conceptual understanding (meaning, control, awareness, systematicity, and intentionality), creative-critical abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Reaction</em> to contextual cues</td>
<td>Meaningful, motivated <em>action</em> (even in contradiction to rules of thumb), intentionality, attention, awareness, control, agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language is neutral and describes</td>
<td>Language is intrinsically literary and shows perspective, subjectivity, personal sense; linguistic choices (instead of (only) propositional content) “tell” the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phenomena in objective terms; subjectivity is expressed through propositional content</td>
<td>Language poses limitations (right-versus-wrong view of language). Proficiency is about “correctness” in the strict sense. Some elements of language (punctuation, aspect, text frames) are dispensable, accessory, synonymous, for advanced students. They do not alter meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students make grammatical choices in the context of the sentence</td>
<td>Students make grammatical choices in the context of the whole text and according to the discourse that they want to enact.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6.1**: From conventional learners’ foreign-language histories to a developmental telos.
In the above sections, I referred to a number of assignments, such as compositions, composition logs, literary interviews, portfolio entries, etc. In the following sections, I will describe the course within the curricular sequence and the assignments that will serve as sources of data in greater detail.

6.4 The courses and data sources

Spanish 300W, the study course, is the first advanced course in the language sequence, and it is a requirement for all majors. According to an analysis of several syllabi, instructors teaching Spanish 300W, depending on their field, typically introduce either linguistic topics or literary texts in the traditional fashion with writing, literature, reading, and linguistics, following independent agendas. An advanced course was chosen because research on pedagogy is mostly focused on the beginning levels, and, by the advanced levels, pedagogy is typically abandoned as students are expected to be grammatically ‘prepared’ for content courses (however, recall exceptional language programs and research mentioned in Chapter 1).

Classes started on (1/13). On that day, students completed the ‘diagnostic exam,’ developed by T. It consisted of a questionnaire constructed by T in which students had to indicate the Spanish courses taken previously (at both the Pennsylvania State University and other institutions, including in secondary, middle or elementary school), their native language(s), and their knowledge of other foreign language(s). In addition, students had to write a composition to answer seven questions about their histories as language learners of Spanish (see Appendix T).
On the very same day, it was announced for the first time that that section of Spanish 300W (the study course) was an experimental section. The Pennsylvania State University Office for Research Protections protocol for research studies was applied. Out of eighteen students, one dropped the course, three decided not to participate, and none withdrew from the study after signing the consent form. Out of the fourteen students that volunteered to participate in the research study, one (Swann) has been left out of the analysis because of lack of completion of all course assignments, yielding a total of thirteen participants to be reported on here (see pseudonyms in Chapter 4).

Throughout the course students were required to write three compositions, construct a portfolio, and have three composition interviews and three literary interviews with T. A follow-up (see addendum to the previous consent form in Appendix V) was planned for the following semester. Though only three students (Juliet, Emma and Lara) participated, these interviews were also included in the data pool.

### 6.4.1 The portfolio

The students were told that their portfolios should be similar to a personalized textbook to be used in other courses. The purpose of having the students write a portfolio was manifold. The portfolio was intended as an artifact in which students could construct their personal diagrams, schematic representations, outlines or study guides for concepts. It was a tool for externalizing the students’ beliefs about language (i.e. their histories), problems, and conflicts, to evaluate their own progress, and to reflect on language and literature. The portfolio consisted of several entries: two logs (one daily and another weekly), a word bank, two glossaries (the metalinguistic and the literary glossaries), commentaries (posts from the web forum), and follow-ups (reflections on
activities that needed to be revised). For the present research purposes, only the daily and weekly logs have been used as sources of data.

The daily learning log (henceforth referenced as Daily Log) was an entry in which students had to explain in their own words the various topics covered in the course in such a way that they would be useful in future courses. Participants were encouraged to make these explanations different from the class diagrams and notes. Handwritten copies of handouts or textbooks were discouraged. Learning logs needed to be “complete,” “organized, user-friendly, context-independent, systematic, well-structured sheets / outlines / study guides containing the information of the (grammatical) points seen in class every day” (syllabus, p. 1, see Appendix E). In addition to this explanation, students had to provide examples, indicate what activities in class were related to the point at hand, write questions or include any other type of reaction to the class contents.

The personal logs or journal entries (henceforth referenced as Weekly Journal) were submitted weekly and were divided into two sections. In the first section, the students wrote about their personal experiences in general, as in a diary or personal journal. In the second section, students had to reflect about their learning processes, about the course itself and about previous Spanish classes where relevant.

In addition, participants were also required to write a composition log (LOG), in which students commented on issues such as the changes from draft to draft, what made their compositions more or less creative, what they had learned in the process of writing, etc. In the next section all composition assignments are described in greater detail.
6.4.2 Compositions, composition interviews and composition logs

There were three compositions in the course, each with a minimum of three drafts and a reflection log. Students were generally able to choose the genre of each composition, but occasionally T would suggest a different genre if students were only writing formal academic texts and not exploring different genres.

Students initially received very succinct comments on their drafts. T provided further assistance, if required, in the compositions interviews. Following the procedure in Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) and Lantolf and Aljaafreh (1995) for working within the students’ ZPD, mediation initially implicit and become increasingly explicit in accordance with students’ responsiveness to the mediation. For example, the type of error was indicated next to each line on the first draft, but students were not told what specific part of speech contained that error. During the interview, they were also asked to find the mistakes and correct them. If students failed to detect the error, they were told to carry out specific operations, or they were offered hints or self-editing tools. For instance, students were asked to read the text backwards to focus on spelling of words, or to draw arrows from the word that governed gender, number or case to the clitics, determiners, adjectives, verbs, etc. that had to agree with that word. They were asked to use symbols to draw the internal and external cohesion of their compositions. Students were asked to alter the order of sentences or to remove parts of their composition (such as subject pronouns or an introduction) and contrast both versions. They were instructed in how to use corpora to consult collocations; they were asked to consider the effect of the same verbs with different aspect, tense, voice, etc. They were also asked to find propositions in their compositions that were the result of the literal translation of L1 everyday metaphors. If students failed to edit and improve their compositions, the specific
problematic item was underlined. Students were asked to further improve their
composition in draft 3. Corrections, alternatives, and more comments were provided by
T on the third draft.

The composition log, as mentioned above, was a reflection on the writing
process. It contained questions about the changes made throughout the three drafts, the
genre and structure of text, the ways in which the text could be more creative and
expressive, and the problems that still needed to be addressed. When an issue had not
been discussed during the composition interview or an office hour, T drew an arrow
signaling that the student had to comment on that item in their log. Students also
received feedback in the margins of their texts such as “comment on the choice of
aspect in this paragraph.” In addition, students had to reflect on something that they had
learned during their composing process, and they had to create a study guide for one
persisting problem.

The topics and transformation of each composition were the following:
Composition 1 draft 1 was a conventional description or narration to describe the self:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELF-PORTRAIT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write an autobiographical piece, whether a description or a narration of an event that represents your essential self. This can be about your entire lifeline or about a particular event or circumstance that perfectly symbolizes your personality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though probably one of the most conventional topics in foreign-language writing, this
topic was assigned because it was personal, connected to their identity, and was
potentially significant to the student. For the second draft, however, students were asked
to do something less conventional. They had to describe or narrate in such an interesting way as to make themselves appear as a fictional or literary character. To that effect, they were asked to be more creative, original, and literary. With this assignment, students had to explore what being ‘literary’ meant, and participants’ underlying ideas about creativity, originality, and literariness were disclosed. In addition, their ability to make a clichéd topic original was put to the test.

Additionally, participants were asked to adopt narrative distance from the narrated object by converting their first-person descriptions or narrations into the narrations and descriptions of a third-person fictional character in a literary fashion. The transformation from first into third person was meant to disclose whether students also manipulated narrator’s voice, perspective, third-person omniscience-limitation, etc. accordingly, or if they were only concerned about the formal aspect of this transformation — that is, the mechanical unmotivated change of personal markers and clitics. In addition, if students had written in the present, then they had to rewrite their narration or description in the past. This was because some students had written in the present in order to avoid the preterit/imperfect dilemma, not because present was more meaningful than past tense for their purposes. This was an opportunity to deal with the topic of aspect in a different way.

In their second composition, students had the following scenario:
THE TIME MACHINE

Imagine that you can get in a time machine and travel back to the past to change a historical or personal event. What would you change? Write a narrative about your trip to the past and how you changed history. Then narrate how the future of the world changed from that point on.

In the second draft, students had to recast the story of travel in time into an intradiegetic narration within another story. To be more explicit, the protagonist of the trip is back from his/her enterprise and narrates his/her adventure to another character during a strange situation / encounter. The students had the choice of taking the narrative perspective of the time traveler, the listener, an omniscient perspective, etc. In order to accomplish this, the students were advised to think carefully about how much information they would be able to provide from the perspective to be adopted, the attitude of the speaker and the listener with respect to the other interlocutor, etc.

This topic had the potential of becoming a playing field for the manipulation of (temporal) perspective, the treatment of time in narrative, the expression of subjectivity, and the representation of speech and thought. The topic was chosen to tap into students’ fantasies and ideals and to allow for more personal, subjective, and expressive writing.

For the third composition, students were assigned the following topic after a discussion on how language constructs subjectivity:
EXTREME EXPERIENCE

Think of an extreme feeling that you have had in your life. It can be the most wonderful/horrible/joyful/miserable/funny/embarrassing… thing that has ever happened to you. It could have been a period of your life, a day, a couple of weeks, years, or just seconds. Use linguistic choices as psychological symbols to construct your view of time and the intensity of that experience. In other words, you cannot just explicitly say, “It felt like an eternity,” “It was a very chaotic moment” … Instead, use language to make your reader experience your mental world (the length and pass of time, the intensity of your feelings, the suspense, the chaos, etc) through your narrative.

For the second draft, the participants were assigned to insert a different genre or register in their composition. They also had to improve the story by telling even more of the story through grammatical choices than through the propositional content. Learners had to try to improve their composition so that the event was even more momentous and intense, the time even longer or shorter… etc. The overall composition had to be original, engaging, creative, and literary.

6.4.3 The literary interviews

In addition to the texts that were rewritten and transformed collaboratively in class, students were assigned three literary texts throughout the course to read at home and comment on in the instructor’s office. T first initiated a ‘casual’ conversation with the student about the semester. Then, T asked the students about interpretations of the literary text at hand and required them to provide linguistic evidence to justify their
interpretations. Other possible readings were also offered by T, and the participant was asked to offer an opinion about them and connect them with the language of the text. Finally, participants were asked to analyze specific linguistic features of the literary text, such as the possible meanings of literary figures, the most predominant type of utterance in the literary text and its structure, the use of repetition and other patterns, etc.

Although these reading interviews were compulsory for everybody, the quality of students’ performance did not affect their grades. T presented these interviews as an opportunity for the students to converse in Spanish and for the instructor to evaluate how students could be further assisted. In this way, students were free to express their real feelings about texts and their problems with interpreting them. None of the thirteen participants missed the literary interviews.

The three texts chosen for the literary interviews were: “Monólogo del amor que no quiere amar” (Ignacio Anzoátegui), “A imagen y semejanza” (Mario Benedetti), and “Donde habite el olvido” (Luis Cernuda). The criteria of selection of these texts were based on the exploitation of language. There was a manipulation of some of the linguistic concepts featured in the course. These texts also contradicted the students’ previous language histories for violating the main principles of traditional foreign-language standards: incomplete and choppy sentences, polysyndeton, repetition of propositions and structures, etc. Unlike the texts used for the reconstruction activities in class, the three texts used in the literary interviews were not previously manipulated by T as the purpose was to assess the students’ capacity to recontextualize composing-interpreting operations autonomously, as in traditional literature classes. Therefore, the interview followed the conventional analysis/commentary questions.
The text used for the first literary interview, “*Monólogo del amor que no quiere amar*” [Soliloquy of the love that doesn’t want to love], plays with subordinated clauses. The poem starts with four lines, which are four infinitive clauses joined by coordination. There is parallelism among the clauses and repetition of the same words, sometimes in chiasmus, creating a sense of conflicting, recurring feelings about the simultaneous desire and fear of loving. Then, the first stanza of the poem finishes with a full stop. The polysyndeton, the mirroring of oxymoronic pairs of actions, and the final position of the main clause (at the end of the second stanza) contribute to represent the narrator’s ambivalent thinking about love.

The text used for the second literary interview, significantly entitled “*A imagen y semejanza*” [In His own Image]⁴², is about an ant that lags behind its group when trying to collect and carry a little portion of sugar (which the ant eventually has to abandon) and then a little wood splinter. The ant’s hardships are depicted with an accumulation of movement verbs describing actions broken down into multiple, microscopic, intricate, painstaking, effortful, atomistic operations mainly portrayed in the encapsulating perspective of the preterit. Minimal subordination, relatively short sentences, and periods where semicolons could have been used put the reader into the frantic ant’s perspective and contribute to, literally, making a mountain out of an ‘anthill’ from the human point of view… until a human thumb appears and puts an end to the ant’s life in two verbs, in just one line.

The text used for the third literary interview, “*Donde habite el olvido*” [Wherever oblivion inhabits], exhibits manipulation of subordination and figurative language. Cernuda’s poem presents one of the most typical themes in the author’s poetry: the

---

⁴² “God created man in his own image. In God’s image he created him; male and female he created them.” (Genesis, 1:27).
clash between thwarting reality and desire at a stage in which it still has the lingering, obsessive quality of limerence and infatuation. The line “allí donde termine este afán que exige un dueño a imagen suya” [“there, wherever this yearning that demands a master in his own image ceases”] seems to point Cernuda’s suppression of his homosexual desire as a source of great distress. This happens in the Spain of the first third of the 20th century, a time in which homosexuality is persecuted and punished with imprisonment. The sinister imagery describing the place to which Cernuda refers makes us suspect that he wants to put a drastic and dramatic end to his existential frustration.

In addition to the figurative language, which is suggestive of a burial ground, one of the most striking aspects of the poem is the fact that the whole text is an adverbial of place. The work starts with what seems to be an adverbial finite clause, “donde habite el olvido” [wherever oblivion inhabits], subordinated to a clause that is yet to come. But beyond this adverbial, the poem grows paratactically, not syntagmatically. The rest of the poem is a paraphrase, an asyndetic expansion of the same idea expressed by other subordinated adverbial finite clauses (“donde yo sólo sea memoria de una piedra”), prepositional phrases (“en los vastos jardines sin aurora”), and adverbs (“allí”).

All these adverbials point to a place devoid of feeling and remembrance, which is the circumstance of an action that is never expressed through the predicate of a main clause. All that the reader is left with is an adverbial that insists on the deadening quality of this place. With no event, process, or activity, there is no chance for expressing further experience, feeling, tense, aspect, modality, participation, and quality (for example, “wherever oblivion inhabits…” I will stop aching / my burning passion is doomed to be dissolved “in the vast gardens without a dawn” / I will be feeling so much relief “there, wherever this yearning ceases”). This poem then becomes an inert circumstance, a lifeless place, a grammatical tombstone in which all of Cernuda’s past
flesh epiphanies and present afflictions are buried to become "no more than just names" (no longer vivid experiences).

No assistance was provided to the participants for making meaning of the literary texts during the literary interviews. Students recontextualized isolated aspects in the texts (for example, some participants were able to explain the use of aspect in the second text, Benedetti’s *A imagen y semejanza*). However, as multifaceted aspects of language were involved in these works, and the texts were outside the students' ZPD, the participants’ histories appeared to bridge the gap. For example, students resorted to propositional content to explain the texts, included events that were not in the works, interpreted the works according to their personal ideology (e.g. most participants interpreted *A imagen y semejanza* in light of their religious beliefs, but were reticent to contemplate the story from an existentialist perspective), and applied previously learned grammatical rules of thumb. These interviews helped participants externalize rules of thumb and strict conventional template-like descriptions of texts. Therefore, parts of literary interviews will be used to describe participants’ traditional language-learning histories in greater detail.

### 6.5 Abbreviations

The following are the abbreviations used for transcription of the interviews:

- Portfolio: P
- Composition 1 (self-portrait) Interview: C1
- Composition 2 (the time machine) Interview: C2
- Composition 3 (extreme experience) Interview: C3
- Composition 1 learning log: LOG1
Composition 2 learning log: **LOG2**

Composition 3 learning log: **LOG3**

Literary 1 Interview (*Monólogo del amor que no quiere amar* by Anzoátegui): **LT1**

Literary 2 Interview (*A imagen y semejanza* by Benedetti): **LT2**

Literary 3 Interview (*Donde habite el olvido* by Cernuda): **LT3**

…: unfinished utterance due to false start, pause or interruption.

Bold in transcriptions is my emphasis, and underline is the participant’s emphasis or T’s emphasis in interview extracts. Refer to Chapter 4 to find the list of participants’ pseudonyms. The study course instructor’s pseudonym will continue to be T.

Chapters 7 and 8 will analyze and discuss participants’ notions of text from a historical perspective, while Chapter 9 will focus on aspect. The analysis will center on composition interviews, composition logs, literary interviews, and portfolio logs to reveal the participants’ underlying dynamics in the recontextualization of linguistic means from reconstructing activities with literary texts to their own compositions. Due to the synergetic relationship between linguistic data and data related to students’ histories, personalities, view of language, language learning, and literature, attitude data will not be separated from linguistic data as both of them are integrated in the notion of development adopted in this dissertation. Nevertheless, a section offering a more specific analysis of participants’ attitude towards literature-through-language pedagogy, language learning, literature, and content courses will be presented in Chapter 10.
Just as modern mass production requires the standardization of commodities, so the social process requires standardization of man, and this standardization is called equality.

(Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, ch. 2)

In traditional language learning, the usual grammatical unit is the “complete” sentence, which the conventional foreign-language student is expected to learn to construct from the beginning levels. Other utterances, such as words, phrases, and non-main clauses are construed as “incomplete sentences” in mainstream writing standards. Through writing criteria based on these conventional standards, the notions of grammar are then enforced on students, who are penalized for using utterances other than ‘complete’ sentences in their compositions. In this way, by taking the complete sentence as the grammatical unit of instruction, form is made to prevail over meaning (for which the utterance would be a more appropriate unit), and ‘correctness’ (in the traditional sense) is privileged over creativity.

By the intermediate phases of the curriculum, in writing courses, students are typically taught how to produce particular text types such as expositions, argumentations, formal essays, etc. according to strict lists of rules and rigid textual templates. The concept of utterance is not taught even at the level in which students are expected to produce written and oral texts. Students learn about the notion of text (one of the instatiations of utterance) empirically, usually with subsequent overgeneralizations of the non-core features of a narrow scope of texts, which also impacts the notions of communication, writing, and literature.
The issue to be examined in the present chapter is intentionally and inevitably broad due to the range of beliefs about texts that students typically form over years of mainstream (foreign) language instruction. The examination of the notion of text includes topics such as choice of genre, shared generic conventions, textual frames, schematic structure, repetition, and beliefs about (written) communication and literature. The instructional focus was primarily on narrativity, because of its centrality for both literary and non-literary genres, including genres for education, and for both primary and secondary discourses (Byrnes, 2008, p. 12).

As the complete sentence is considered as a prerequisite for text production in conventional writing standards, I will first analyze whether the notion of the ‘complete’ sentence that was provided to participants in previous courses was of any help to understand texts. Secondly, I will analyze the limited notion of text that participants derived empirically from traditional formal foreign-language instruction. Finally, I will examine how conventional notions of text were put to use by students when they interpreted (literary) texts.

7.1 ‘(In)complete sentences’ and literary texts

The danger of the past was that men became slaves. The danger of the future is that men may become robots.

(Erich Fromm, The Sane Society, ch. 9)

The idea that texts are composed of ‘complete sentences’ was so deeply ingrained in the students that they resisted definitions of utterance and multiple examples of written texts and everyday conversations showing that we do not communicate in ‘complete’ sentences all the time. Darcy misinterpreted the lesson on
utterance and commented, “Un texto ahora entiendo representa un idea, una significación que comunica algo esta ordenado en frases completas” [A text now I understand represents an idea, a signification that communicates something that is ordered in complete sentences], and “The complete sentence is something crucial to all languages” (Darcy, P, Daily Log, January 20).

Occasionally, students had the feeling that writing in a foreign language was more than writing correct sentences, but the mainstream curriculum, with its emphasis on ‘accuracy’ in the traditional sense of the word, had not taught or allowed learners to move beyond rules and strict writing conventions. Alice’s comment below followed a question concerning mistakes, grades, and creativity:

(1) Alice, C1

ALICE: I’m uninspired to use metaphors in Spanish cause I don’t know… I know a lot of them can’t translate into Spanish. Should I try to create them?

T: In traditional assessment, we are so scared of mistakes that we don’t try to move forward....

ALICE: That’s … that’s really true cause I’m skeptical if there’s anything more than, you know, basic sentences. Not basic, but nothing like literary cause I don’t know if it’s right or not.

As learners are instructed in different types of subordinated clauses, intermediate and advanced learners are expected to ‘apply’ that knowledge to writing assignments by combining simple clauses into complex subordinated structures. Thus, “choppy, short sentences” become signs of poor expression, not typical of the advanced student, while juxtaposed, subordinated, non-finite structures are conceived of as more complex, writerly and formal than simple, coordinated, or juxtaposed finite clauses.
Below, Ulysses experiences a conflict between his personal meaning and the image of the advanced writer depicted by conventional grading criteria and standards. The participant is describing his chaotic efforts to pass a math exam at school after he nearly failed the previous test:

(2) Ulysses, C1

T: Una pregunta. Veo que aquí repites “yo no quise abandonar, yo trabajé más duro, yo no quise suspender, yo tuve mi orgullo….” ¿Hay alguna razón por la que utilices “yo”? [One question. I see that here you repeat “I didn’t want to give up, I worked harder, I didn’t want to fail, I had my pride.” Is there a reason why you use “I”? [The reader will recall that Spanish is a pro-drop language]].

ULYSSES: Eh… no hay una razón, pero yo hablo sobre mí y … ¿no necesito “yo”? [Eh… there’s no reason, but I speak about myself and … don’t I need “I”?]  

T: Si eliminás “yo”… Vamos a quitar “yo” y ver. Dice: “mi nota fue más bajo que merecí, pero no quise abandonar la lucha… trabajé más duro… no quise suspender porque yo tuve orgullo”… [If you eliminate “I” … Let’s eliminate “I” and see. It reads: [passage is read without explicit subject pronoun]

ULYSSES: Puedo caminar [sic combinar] oraciones ... [I can *walk [sic combine] sentences…]  

T: Puedes ¿cómo? [You can what?]  

ULYSSES: Caminar? ... no caminar... ["Walk?, not *walk]  

T: ...Combine?  

ULYSSES: Sí. [Yes]  

T: ¿Combinar oraciones? [Combine sentences?]  

ULYSSES: Sí. [Yes]  

T: Sí. And why do you think that you need to combine sentences?
ULYSSES: *Porque tengo oraciones corto... corta.* [Because I have short-masculine ... short-feminine sentences]

In foreign-language learning, we tend to assume that students write short, choppy sentences for lack of linguistic proficiency, which may be true in some cases. However, short, simple sentences may also be actually intentional and with the purpose of creating a certain effect. Students who have internalized conventional standards, grading criteria, and rules of thumb may shy away from experimentation inspired by their natural talent or their everyday knowledge of language for this reason. T further questioned Ulysses about the rationale behind these ‘short, choppy, repetitious structures’ – in traditional assessing parlance:

(3) Ulysses, C1

T: What is the effect of these short sentences? Do you think that they may have an effect that may suit your purpose? Or maybe you need longer sentences to fit your purpose?

ULYSSES: If I have short sentences, kind of like ‘this is this short, this is this short, I did this, I did this, I did this’... But at the same time I can convey that it was over a semester it helps to make it sound like blah-blah-blah-blah-blah-blah...[tapping fast on the desk]. Or I can stretch it longer...

T: ...to make it really slow?

ULYSSES: Yeah.

Ulysses was aware that he could imprint a busy, or, on the contrary, a slow-paced rhythm into this fragment of his narration by manipulating the length and the number of sentences. He wanted to convey a feeling of proactiveness as a response to his initial problems with the math course. Short, juxtaposed, simple sentences were used meaningfully for the appropriate purpose, and that made them ‘correct.’ However,
Ulysses’ internalization of conventional writing guidelines and standards that categorize these “choppy” sentences as a simple, narrow range of structures, typical of a non-advanced student, overruled his personal meaning in the interview setting with T.

Not only may strict rules of thumb override, rather than enhance, students’ creativity, but also they are also difficult to apply to contexts other than textbook exercises. Despite the fact that students in the literature-through-language course (henceforth referenced as the LTL course) had ample experience with the sentence and that they had been taught about subordinated clauses in the intermediate level, they had tremendous difficulties applying such knowledge in putting the fragments of the Cortázar story together. All students in the class reported in their learning logs and weekly journals how extremely difficult the Cortázar activity was. The fragmentation of Cortázar’s text and the students’ active position disclosed gaps that were attended with theoretical knowledge and diagrams on the formation of different utterances (texts, clauses, phrases), cohesion, punctuation, word order, etc. Below is just one of the many comments with respect to the difficulty of this activity that we will see in other sections of this chapter:

(4) Emma, P, Daily Log, February 10

Today we just worked on putting together the fragments in group 4 to continue the story. It was pretty difficult to put different phrases together, especially since there are only a few conjugated verbs and very long sentences. Once we started discussing it as a class and looking at the lineal articulation, as well as which phrases could stand on their own and which were subordinated, it became a little more clear.

Emma had difficulty in understanding the relationship among propositions in long sentences, and in distinguishing phrases from clauses, and potential main clauses from
subordinated ones. We often assume learners will be able to understand a story because it is short and the vocabulary is not complicated (such as Cortázar’s one-page *Continuidad de los parques*), without considering how far from their ZPD the relationship among the different propositions in a text may be:

**5) Ulysses, P, Daily Log, February 10**

*La reconstrucción del cuento* [The reconstruction of the story]

*Hoy clase fue muy difícil. No pude comprender y reconstruir el cuento. Yo tuve ideas pero las no estuvieron en fila con las de la clase.* [Today the class was very difficult. I couldn’t understand and reconstruct the story. I had ideas but they were not in line with those of the class].

There was a sentence that I do understand now but is very complex:

_Ej. Gozaba del placer perverso de irse desgajando de lo que lo rodeaba, sentir que su cabeza descansaba en el terciopelo del alto respaldo, que los cigarrillos seguían al alcance de la mano, que danzaba el aire del atardecer bajo los robles más allá de los ventanales._

[He enjoyed the perverse pleasure of unwinding from what surrounded him, of feeling that his head was resting on the velvet of the high chair back, that the cigarettes remained within reach, that the dawn breeze danced underneath the oaks beyond the bay windows]

I see the flow but I did not really understand the meaning
The graphic analysis of the complex sentence above was also mimetic with the idea of “irse desgajando,” which means something like “getting more and more detached (from what surrounded him).” Propositions seem to structurally dematerialize away from the earthly anchor of the main verb into the unraveling impressions in the subordinated clauses, until all sense of real activity on the character’s part disintegrates. By the end of the sentence, the reader, lost in the character’s impressions and train of thought, may even forget what the sentence initially was about.

The idea that the ‘complete sentence’ was the unit of communication affected the interpretation of other literary works, for example, Anzoátegui’s poem (LT1). Students were unable to make sense of a set of propositions that were not ‘complete sentences.’ Recall that the first stanza in “Monólogo del amor que no quiere amar” is composed of infinitive clauses and ends with a period. The second stanza starts with two coordinated infinitive clauses, and, by the third line, we find a main clause. All these infinitive clauses
in the first stanza and the second stanza can be interpreted as the subject of this main clause. Given the period at the end of the second stanza, the first group of nominal clauses can also be interpreted as utterances representing each of the poet’s conflicted, recurring musings and, therefore, as complete ideas in themselves.

Far from enacting meaning from the pattern of language, students were extremely confused by it. Scheherazade’s confusion was due to the fact that only three verbs were inflected. Dulcinea commented that the poem was confusing, complicated, and that she had not even realized that there was not a main clause in the first stanza until T invited her to find one. Lara commented that the poem was very confusing because of the amount of infinitives and prepositions. The instructor asked the students what type of utterance or utterances appeared in the first stanza:

(6) Lara, LT1

LARA: Creo que es una oración independiente porque en la … ¿poetry? Or… [I think it’s an independent sentence because in … poetry? or…]

T: En la poesía [in poetry]

LARA:… poesía, en la poesía no hay una … ¿las reglas? […] poetry, in poetry there’s no … rules?]

T: Reglas [rules]

LARA:…reglas exactamente para la poesía. Muchos autores usan gramática y estructura y palabras y puntuaciones diferentes en la poesía para hacer un efecto por eso yo creo que esto es una oración completa porque it ¿conveys …? […] exact rules for poetry. Many authors use different grammar and structure and words and punctuations from those in poetry to make an effect and because of that I think that this is a complete sentence because it … conveys?

T: Comunica… [Conveys...]
In this excerpt, we can see how Lara’s learning history interferes with the interpretation of the poem since she does not even recognize one of the poet’s strategies to mimetically construct his obsessive worry. Paradoxically, despite Lara’s experience with the ‘complete’ sentence in the traditional curriculum, she is unable to recognize the lack of such a structure in the first stanza. This is probably due to the fact that a scientific explanation of sentence was never provided in the past, and that the student at that point did not master the systematic explanation of utterance and its instatiations taught in the course. In addition, Lara seemed to infer that we communicate in ‘complete’ sentences, and that exceptions can only take place in a poem, a type of text that falls in the anarchic zone in which literature is typically placed. The idea that literary texts do not follow the same “rules” as non-literary ones was pervasive. Below is Ulysses’ response to the same question:

(7) Ulysses, LT1

ULYSSES: Hay una oración completa. [There’s a complete sentence]

T: La idea es completa pero por ejemplo en clase vimos que una oración principal, una oración independiente, tiene un verbo conjugado. Puede tener un sujeto, objetos, también puede tener un complemento circunstancial… Crees que … Esto es una idea completa, estoy… [The idea is complete but for example in class we saw that a main clause, an independent clause, has a conjugated
verb. It may have a subject, objects, also an adverbial… Do you think that …
This is a complete idea, l…]

ULYSSES: Sí [yeah]

T: … de acuerdo, ¿pero es una oración? […] agree, but is it a sentence?]

ULYSSES: Poesía y el poema, poesía es diferente del texto –no quiero hablar simple, pero … Y la idea que hay sujetos y verbos, yo no sé sobre objeto directo [Poetry and the poem, poetry is different from text –I don’t want to sound simple, but … And the idea that there are subjects and verbs, I don’t know about direct objects]

Ulysses’ words seem to imply that poems are so different from other communicative manifestations that they cannot even be classified as “texts.” The participant seems to have problems with recognizing that we communicate in utterances and not in ‘complete’ sentences. This compels him to look at the poem as an exception typical of literary extravagance.

As students did not recognize the main linguistic strategies in Anzoátegui’s poem, they resorted to the propositional content to interpret the work (that is, only to the lexical content of propositions, for example, the explicit title, the word “miedo” [“fear”], and lines such as “este miedo de amarte sin quererte” [“this fear of loving you without loving/ wanting you”]. Thus, students talked about the fear of loving, the fear of rejection, the fear of commitment, etc., and occasionally completed their interpretation with their own beliefs, and even with facts and events that were not in the poem and could not be supported with the use of language. For example, Darcy commented that the poem’s intricate way of expressing love was typical of a woman’s way of speaking about her feelings. Dorothea talked of friends telling the poet to stop loving a person who could not love him back. In general, except for Ophelia, students failed to construct an
interpretation based on how language (lexicon, grammar, culture, and text in a synergetic relationship) mimetically recreated the poet’s contradictory cycle of love and fear. Students constructed their interpretation of the poem despite how “confusing” it was, that is, despite the way lexicogrammar was creatively deployed precisely to evoke meaning.

In the next section, I will examine participants’ notions of texts resulting from traditional sentence-based instruction, and how those notions affected the construction and interpretation of texts.

7.2 Last and least: texts in the traditional foreign-language curriculum

It usually takes more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.

(Mark Twain)

Though short compositions may be assigned in the lower levels, the focus is typically on oral skills, grammatical accuracy and the practice of grammatical structures and vocabulary. After students are taught how to create sentences, they are expected to produce texts of various difficulties in the intermediate and advanced levels. The typical relegation of text to the intermediate and advanced phases of the curriculum seems to imply that all matters related to text are as dispensable for effective communication; just embellishments and flourishes, at best, for the advanced student. Ernest’s comment below on the Cortázar activity captures this idea. The student is reflecting on the work in class with the concepts of utterance and text, word order, sentence structure, etc.:

(8) Ernest, P, Weekly Journal, Week 2, January 20-22
The implications of this are a little intimidating because of the amount of planning that I need to put into my writing. In English the knowledge seems inherent but in Spanish I really need to focus on how the order changes meaning. It seems a bit overwhelming because I’m still a little unsure of the basics so it’s very difficult to try to manage both the basics and this high order way of thinking about writing.

Ernest captures the traditional separation between “the basics” (i.e. rules of thumb about prepositions, verb conjugations, etc.) and texts throughout the whole curriculum. Traditionally, even when texts finally become the focus of the curriculum, there is still a considerable disjunction between texts and grammar as they are conventionally understood. Grammatical decisions are still taken based on contextual clues (not on overall meaning and purpose) that typically occur at sentence level, not within texts.

The conventional view of textual aspects as dispensable for communication has also been propagated by a traditional emphasis on the so-called oral skills in the beginning phases of the curriculum. Despite contemporary emphasis on literacy and calls for the integration of the so-called ‘language skills’, documents as consequential as the National Standards still associate the interpersonal meaning dimension “primarily with oral dialogic language, the interpretive with reading and listening, and the presentational with monologic language use, oral or written” (Byrnes, 2008, p. 107). According to Byrnes (ibid.), these associations fail to represent the interpersonal, interpretative and dialogic qualities underlying all language use. Thus,

Reading and writing, central for a schooled environment even in a second language, are not seen as an important context for enabling learners to develop literate language use and, along with speaking, an identity as a competent non-native user of the language.

(Byrnes, 2008, p. 107)
As a result of the implementation of such notions of language, writing becomes secondary to conversation and vocabulary in the typical L2 learner’s view, who comes to think that oral speech is governed by different principles from those of written language. To illustrate this, all participants, except for Lara, saw no connections between writing and speaking when asked in LT1. In fact, students viewed writing courses as detracting from learning “speaking skills” and participants hoped to take more conversation courses and fewer writing classes in the future. Noteworthy is Alice’s comment about how a focus on writing could be detrimental to speaking because it could make one speak more slowly (Alice, LT1). These beliefs were resistant due to the participants’ language learning histories and difficult to change during the study course. Below, Dorothea is asked at the end of the course why writing in literary ways was difficult for her:

(9) Dorothea, LT3

DOROTHEA: Porque escribir es más diferente de hablar y tiene más formales y por ejemplo un narrativo necesita un conflict y resolution pero cuando habla con otra persona no es necesario tiene un conflict, so es más fácil hablar con una persona y no necesito … pay attention to? [Because writing is different from speaking and has more [formalities] and for example a narrative needs a conflict and resolution but when one speaks with another person it is not necessary to have a conflict, so it is easier to speak with a person and I do not need to … [how do you say] to pay attention to?

T: Prestar atención.

DOROTHEA: … prestar atención a grammar [pay attention to grammar]

T: So do you think that speaking doesn’t come in genres, that in speaking there are no types of text?
DOROTHEA: Speaking *es un tipo pero es más relajado* [Speaking is a type but it is more relaxed]

By the end of the LTL course, Dorothea still did not understand the concepts of genre and register. She views speaking as a light type of ‘genre’ with fewer formal elements than written texts. This reflects the way the so-called skills are typically constructed throughout the different phases of traditional curricula. In the beginning stages of the conventional curriculum oral ‘skills’ are fostered as much as grammar is deemphasized and the teaching of the formal aspects of written texts is postponed. This constructs grammatical and generic considerations as components of the written realm, not equally applicable to oral speech. Therefore, the relegation of texts to the intermediate and advanced levels together with the student’s utilitarian view of language learning enhances the idea that writing and choices such as text patterns, genre, etc. are not really meaningful communicative components in a (foreign) language. This does not only establish an entrenched dichotomy between the written and the spoken, but also prepares the ground for the traditional separation between literary and non-literary discourses.

The following is Juliet’s comment on learning about texts after a class that focused on metonymy in morphological processes. Just like Dorothea’s, Juliet’s observations reveal the conventional view of written texts as exogenous to ‘real’ communication:


I like activities like this [learning about deverbal nouns such as “lavaplatos”] **because I feel as though they are useful.** While I am very happy learning about texts and different writing styles, once in awhile I enjoy learning new vocabulary, especially if it seems useful. I have been growing more and
more concerned lately about how well I will be able to communicate in Spain and activities like this help to boost my confidence.

As a result of this curricular disregard for texts, participants’ rationales justifying textual frames in the first and the second compositions were for the most part a posteriori analyses that revealed that students did not contemplate the communicative purpose of writing and the forms that could instantiate their intentionality. Juliet’s answer to a LOG2 question about the genre of her second composition is an example of the conventional L2 learner’s typical disregard for textual matters:

(11) Juliet, LOG2

My second draft was as though I was telling someone about this event that nearly happened. It could be a diary entry, a letter to a friend, or even a verbal conversation. I decided to write it like that to make it more personal and use more everyday language (Ay, Dios).

Juliet does not seem to realize how different a diary entry can be from a letter to a friend or a verbal conversation in purpose/ function, meaning, and form. It appears that in Juliet’s view, texts are merely about the type of vocabulary used in them rather than about accomplishing a specific communicative purpose. The participant paradoxically writes a text without a communication goal, only to practice colloquial expressions in a certain context, just as she has written in the past to practice certain colloquial vocabulary and grammatical items. Therefore, it can be safely argued that, without a communicative purpose, there is as much text in Juliet’s composition as in a group of conventional textbook practice sentences.

One more manifestation of this meaningless conceptualization of text in the curriculum is the fact that participants applied the same rigid rules and overgeneralizations to all types of texts. For the first writing assignment, students wrote
mostly descriptions or narrations, except for an academic essay by Lara and a letter by Scheherazade. Students were asked about the schematic structure of their composition and the rationale for having that particular frame. All students, except Ernest and Emma, had the traditional introduction, body, and conclusion regardless of the genre. While all texts have at least some type of beginning, middle and ending parts, these structural components do not always materialize in the ways ‘introduction,’ ‘body’ and ‘conclusion’ were characterized by participants. The introduction-body-conclusion schematic structure is, at best, too general, only appropriate for certain elementary academic texts. Some participants could not provide a rationale for using this general textual frame. Other students argued that that structure was “easy to follow,” or that they were used to writing in that way. Other participants provided rationales that did not correspond with the effect of such a textual pattern. Below are some examples:

(12) Ulysses, C1

T: ¿Puedes explicarme la estructura que tienes en tu composición? [Can you comment on the structure of your composition?]

ULYSSES: OK, yo tengo una introducción y en el cuerpo hay un ejemplo de tema de la composición y una conclusión. Y la conclusión para … para … [OK, I have an introduction and in the body there is an example of the topic of the composition, and a conclusion. And the conclusion is to … to …] to make the reader think about what I just talked about. I didn’t want to have like a traditional paper.

Paradoxically enough, Ulysses, who later in the course proved to be a very creative student, did not want to write “a traditional paper.” However, that is exactly what he ends up writing: a conventional paper with a structure that is unreflectively used by all the students. He later explains in the interview that he used that structure because it was
easy to follow. Similarly, Alice (see below), who wrote a narrative, shows a similar
degree of unreflectiveness or lack of awareness of textual frames:

(13) Alice, C1

T: *Una pregunta, ¿por qué has elegido tener una introducción, un cuerpo y al final una conclusión?* [I've got a question, why have you chosen to have
introduction, a body, and, finally, a conclusion?]

ALICE: *

¿Por qué?* [Why?]

T: *Ajá* [Uh-huh].

ALICE: I don’t know.

T: What are the consequences of having an introduction, a body, and a conclusion? Why do you think that some texts, and what types of texts, have this structure?

ALICE: *No siempre cuentas* [sic cuentos]. *Muchas veces cuentas tienen propósitos pero no son muy… structured?* [Not always short stories. A lot of
times short stories have purposes but they are not very …[how do you say] structured?]

T: *Estructurados.*

ALICE: Sí, pero … *Creo que usar estructura porque tenemos la opción de hacer un cuento sobre mí mismo. Creo que una cuenta refleja más sobre persona y es muy difícil hablar sobre mí misma. Pero es… odd.* [Yes, but … I think that I use this structure because we have the option of writing the story about myself. I think that a short story reflects more about the person and it’s very difficult to talk about myself. But it’s … odd].

T: ¿*Es raro?* [Is it odd?]

ALICE: *Raro* [Odd].
T: What’s odd? … ¿qué es raro?

ALICE: Now that I think about it, es raro que escogí esta estructura por una cuenta y creo que es simplemente porque siempre he usado esta estructura en la clase. [Now that I think about it, it’s odd that I chose this structure for a short story, and I think that it’s simply because I’ve always used this structure in class]. Alice ‘chooses’ the same general textual pattern as Ulysses for writing a story, and again, there is no clear rationale for ‘choosing’ it other than the difficulty of writing about herself and the need of having some type of structure, one of the few that she appears to have been taught in formal education. This indicates a lack of conscious awareness regarding textual aspects since Alice probably would not have thought about the textual frame in her composition had T not asked. In this kind of traditional dynamics, form precedes function and meaning because students follow meaningless writing conventions, and then, if ever invited to do so, they think of a rationale for such a convention.

Even Scheherazade, who wrote a familiar, everyday type of text, such as a letter, followed the same scheme. The opening of the letter, which Scheherazade called “introduction” in C1, was the typical heading of a letter, but then it was followed by a body composed of three paragraphs, each of them describing a different activity that Scheherazade was doing in Honduras. Finally, the ending, which Scheherazade called “conclusion,” was the final paragraph of a “composition,” since there was no evaluation or closing directed to the addressee.

The traditional introduction-body-conclusion frame was so ingrained—probably from formal instruction in L1 writing as well—because students also associated introductions and conclusions with quality writing. Ophelia explained that both her parents were professional writers and had trained her to write properly, which meant
including an introduction and a conclusion (C1) – a rule that she followed even for a narrative. Juliet held the same concept of “good writing”:

(14) Juliet, C1

T: Why did you feel you had to write an introduction?

JULIET: Because I kind of felt I was writing … so just maybe a little bit different than just, you know, “I have brown eyes, I have brown hair, I’m five foot seven” … So I thought I should perfect my style a little bit, and I’ve just always been careful to write an introduction because that’s what the teacher in high school … and after … Introduction and conclusion, so … Is that OK or…?

Juliet was reproducing the curricular stages of traditional language instruction in her comment. She had been initially taught how to form ‘correct’ isolated sentences such as “I have brown eyes, I have brown hair.” Then, at some point of the language curriculum, she was probably taught to add external connectors, an introduction, a body, and a conclusion to make a group of sentences a text. Juliet also reproduces empirical rules about texts, but so meaninglessly that she seems to depend on her former high school teacher’s criteria (“because that’s what the teacher in high school…”). Juliet does not complete her sentence, but it seems that she decides to have an introduction because of somebody else’s (her high school teacher’s) criteria of texts, not because of her own motivation. She also needs T’s criteria about texts to validate her choice (“is that OK or …?”). Juliet’s idea of “perfecting” her style seemed to be about following conventional standards rather than about using those writing conventions to actually mean something. As rules of thumb are not about personal meaning and do not connect with everyday knowledge of texts and language, students are made to depend on the authority of the moment to decide their applicability and, thus, become object-regulated.
At this point, students were not aware of the notion of text. They reproduced and generalized the same frame to all sorts of texts without really choosing it because the frame preceded meaning, function and intention—if the latter were present at all. In a way, participants did not have an alternative; their agency was constrained by the empirical notions of text and language resulting from their language histories:

(15) Ulysses, C1

T: ¿Esta introducción es similar a la introducción de un paper? [Is this introduction similar to the introduction in a paper?]

ULYSSES: Sí es similar pero no hay una thesis per se pero hay un tema de orgullo y es para tener un paper con coherencia. [Yes, it’s similar but there isn’t a thesis per se but there is a theme of pride, and it’s there to have a paper with coherence]

Although Ulysses is writing a narrative, he has crafted a central idea, which functions as a pseudo-thesis that he will try to prove with an example, as in academic argumentative texts. The frame that he tries to impose on his narration is too rigid and replete with superficial features even for a formal, academic essay. In such a scheme, there are strict rules of thumb sanctioned by convention, which pose more restrictions than possibilities for meaning (there should be a central theme announced in the introduction, a specific number of ideas, an example to illustrate the main theme, a final recapitulation, etc). Because of that, there is no room for creativity, personal sense and critical analysis of conventions.

Ulysses’ knowledge of text and genre is so limited at this point that he does not consider changing the schematic structure even when a different communicative situation is presented to him:

(16) Ulysses, C1
¿Cuál es tu especialidad? [What's your major?]

ULYSSES: Psicológica. [*Psychologic]

¿Psicología? Si tuvieras que escribir un paper sobre las patologías mentales, por ejemplo, ¿qué pondrías en la introducción? [Psychology? If you had to write a paper about mental pathologies for example, what would you have in your introduction?]

ULYSSES: Un thesis sobre el tópico y tres … tres ideas ¿mejor? [A thesis about the topic and three … three ideas … [how do you say] major?]

¿Más importantes? [Major ideas?]

ULYSSES: Más importantes y una transición y el cuerpo tiene tres ideas y la conclusión es un ri… es un … [Major ideas and a transition and the body has three ideas, and the conclusion is a re… it’s a …]

¿Recapitulación? [Recapitulation?]

ULYSSES: Sí, del introducción y del cuerpo [Yes, of the introduction and the body]

¿Por qué tres ideas? [Why three ideas?]

ULYSSES: Porque en educación es la manera de escribir. [Because in education it’s the way of writing]

¿No puedes tener más ideas? ¿Puedes tener cuatro ideas o así? [Can't you have more ideas? Can you have four or so ideas?]

ULYSSES: Tú puedes tener más pero tres es un buen número para tener la atención del lector y para no ser … ser loco o tener confusión. [You can have more, but three is a good number to have the reader’s attention and in order not to go … to go crazy or be confused].
In the above example, it is significant that Ulysses does not make his answer relative to a goal for writing about mental pathologies. Purpose (e.g. showing mastery of the topic to the professor; presenting a conclusive definition of psychopathologies and criteria for the detection of personality disorders for University counselors in their practicum, etc.) should yield completely different genres, registers, and textual strategies. However, even when the intention for writing was not clear, the formal aspects of the written text (the textual frame, the number of paragraphs and other limitations) were already set. Ulysses’ habitus seems to be one in which students write compositions only for the instructor, not for an abstract reader. Students lack a real communicative need, a personal goal or motivation to write for a displaced reader, other than showing proficiency or knowledge of vocabulary and structures to the instructor. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that students cannot relate writing to a goal other than presenting information and using language the way advanced students are supposed to use it.

Ulysses’ only rationale for choosing this pattern is not related to a specific communicative purpose but to convention in the educational setting, which is molded in turn by institutional factors (increasing number of students and sections, homogenization trends, etc). Unfortunately, conventions are usually empirical and unreflective, which does not allow for creativity and for their application to all communicative situations. Knowledge about genre and text should be abstract, systematic and generalizable enough to allow students to apply it to communicative situations that require writing for a variety of purposes and for a variety of readers (the teacher, an abstract reader in or outside academia, etc).
The entrenchment of unquestioned convention was manifest in frequent meaningless, agencyless, conservative rationales in the interviews. The following is another example:

(17) Juliet C1

JULIET: And then this kind of sums it all up. It’s my conclusion, I guess.
T: Uh-huh. And why do you feel you need a conclusion?
JULIET: Because I have an introduction.
T: So you are forming the structure of a conventional exposition or an argumentation …
JULIET: Uh-huh.
T: But that’s normal because that’s what you know so …
JULIET: Right. That’s what you learned so... It’s just, you can do a different kind of thing if you think about it…. Like, I didn’t think at all of the structure. I just kind of sat down and wrote the way I’m used to.

Due to empirical knowledge of conventional academic texts, participants internalized and generalized non-core textual features in the form of rigid schematic structures that are not versatile for expressing personal meaning. Form and meaning were completely unconnected, and consequently, agency was impaired by the power of convention since participants’ linguistic behavior is reactive rather than intentional, purposeful, meaningful, consciously aware, and in control of a system of choices. Thus, Juliet needs a conclusion because she has an introduction, and Ulysses needs three ideas in the body of the composition because that is the way one writes in academia. Alice uses the introduction-body-conclusion frame in her first composition and writes a traditional formal essay (instead of a narrative) to narrate her travel-in-time adventure in the second writing assignment, because she is more used to that type of writing and
because it is “more structured” (Alice, C2). Although Ulysses does not have three ideas to discuss in his narration, the idea that he does not do things to hurt his pride in himself becomes his pseudo-thesis or central idea, which evokes what he has learned about argumentations and expository texts.

The function and the core characteristics of different texts types are missing, as is illustrated in the following example:

(18) Ulysses, C1

T: Ahora, ¿crees que el propósito comunicativo de, por ejemplo, tu composición es el mismo que tiene por ejemplo un paper (que la información sea estructurada y clara) o es un propósito diferente? [Now, do you think that the communicative purpose of, for example, your composition is the same as that of a paper (to provide clear and structured information) or does it have a different purpose?]

ULYSSES: Es un poco diferente porque yo no tengo tres ideas de mucha importancia. Tengo un ejemplo que yo quiero hablar. [It’s a little bit different because I don’t have three major ideas. I have an example I want to talk about].

Ulysses presents a clear example of forms or rules/principles becoming ends in themselves rather than means to a purpose or end. He defines a text by the number of ideas. The frames of the typical expository text and argumentation are so ingrained in him that he speaks of his anecdote (his ordeal to improve his math grade) in terms of an “example” of a central theme or a pseudo-thesis. Therefore, Ulysses is not using forms in order to materialize his meaning, but rather accommodating his meaning and intention to pre-established textual templates.

Similarly, Gulliver thinks that a paper needs to be two or three pages, and must contain an introduction, a two-or-three-paragraph body, and a conclusion. Accordingly, a narrative has to follow the same structure as a paper, although the end needs to be
“open-ended,” and it is not necessary to provide all the “information” at the beginning (Gulliver, C1). Empirical composites of generalizations based on superficial, non-core features of academic texts become the yardstick of what every text is supposed to be, regardless of meaning and intention. These limiting, narrow characterizations have become success formulas over the years, and the students were, therefore, very resistant to alternative ideas.

For the second writing assignment, students were asked to create a piece of writing on a fictive adventure (recall that they had to imagine that they could travel back in time, change something in history, and finally narrate what the world would be like after such a change). Surprisingly, despite the fact that such a topic would be very suitable for a short fictional narrative (e.g. an adventure short story), only three out of thirteen students chose to write a narrative. The rest chose genres such as formal essays, expositions, an analysis and a historical commentary (see table 7.1 below):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Composition 1</th>
<th>Composition 2</th>
<th>Composition 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Draft 1</td>
<td>Draft 2</td>
<td>Draft 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>ND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juliet</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>ND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheheraz.</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulysses</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>ND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulliver</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>ND</td>
<td>ND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothea</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulcinea</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darcy</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A = argumentation
CC = account
D = description
E = essay
HC = historical commentary
L = letter
N = narration
ND = mixture of narrative and description
NE = mixture of narrative and essay
NP = mixture of newspaper and narrative
P = poem
S = analysis
T = lecture
X = exposition
XN = expository narrative
W = newspaper article
? = letter, informal conversation or diary entry
* although the participant described her composition in these terms, the drafts are simply narratives

Table 7.1: Genres of compositions as defined by participants.

Again, the main rationale for choosing essays, analyses, expository texts, etc. was the safety of using genres that had been habituated in their histories as foreign language writers in the traditional educational setting. For example, Alice justified the choice of a formal essay saying, “Creo que es porque en el pasado usualmente crear
I think that it is because in the past I usually created essays always and until this class I didn’t create stories and I’m very comfortable with essays] (Alice, C2). The participant later reflected in LOG2,

(19) Alice, LOG2

My first draft was in essay form, and I guess I chose to write in this way because I have become very accustomed to writing essays in Spanish. Throughout all my years of Spanish, my teachers have always had us write essays, not stories, poetry, or anything else of that nature. Furthermore, it seemed easy to express my ideas about which point in history I would change through writing an essay. Essays are often bland and do not contain any literary features. Also, they often follow a very structured pattern. I think that some features are that my first draft was very structured: it had an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Furthermore, it lacked literary language and dialogue. Basically, I presented a thesis and used arguments to support that thesis which is what an essay typically does.

Alice’s notions about texts were extremely entrenched due to the safety of black-and-white empirical rules and of work within her zone of actual development. The participant’s conceptualization of text had also been reinforced by her success in the past with the use of a limited range of academic genres and the historically deep-rooted divide between literary and non-literary texts in the mainstream curriculum. This split is reflected on Alice’s strict and dry characterization of academic essays and on her comment that seemed to point out that dialogues are only part of literary language.

In sum, due to their curricular histories, students generalized rigid, meaningless rules about texts, overused habitual academic genres, and reproduced dichotomous
characterizations of literary and non-literary texts. In the next section, I will discuss how conventional textual patterns in traditional writing courses relate to the metaphor of communication as the unambiguous transmission of information, rather than as a the co-construction of meaning.

7.2.1 If frames could talk...Too much information and too little interest

“...but I rather chose to relate plain matter of fact, in the simplest manner and style; because my principal design was to inform, and not to amuse thee”

(Jonathan Swift, Gulliver’s Travels, IV: 12)

In addition to the safety of rigid patterns, participants justified the conventional introduction-body-conclusion frame with rationales regarding the need of anticipating information and of capturing the reader’s attention. Lara, who wrote an expository text for her first writing assignment, which included an introduction, a three-paragraph body, and a conclusion, finished the introduction with a thematic sentence that gave way to three paragraphs, each of them developing a different characteristic of her personality. Her rationale for using such scheme was to “prepare” the reader for the topic of her composition and to capture the reader’s attention with a thematic question (Lara, C1). The first draft of Lara’s second composition is another essay, and she uses this pattern because it is “more structured” and “easy to follow or write in that way” (Lara, C2).

Ulysses’ a posteriori rationale was similar to Lara’s:

(20) Ulysses, C1
T: ¿Y cuál crees que es el efecto de tener una introducción, un cuerpo y una conclusión? [What do you think is the effect of having an introduction, a body and a conclusion?]

ULYSSES: Um…

T: ¿O por qué hay com… - por qué hay textos que tienen una introducción, un cuerpo y una conclusión? [Or why are there compos … why are there texts that have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion?]

ULYSSES: ¿Para obtener la atención del lector, para presentar información y para terminar la composición? Y en mi caso, necesitamos un ejemplo y fue perfecto por la estructura de la composición. [To obtain the reader’s attention, to present information, and to finish the composition? And in my case, we needed an example, and it was perfect for the structure of the composition]

Ulysses understands texts through the conventional metaphor of written communication underlying the traditional language curriculum. According to such a metaphor, texts are containers of unambiguous information in which nothing is written between the lines or left to the reader’s imagination. In addition, Ulysses’ and Lara’s intention is to attract the reader’s attention—or at least they feel that one should do that in an introduction.

However, the form (a highly predictable scheme that places a map of most of the ‘information’ up front) seems to thwart this purpose by annihilating any shade of mystery. Additionally, judging from Ulysses’ reply with interrogative intonation, form seems to be conventionally pre-established in the learner’s mind, and intention or purpose, rather than the starting point, is a posterior consideration. Despite the participants’ emphasis on a particular form, significantly, that form does not contribute to telling the story:

(21) Ulysses, C1
T: ¿Crees que si toda la información … si el lector lee tu introducción y sabe sobre qué es el resto de la composición, crees que eso contribuye a hacer más o menos interesante tu composición? [Do you think that if all the information … if the reader reads your introduction and knows what the rest of the composition is about, do you think that that contributes to making the composition more or less interesting?]

ULYSES: Creo que la situación es interesante [I think the situation is interesting!]

T: Sí, sí, sí, pero … [Yeah, yeah, yeah, but …]

ULYSES: No sé. [I don’t know]

Having an interesting situation, anecdote, or plot to tell does not make a text interesting, just as having the opposite circumstance does not have to doom an otherwise well narrated story –comedians and humorists know this. The linguistic form, not just the propositional content, constructs the story in a narrative –a matter of which the student, due to his curricular history, is not fully aware. Ulysses does not have the linguistic resources –only strict rules of thumb-- to carry out his intention of capturing the reader’s attention.

A second a posteriori rationale for including an introduction was that compositions, no matter the genre, had to convey ideas and information unambiguously and clearly. “Information” had to be mapped out from the beginning in order to anticipate the writer’s intention and anticipate the structure of the composition:

(22) Ulysses, C1

T: ¿Y por qué crees tú que en una introducción tenemos como una “preview” o una presentación breve de los temas que se van a desarrollar (develop) en la composición? ¿Por qué crees …? [And why do you think that in a composition
we have something like a “preview” of the topics to develop in the composition? Why do you think…?

ULYSSES: *Porque el lector necesita saber las ideas que él está leyendo sobre.* [Because the reader needs to know the ideas he is reading about]

T: *¿Y crees que aquí en tu composición el lector necesita saber la información antes?* [And do you think that here in your composition the reader needs to know the information beforehand?]

ULYSSES: *Sí, es importante por el lector.* [Yes, it’s important for the reader]

T: *¿Cuál sería el efecto de tener toda la información antes?* [And what would the effect of knowing all the information beforehand be?]

ULYSSES: *¿Qué efecto?* [What effect?]

T: *¿…Produce en el lector o produce en general?* [What effect is created in the reader or in general?]

ULYSSES: *En mi papel o un papel general.* [In my paper or in a general paper]

T: *Sí, en un papel hipotético o aquí. Cuando pones en un texto una “preview” de todas las ideas más importantes, ¿cuál es el propósito de esto?* [Yes, in a hypothetical paper or here. When you write a preview of all the most important ideas in a text, what’s the purpose behind this?]

ULYSSES: *Er … para … es para … dar estructura.* [Er … to … it’s to … give structure]

Still there is not a clear reason why the structure of a narrative should be anticipated in the introduction or why this ‘information’ should be useful to a narrative reader. Additionally, from Ulysses hesitation, it seems that, again, form precedes communicative intention. Compositions are to be written the way they are written; meaning becomes an addendum or afterthought.
Just as Ulysses, Alice conceived of introductions as a way of anticipating the writer’s intention so that information was clear to the reader. T had asked Alice to compare the structure and the purpose of different texts (among them, newspaper articles). T further questioned Alice about short stories. Her answers still revealed a superficial characterization of narratives:

(23) Alice, C1

T: ¿Crees que en un cuento es necesario tener información de forma rápida [as with certain newspaper genres]? [Do you think that in a short story it is necessary to obtain information quickly [as with certain newspaper genres]]?

ALICE: Um, ahora no [Um, not now] [laughs]

T: ¿Ahora no? [Not now?]

ALICE: … pero…no [… but … no] … maybe with the limit that we have, if it was like 10 pages, you know. But one page, es muy difícil a hacer porque [it’s very difficult to do because] … Si la cuenta es 100 palabras obviamente necesitas tener la información inmediatamente, pero muchas veces no es importante tener la información en una inyección. [If the short story is 100 words, obviously, you need to have all the information immediately, but a lot of times it’s not important to have all the information in just one shot]

T: So the purpose of a story is to convey information?

ALICE: A veces una moraleja. [Sometimes a moral]

T: Una moraleja. [A moral]

ALICE: A veces más o menos para decir …goals? [Sometimes more or less to say … goals?]

T: …acciones, hechos, acontecimientos? […actions, deeds, events?]
ALICE: … o decir el propósito es para describir hechos … [or *to say the purpose is to describe deeds]

T: ¿Y cuando un cuento cuenta hechos es para informar o para otro propósito?
[And when a short story tells us about deeds, is it to tell us information or for another purpose?]

ALICE: Creo que usualmente es para entertain… [I think that usually it is to entertain]

T: …entretener… […to entertain…]

Alice abandons the idea that narratives are about conveying information, but then, she justifies the need of an introduction based on superficial contextual features, such as the length of the narrative –rather than the writer’s intention or an intended effect. After that, Alice continues defining narratives in traditional academic terms such as goals, purpose, description of facts… much in tune with the conduit metaphor of communication permeating the traditional curriculum. Additionally, Alice provides two non-essential characteristics of narratives: they have a moral and they entertain. Despite this discussion, the idea of clarity of information is manifested in other ways in LOG1: “The purpose of my composition is to inform my audience that Alicia (aka me) is a generous person who enjoys giving back to the community without receiving paybacks or awards;” “I think the structure is appropriate because it flows somewhat chronologically, and therefore it is easy for the reader to follow the story” (Alice, LOG1).

The idea that all texts had to be “structured,” “easy to follow,” and informative was recurrent among the students. This one-size-fits-all conceptualization of text yielded “opening questions” in many introductions and more than explicit composition titles such as “Un aspecto de la historia que es necesario cambiar” (Jane, C2), which describes the
topic of the travel-in-time writing assignment to the letter. Participants left nothing to the reader’s imagination and expressed every idea plainly and explicitly in the propositional content in the first composition and for the most part of the second composition. Language form did not construct the plot or content in any way. Students did not understand the connections between function, meaning, and form in texts and did not contemplate what they may want to write for, other than to provide unambiguous information, as the following comment shows:

(24) Dorothea, LOG1

“Su nombre era Dorothea Wolfgang von Goethe” [“Her name was Dorothea Wolfgang von Goethe”]. This sentence is a great sentence because it flat out says who I am. It is an identifying sentence, so even if someone knows me, but hasn’t read the essay they’ll know what the story is about.

Once again, the purpose of a description, in this case Dorothea’s description, seems to be to offer “information” explicitly, objectively, and unequivocally. The first sentence is not designed to cause intrigue, to shock the reader, or to construct an original view of the self. There is nothing evocative or enticing. The function of sentences such as Dorothea’s, of opening questions and of informative introductions seemed to be to anticipate what stories were about – as plot spoilers do! Strangely enough, Dorothea is not writing for an abstract reader, but for a reader who may even know her and therefore, may not need to read her essay to know about its content. One may wonder what the purpose of her writing is at all. It seems that for Dorothea the purpose of descriptions is to identify people or to tell what anybody otherwise already knows, rather than to present a person or a character in a certain light, in a revealing way.

The conduit metaphor of language was also manifest in the students’ changes to each successive draft of composition 1. The students were asked to improve their
compositions in order to enhance meaning, to make their texts more creative/ literary and interesting. Then they were asked about those changes in C1 and in LOG1 questions. Table 7.2 (below) lists these changes:
### Linguistic resources in composition 1 (explained by participants in C1 and LOG1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>dialogue, additional adjectives, synonyms, *metaphors, *similes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>*metaphors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juliet</td>
<td>personal tone, real-life example, interjections, exclamations points, past tense, additional adjectives, + metaphors,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheherazade</td>
<td>descriptive vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulysses</td>
<td>(*hyperbole), (intradictegetic narrator), (polysyndeton with patterned short clauses), circular structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulliver</td>
<td>++ metaphor, (++personification), (media res), (manipulation of tense in one sentence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest</td>
<td>+ anaphora, + similes (dramatic vocabulary), + paradox, (utterance other than a sentence), no gender markers for the protagonist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>*/ ++ metaphors, + similes, dramatic vocabulary, (++ personification), (media res),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>&lt;preview/ detail&gt;, warning signs, flashforwards, flashbacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothea</td>
<td>anecdotes of her life, her personal motto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>colorful, expressive vocabulary, detailed description, + / ++ comparisons, + / ++ metaphors,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulcinea</td>
<td>specific vocabulary, subject pronoun drop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darcy</td>
<td>less common words, (sophisticated vocabulary), +/ ++ metaphors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *clichéd/ everyday literary figure (e.g. I wanted to let my hair down, Dorothea, LOG3)*
+ *mildly original literary figure (e.g. the stormy sky was angry, Ulysses, LOG2)*
++ *original literary figure (e.g. the ditch ran to me and opened its mouth to consume my front wheel, Gulliver, LOG3)*
( ) *the student does not use this specific term; the learner provided only examples or used a more general term*
< > *the student uses this term, but the term is not appropriate or does not really apply to the student’s text*

*Table 7.2:* Linguistic resources to enhance meaning, creativity and interest in composition 1.

As can be seen in the table above, generally, students incorporated examples, personal anecdotes, adjectives, details, and colorful vocabulary in order to improve their
first composition. In other words, learners continued constructing their stories explicitly in
the propositional content by adding further unambiguous “information” and details.
Students used literary figures to enhance punctual descriptions, rather than to present a
whole state of affairs in a different light. In addition, most figures were clichéd, fossilized
metaphors, which students had started to recognize after a lesson on everyday figurative
language. It may be possible that the students mentioned these clichéd literary figures
as well as the introduction of dialogue among the improvements to their drafts because
at that point they still associated these elements with the literary realm. In connection
with this, students viewed the past tense as more literary than the present. However, the
past tense was not deployed in any original way to make texts more creative at this
point.

While all these were very valid resources, it is significant that students rarely
employed generic, textual and grammatical strategies to improve their compositions. In
other words, at this point, learners were not able to construct or evoke meaning in less
obvious ways through lexicogrammatical and textual choices, or, to put it differently, they
were not able to use language suggestively, creatively and mimetically.

The exceptions to this general propositional explicitness were few and
sometimes shaky. Ophelia described her textual frame as preview-detail, but this
pattern, which had been discussed in class for other texts, did not apply to the way her
narration was structured. Ulysses created a circular structure, but it was within a
traditional introduction-body-conclusion textual frame for a narrative-like composition.
Gulliver and Emma started their narrations in “media res,” but, as we will discuss later,
they either could not account for their own intuitive strategy or interpreted such a frame
as an example to illustrate a thesis.
On the other hand, Ophelia, Ernest and Gulliver, who proved to have great interest in literary texts, used the most original linguistic resources, which affected the lexicogrammar and the structure of their texts. For example, Ernest avoided using gender markers to refer to his protagonist in order to construct a world in which gender and sexual orientation were not relevant, and individuals were treated just as people. Ophelia used future perspective to hint at the possibility of a car accident, and, thus, to maintain the reader’s interest in her narration. Gulliver switched from past tense to the present perfect because it was closer to the present and “[brought] interest” to a specific action in his narration (C1). These linguistic resources are exogenous to traditional foreign-language writing conventions and might rather relate to the participants’ literary experiences. The following section will discuss the usefulness of using literary texts in (foreign) language instruction.

7.2.1.1 Worlds between lines: the advantage of literary texts in the language classroom

“In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity is the vital thing.”

(Oscar Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest, p. 1700)

From the above examples, it may appear that traditional shortcuts for writing ‘correct’ texts have generally led students to dead ends. The conventional structure of “compositions” reflects the textbook conceptualization of communication: the exchange of messages with no impediments or misunderstandings through the neutral code of language. Messages are transmitted rather than co-constructed, and texts are information containers rather than invitations to enact meanings in context. Therefore, all information is in the message rather than between the lines. As a result, students
ignored how to use language mimetically and meaningfully. Forms became ends in themselves, and ‘correctness,’ in the most traditional sense, became the main concern. Participants did not know how to express content through the form, how to make their texts interesting, or how to express multiple meanings with few words.

All these signs pointed to the potential benefit of using literature in the classroom, because literary texts show how much can be written between the lines in conspicuous ways. For example, when Alice insisted on providing ‘information’ about her character in the description, she was reminded of the fact that the story that they were reconstructing in groups in class (Cortázar’s Continuidad de los parques) did not have an introduction explaining who the character was or anticipating what was going to happen in the story:

(25) Alice, C1

T: *El cuento que estamos leyendo en clase, ¿en ese cuento tenemos una introducción?* [The story that we are reading in class, does this story have an introduction?]

ALICE: *No.*

T: *No. ¿Y cuál crees tú que es el efecto de …? O sea, ¿tenemos información del protagonista?* [And what do you think is the effect of …? I mean, do we have any information about the main character?]

ALICE: *Sí, alguna información, pero no hay una introducción de … character?* [Yes, some information, but there isn’t an introduction of … [how do you say] character?]

T: *… del personaje …*

ALICE: *Sí… That was bad [laughs]. Pero recibí una idea del personaje dentro de los hechos y las discusiones, pero no dice “es muy generosa,” you know, “es muy divertido,” you know, no es una descripción.* [But I get an
idea of the character within the events and the discussions, but it doesn’t say “she’s very generous,” you know, “he’s a lot of fun,” you know, it’s not a description].

T: *Conocemos al personaje por lo que hace en la historia, no conocemos nada de él antes…* [We get to know the character from what he does in the story, we don’t know anything about him before].

ALICE: … *sí, sí…* [yes, yes]

T: …¿y cuál crees tú que es el efecto …? …y no sabemos tampoco nada del libro, sabemos que está leyendo la novela, pero no sabemos qué novela es ésta, pero después en la próxima clase vamos a ver qué está leyendo [participant laughs]. ¿Qué efecto produce no saber nada del personaje, solamente lo que está haciendo pero no saber quién es? […] and what do you think is the effect…?… and we don’t know anything about the book, we know he’s reading the novel, but we don’t know what novel this is, but after the next class we’ll see what he’s reading [participant laughs]. What effect does it create knowing nothing about the character, only from what he’s doing but not who he is?]

ALICE: *Es muy difícil para entender esta personaje, especialmente a la manera que nuestra clase es …descr… discovering?* [It’s very difficult to understand this character, especially in the way our class is … descr … discovering?] [how do you say]

T: … *ah, descubriendo…*

ALICE: … *el personaje porque no sé el orden de los segmentos, pero las cuentas que no dan una historia del personaje son misteriosas y sólo puede aprender mucha del personaje cuando continúo a leer la cuenta …* [the character because I don’t know the order of the fragments, but the stories that do not
provide a story about the character are very mysterious and you can only learn a lot about the character when I continue reading about the story…]

T: Maybe not. [Student laughs] Maybe not, we will see what happens. [Student laughs].

Alice realizes in Cortázar’s story something that is also true of everyday conversations, news, commercials, speeches, etc.: texts show through language rather than explicitly tell. Meaning is also constructed in linguistic choices, not only in the propositional meaning (e.g. “es muy generosa,” “es muy divertido”). Finally, with the discussion and some other examples during the interview, she arrived at the conclusion that not providing information at the beginning also might have a communicative value and might create the desirable effect of exciting the reader’s curiosity, that is, grabbing the reader’s attention, which was her initial purpose.

In sum, participants imposed pre-established frames that they had learned unreflectively through empirical rules and justified the form a posteriori. These rigid frames and rules were taught as shortcuts of more complex theoretical explanations to guide students away from errors. The structure of students’ compositions was “correct” from a traditional point of view; however, from the theoretical standpoint of this dissertation, students’ compositions can hardly be classified as texts outside the traditional educational system. The “compositions” lack a communicative reason for being written, and students’ answers reveal a lack of intentionality, agency, and choice. Students simply continued doing what they had been instructed to do throughout their histories as students: produce texts mainly designed for the teacher organized according to strict formal rules of thumb.

As students perpetuate the traditional textual model, they do not only create literary texts in light of the superficial and formal characteristics that they have
internalized, they also risk interpreting literary texts according to the same characteristics. There is reasonable doubt that the conventional foreign-language learner that reaches the advanced levels, including literary courses, will interpret without problems flash-forward (to give one example) as a technique to deconstruct the linear metaphor of time and to overcome the Realist search for objectivity and neutrality. In view of the beliefs generated by conventional formal knowledge of texts, there is a possibility that the use of flash-forward may be interpreted as a way of anticipating information ‘so that the reader is prepared for the rest of the story.’ In the next section, I will examine whether participants applied their conventional knowledge of curricular genres to literary texts and how this knowledge interacted with students’ previous experiences with texts and their creativity.

7.2.2 Talent, empirical knowledge, and mainstream formal knowledge of language: understanding literature?

Students overgeneralized conventional textual frames to narratives, descriptions, expository texts, and letters. With practices derived from the metaphor of communication as the transmission of information, students had learned how to explicitly relate “information,” but failed to understand the ways in which stories and other everyday texts show between the lines. As explained in Chapters 4 and 6, meaning-composing and interpretative processes are closely related and are present both in writing and in reading; thus, the creative and the critical are but the two sides of the same coin. The next question is whether participants would also apply their conventional knowledge of texts to literature and how this knowledge would contribute to the understanding of literary texts.
In view of participants’ analyses in literary interviews, it seems that students interpreted literary texts in light of the empirical rules about texts and the information metaphor underlying language learning in the mainstream curriculum. For example, Dorothea considered that the title of Benedetti’s short story, “A imagen y semejanza,” was not a good one because “it does not tell you what the story is about” (LT2). When Lara was asked what the purpose of introductions was, she replied that when somebody reads “a novel, a letter, or any text,” it is good to have an introduction so that they know “what they are reading,” because it allows the reader to start thinking and “preparing for the text.” She thought that the same scheme was suitable for short stories and papers, but not for all newspaper articles because some of them were “short” and talked “about facts” and, therefore, did not need an introduction (Lara, C1). Similarly, Darcy argued that both narratives and editorials followed an introduction-body-conclusion scheme, but claimed poems were the exception (C1).

Even if poems were an exception for Darcy, they were not for Alice. The latter had prepared a written commentary of the poem for LT1 before the interview. In this commentary, Alice discussed the structure of Anzoátegui’s poem according to the criteria of the conventional academic essay, only, instead of the first sentence and paragraphs, she spoke of the first line and stanzas:

(26) Alice, written commentary on poem for LT1

*El propósito [the purpose]:

*La línea primera indica el propósito de la poesía [the first line indicates the purpose of the poem] [Alice summarizes the content of the first stanza]

*El segundo estrofa enfoca la poesía [the second stanza frames the poem] [Alice summarizes second stanza]
That is, the first line of the poem establishes its purpose – just as the first sentence in the introduction of a traditional essay and in Alice’s first composition, “the first sentence introduces my topic” (Alice, LOG1). The second stanza frames the poem, just as the body of a composition finally develops a central theme.

There seemed to be no exceptions for Dulcinea either. When the participant was asked (C1) what types of texts have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion, she answered in a very surprised tone:

(27) Dulcinea, C1

DULCINEA: Pretty much everything. Like, if you write a paper, like, for another class or if you write... Usually stories, you will get introduced to the characters and what’s happening, and at the end, you get to the conclusion of the story …

Even, like, articles have an introduction!... and a conclusion.

Curiously, the paper had to be for a class other than the LTL course, which reveals how non-generalizable the descriptions of genre and text that the traditional educational setting has created are. Unfortunately, the principles seemed to apply also beyond the educational setting – neither literary texts, such as stories, nor everyday texts, such as articles, escaped the conventional and meaningless textual pattern. Conventional formal knowledge had affected Dulcinea’s perception of texts inside and outside the classroom.

Additional examples show that inadequate formal education can distort rather than advance participants’ natural talent and experiences with literary texts and other media. Out of thirteen students, Emma and Gulliver were the only ones who started their first composition (a narration and a description with narrative dashes, respectively) in media res, without anticipating all the information, leaving some room for suspense. Emma’s character was in the middle of cracking a fortune cookie, the meaning of which would only be fully understood later. Gulliver’s character could hear the whistling air as
he kept on falling—the reader later discovers that he is parachuting. Students may have learned to start a narrative in *media res* intuitively probably from novels, short stories, movies, comics, etc. However, when they were asked about the beginning of their narrations, Emma admitted that she had not thought about the fact that her composition started in the middle of action and, paradoxically, emphasized the usefulness of having an introduction to grab the readers’ attention. Gulliver, who had written a description with narrative dashes, responded to the same question in this way:

(28) **Gulliver, C1**

T: So what are you doing in your composition, at the beginning?

GULLIVER: There, I was trying to, you know, give an example. It’s almost like giving an argument for your thesis.

Then, similarly to Ulysses (C1), Gulliver proceeded to explain that he had an introduction with little detail—to grab the reader’s attention—, a conclusion, and a three-paragraph body with examples illustrating the main idea or semi-thesis about who he was. Gulliver’s ability to write interesting narratives was distorted by his traditional formal knowledge of academic texts. This example shows how rules of thumb do not offer a logical system in which to integrate learners’ intuitive knowledge and abilities, because rules are counterintuitive and are generalizable only to a limited range of contexts. While talent can be aided by proper instruction, the examples above reveal that creativity can be stunted by the inappropriate type of formal knowledge.

The following set of examples examines how traditional writing instruction interacts with the creative use of repetition. I will specifically analyze the students’ interpretation of repetition in their own narratives and in the LT1 poem by Anzoátegui.
7.2.2.1 You can say that again! Repetition in (foreign) language instruction

According to traditional standards, texts with repetition lack the communicative sophistication and effectiveness of texts with a variety of structures. Repetition seems to only have the functions of emphasizing and clarifying ‘information.’ Again, the metaphor of communication as the transmission of information underlies this view of repetition.

The first example is from Gulliver's second composition on how he, as a scientist, had stolen a dinosaur egg on a trip back in time to the prehominid era. Gulliver uses repetition to describe a place full of dinosaur eggs:

(29) Gulliver, C2

T: [reading aloud] “Después de dos días de buscando, hallé los huevos que había querido. Tenía huevos pequeños y huevos enormes, huevos de muchas especies” [“After two days of searching, I found the eggs that I had wanted. I had small eggs and big eggs, eggs of many species”]

Ok, here, is there something that you did intentionally to create certain effects? “Tenía huevos pequeños y huevos enormes, huevos de muchas especies.” [I had small eggs and big eggs, eggs of many species”]

GULLIVER: [Laughs] Yeah, I forgot part of that but I wanted to have another clause like this “huevos something y huevos something…” I couldn't think of anything else, and I kind of just went on, and then I forgot to go back to it. I kind of like to do that when I’m writing, too.

T: What?

GULLIVER: I like to drag in the sexual part. I wanted to have...

T: More huevos phrases? [laughs]
GULLIVER: …, yeah, y … like a .. something like parallel, tell this is like “huevo
y huevos.” I wanted to have like “huevo y huevos” again. I like doing that, just
separating them with a comma [laughs], I forgot [laughs].

Gulliver, who was already a very creative student and deeply valued literature,
did many things in imitation of texts that he had read, from the beginning of the LTL
course. In the example above, Gulliver uses his L1, the forbidden language in
mainstream foreign-language education, to mediate the articulation of Spanish nominal
phrases with a specific rhythm (“huevos something y huevos something”) while he finds
suitable adjectives in Spanish. Gulliver’s everyday experience of texts seems to have
given him an “intuition” about what is creative and what may sound appropriate or not.
The participant is also aware that he is creating a sexual pun on words with the Spanish
word huevos (meaning ‘eggs,’ but comparable to the innuendo of ‘balls’ in English).
Unfortunately, despite his ample experience with texts, his everyday knowledge of
literature is not maximized, but suppressed, by his history of formal language instruction:

(30) Gulliver, C2

T: I think it’s good. I think your idea is good. What effect do you think that it has to
repeat…[huevos]?

GULLIVER: Very clarifying.

T: Clarifying?

GULLIVER: Yeah.

T: Well, and also …, I don’t know if you did it with this in mind … it’s not …Well,
why do you want to clarify?

GULLIVER: ‘Cause it gives you detail.

T: Detail. And d’you think that the reader looks for clarification in the narrative
or…?
GULLIVER: Maybe, I don’t know. **This gives more information** and I like the way it sounds too.

Gulliver’s action is unfocused; the student writes the *huevos* phrases intuitively, drawing on his everyday knowledge of literature, and this is reflected on the fact that he likes the way they sound, but cannot explain the mimetic effect of repetition on this descriptive passage. The repetition of *huevos* may have a pleasing effect because, rather than providing emphasis or information, the form (the repetition of eggs in a patterned structure) mimics the meaning (a landscape with the repeated image of dinosaur eggs). This is another expression of natural talent or creativity in the student. However, the student lacks full awareness and understanding of his own action because the knowledge that repetition can be used in this way is intuitive, probably derived from experiences with texts and because Gulliver’s formal education does not offer him a system into which he can integrate his everyday knowledge of repetition. Much to the contrary, the participant’s conventional formal knowledge of texts distorts his everyday knowledge of repetition by making it subservient to the transmission of information.

Gulliver’s traditional view of repetition is also reflected in his interpretation of Anzoátegui’s *Monólogo del amor que no quiere amar* (LT1). In this poem, repetition constructs a feeling of preoccupation, contradiction, obsession and struggle. Gulliver, at first, did not know how to interpret repetition in Anzoátegui’s poem (LT1). Eventually, when he was asked to compare one instance of repetition, “*este querer quererte*” (“this wanting to love you”) with a paraphrasis that avoided repetition such as “*este deseo de quererte*” (“this wish of loving you”), the student argued that the former was “simpler,” “less profound in meaning and emotion.” However, it would rather seem to be the opposite case: “*este deseo de quererte*” is more direct, basic, and self-explanatory, while “*este querer quererte*” is more evocative and complex to process because of paradox
and polyptoton (the repetition of the same word or stem with two different morphosyntactical functions). For English-speaking language learners, “este querer quererte” presents an additional problem of polysemy, since ‘querer’ can be translated as both ‘to want’ and ‘to love.’ Gulliver may have been influenced by the conventional belief in foreign language instruction that repetition always amounts to simpler expression, whereas a diversity of structures always conforms to a more sophisticated style, which may have compelled him to attribute more complexity to the non-repetitious, non-paradoxical, self-explanatory, basic structure. Students’ comments, such as Alice’s (below), reflect the appropriation of this common belief about repetition in foreign-language instruction and in L1 writing classes:

(31) Alice, LOG2
I had some vocabulary problems throughout my draft. For example: -Claro que sí –dijo el hombre odioso. [Of course –said the hateful man.] The reason this was a vocabulary problem was because I had already used “decir” [say] multiple times before this. So to fix this, I used “contestó” [answered]. It is a good thing to vary vocabulary unless you are trying to emphasize something by repeating it.

Alice ventriloquates traditional criteria, which insist that advanced students deploy a variety of vocabulary and structures to show proficiency. It seems from this rule that repetition is not only a sign of deficient expression but also that different structures and vocabulary are synonymous and interchangeable. In this passage in Alice’s second composition, repetition could have been extremely useful because she is narrating how a man is relentlessly shooting trivial questions at her in a bar. The repetition of the same plain reporting verb (“decir,” that is, ‘to say’) could have been used to construct the litany-like, tedious bombardment of questions and vacuous statements.
Continuing with the interpretation of repetition in Anzoátegui’s poem, Alice’s reading was congruent with the metaphor of text as the container of clear, unambiguous information. Repetition was again used for emphasis and clarification:

(32) Alice, LT1

ALICE: Pues la mayoría es muy confuso a mí, pero me gusta. Creo que la estructura es muy importante. Y creo que el autor usa repetición para reflejar la influencia del amor en nuestra sociedad. [Well, most of it is confusing to me, but I like it. I think that structure is very important. And I think that the author uses repetition to reflect the influence of love in our society].

The same idea about the importance of love shows in a commentary of the poem that Alice had written in preparation for the literary interview:

(33) Alice, commentary on poem for LT1

Tambiécn hay mucho repetición en la poesía, ej. querer. El autor usa esta estrategia para enfatizar la importancia del sus pensamientos. [Also there is a lot of repetition in the poem, e.g. querer. The author uses this strategy to emphasize the importance of his thoughts].

Alice’s view of repetition as solely a technique for emphasis distorts the interpretation of the poem, which offers many linguistic clues regarding the poet’s fear of commitment and of emotional intimacy, and no clues to justify an emphatic vindication of the role of love in society—which, en passant, sounds like the central theme of an expository text.

Despite Anzoátegui’s manifest and, occasionally, even explicit disinclination to love (“Monólogo del amor que no quiere amar,” that is, “Monologue of love that doesn’t want to love”), Darcy, similar to Alice, interprets repetition as a way of emphasizing that love is important, and Jane interprets repetition as the poet’s way of getting “his point across.” Other students (especially, Dorothea, Emma, Ulysses, Juliet, and Dulcinea)
were, however, unable to make sense of repetition in the same poem and found it confusing and superfluous, a hindrance rather than a clue for meaning. When participants were asked why the author would say things such as “este querer quererte” versus “este deseo de quererte,” Dorothea and Juliet argued that “este querer quererte” was more confusing than “este deseo de quererte,” and, therefore, it was more literary since literary texts are more confusing than regular texts.

The artificiality of foreign-language writing standards, in which repetition is either proscribed or only used to emphasize “information,” does not help learners make sense of real texts. By proscribing repetition, an expressive device that is the root of multiple literary figures, conventional assignments prove to be designed not for the students’ expression of meaning, but for the practice of the structures mandated by the course syllabus.

By providing students with superficial characterizations of a limited range of texts, the ‘preparatory’ courses fail to do their alleged job because those characterizations are rarely transferable to literary and non-academic texts. For example, Scheherazade refuses to write narratives in four out of the nine composition drafts because she had “more experience with the sciences and not so much with creating [her] own stories” (C2). Juliet also recognizes her lack of experience with certain texts in Spanish:

(34) Juliet, P, Weekly Journal, Week 12, March 30- April 1

Sometimes I have no trouble reading things I find in Spanish and other times I feel like I don't know the language at all. I don't know what to attribute this to. Maybe there are different types and styles of written Spanish that I don't know about.

On the other hand, the sole exposition to a variety of texts is not the solution, because it cannot be safely assumed that students will always derive sound concepts
from their everyday, empirical knowledge of texts. Students may create overgeneralizations from superficial observation of literary texts. For example, when students were asked about how they had transformed the first draft of their second composition into (more creative) narratives, they answered that they had added parallelisms, humor, metaphors, a narrator, dialogue, made it all past, added more adjectives or descriptive sentences, and/or talked about thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Some students even talked about dialogues as a different type of text, and not as a way of representing speech that, in turn, can appear in a wide range of texts. Alice’s comment below captures conventional dichotomous beliefs and the generalization of non-core features of narratives:

(35) Alice, LOG2

My second draft was definitely a narration told in the past tense. Well, besides the fact that we were instructed to make original drafts sound more like stories, I feel that narratives are much more entertaining to an audience. In order for something to be a narrative, it must contain literary aspects such as dialogue, metaphors, similes, a sequence of events, and of course a narration needs at least one narrator. I used a lot more dialogue in my second draft, and besides that I told a story as opposed to simply stating what I would change in the past and why I would change it.

Mere experience with literary texts, however enriching, is not usually sufficient to fully apprehend the essence of objects and appropriate composing-interpreting tools. Neither is conventional foreign-language instruction. However, can this be achieved with literature-through-language instruction? Chapter 8 will examine this issue.
7.3 Conclusion

We have examined how the complete sentence is used as the unit of instruction in conventional foreign-language instruction. We have also discussed how, despite this conventional emphasis, LTL learners did not have a sound concept of sentence and were also unable to discriminate other types of utterance. For example, students had difficulty in coalescing the fragments of Cortázar’s *Continuidad de los parques*. This was not only because of word order – a topic in which they had received no previous instruction -- but also because learners were unable to identify which fragments could be main clauses, or to construct complex sentences without assistance, despite instruction on subordination in previous courses. They were also unable to identify the type of utterances in Anzoátegui’s poem (“*Monólogo del amor que no quiere amar*”), and, therefore, to construct an interpretation based on the effect on the prominent non-finite-clause pattern. This may be the effect of not having received theoretical instruction in the general concept of utterance and its instantiations (including text, phrase, and clause) from the beginning stages of language study.

Because of the focus on the oral ‘skills’ and the de-emphasis on grammar in the beginning stages of the curriculum, students considered notions of text and genre only relevant for writing, not for speaking. Additionally, the traditional emphasis on the ‘complete sentence’ and the relegation of texts to the intermediate and advanced levels have alienated writing from the notion of communication, a reason for which learners expected to take more conversation courses and fewer writing and literature courses in the future. As a result of the segregation of the written from the spoken, of writing from reading, and literature from other forms of communication, students connected certain elements with specific types of texts; for example, they associated figurative language,
dialogue or the past tense to literary texts, while they considered that formal essays lacked creativity and only stated “facts.” These superficial, empirical, associations did not contribute to effective language learning or to the interpretation of literary and other texts.

Because of their empirical thinking, students made sense of their own and other texts in light of the conduit metaphor of communication underlying the traditional foreign-language curriculum. Students could only create texts in which the clear, unequivocal transmission of information was the goal. In addition, students had been instructed to write according to rigid, ‘templates’ that did not allow for personal meaning and creativity. The most dominant textual ‘template’ was that of the formal academic essay, basically composed of an introduction (with opening questions, thesis and information preview), a body (composed of three paragraphs, each containing a different idea), and a conclusion (typically a recapitulation of the main ideas). Students applied this scheme to their compositions regardless of the genre in which they had chosen to write, but were only aware of it a posteriori, when questioned during the interviews. Most of the students’ rationales for using such a schematic structure were vacuous (e.g. a conclusion was necessary because there was an introduction). Learners tended to choose academic genres, in which the only schematic structure that they were producing would be more appropriate.

Traditional empirical rules and rigid principles dealing with a narrow range of academic texts did not assist students in making sense of linguistic choices in other texts. Learners applied traditional linguistic notions (e.g. rules of thumb), the conduit metaphor, and the formal essay textual template to the majority of texts (poems, short stories, novels, papers, newspaper articles, etc). For example, they interpreted and evaluated linguistic features of Anzoátegui’s poem (e.g. repetition, distribution of
stanzas) and Benedetti’s *A imagen y semejanza* (e.g. the title) in light of the introduction-body-conclusion schematic structure, and in terms of informational clarity.

Because of this inability to read or write between the lines, literary texts seem to offer a promising advantage for teaching language. On the other hand, no matter how creative students may be, how much experience they may already have with (literary) texts, and how much they enjoy literature, rarely does conceptual knowledge spontaneously appear from mere experience. Moreover, learners’ natural creativity and previous experience with literary texts did not save them from the distortion caused by traditional instruction. To put an example, even when students intuitively used certain patterns (such as *media res*, or repetition) in their compositions, they were not able to account for their effect (“it just sounds good,” “it goes well here”) or to generalize them to other contexts (class compositions, literary texts, everyday language use), because they lacked control, intentionality, and conscious awareness. Although illogical, unsystematic, and non-generalizable, empirical rules and principles about texts did not connect with or enhance students’ literary experiences, learners were often resistant to new knowledge.

In the next chapter, we will discuss whether working on reconstructing literary texts with the mediation of systematic and generalizable knowledge for both literary and non-literary texts affected participants’ understanding of texts.
Chapter 8

Data analysis: the impact of LTL pedagogy on notions of text and genre

The quest for certainty blocks the search for meaning. Uncertainty is the very condition to impel man to unfold his powers… Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties.

(Erich Fromm, *Man for Himself*, chapter 3)

As seen in the previous chapter, most of the participants’ first and second compositions followed the same conventional textual frame regardless of the genre that students were intending to write. There were only three narratives for the second composition (despite the fact that the topic was very suitable for an adventure short story) while conventional academic genres abounded. Learners’ a posteriori rationales for using an introduction-body-conclusion schematic structure were based on the conduit metaphor of language underlying the traditional (foreign) language curriculum. They used genres to which they were accustomed and in which they could deploy such a textual frame.

As was seen in Table 7.1 in the previous chapter, there was a switch in the choice of genres in the third writing assignment; all participants wrote narratives, with the exception of four students: Jane, who wrote an expository text for the first draft; Ophelia, who wrote a poem for her second draft; Scheherazade, who wrote an expository text for her first draft, and Juliet, who wrote what she called “an account” of her Spring Break for all her drafts. In this chapter I will analyze some of the participants’ choices with respect to genre and textual frames in the latter part of course, that is, in compositions 2 and composition 3, although with greater attention to the third writing activity. In addition, I will also examine whether students’ underlying metaphor of language and beliefs about language learning with respect to text and genre were impacted by LTL pedagogy.
Finally, I will analyze whether students developed the ability to attend to “details” in texts, that is, to textual issues such as lexicogrammatical choices.

8.1 Discovering discourse: constructing (im)possible worlds in text

In the previous chapter, we examined Alice’s traditional and inflexible ideas about texts. She considered that the introduction-body-conclusion scheme was applicable to all genres—including Anzoátegui’s poem—because it presented information in a more ‘structured’ way. The participant had reported that she had never been asked to write “anything literary” and that she was not comfortable with writing anything beyond “basic sentences.” She also attributed some elements such as humor, dialogue, metaphors, etc. only to literary texts.

In her third composition, however, not only did Alice refuse to provide an introduction with all the necessary ‘information’ to guide the reader, but she also purposefully attempted to confuse the reader with the use of an allegory of soldiers going into a battle, which is a move beyond what she expressed early in excerpts (1) and (13):

(36) Alice, LOG3

This time, when I wrote my first draft, I decided that I was bored with simply writing essays in Spanish. Therefore, I attempted to make my draft much more interesting by incorporating an extended metaphor throughout. The draft is written in prose; however, the metaphor is used to confuse the reader because it isn’t until the end that the reader understands what is actually going on. The main goal of my first draft is to have the reader understand what graduation was like for me while using a metaphor of soldiers going
into battle to describe the situation. Graduation was something great and scary at the same time which closely parallels a battle because a soldier is fighting for his/her country which is a great thing but is extremely scary.

Basically, the was [sic way] I set up the structure of this draft was to start completely ambiguously by introducing the metaphor of soldiers going into battle; eventually I allowed for some small clues such as the person that makes the announcement and all of us approaching a person one by one to receive a piece of paper. Finally in the end I reveal that I am talking about graduation and that I will be facing my biggest challenge thus far which is college.

It is interesting that Alice warns that this draft about her graduation is written in prose right after she mentions that she has used an extended metaphor throughout her narrative. This reveals how literary concepts such as metaphor and allegory are conventionally associated with poetry, and that past curricular history was resilient in spite of the students’ work with everyday figures in the course. However, on this occasion, Alice understands the role of metaphors to make people view things in a different light. This idea connects with the work in class on the use of conceptual metaphors to present different political views on the Iraq war and on the bullfighting scene from Hable con ella. Through her extended metaphor and by withholding the source term, Alice is able to make the reader experience all the crude feelings of alarm and uncertainty before going into a battle: “I wanted the reader to view the simple act of graduation through a new light. It’s not simply the end of high school, rather it is the beginning of a new era in one’s life” [LOG3].

Unlike Alice’s previous compositions, this narration is not about transmitting information quickly, explicitly, and unambiguously, guiding the reader through an easy-to-follow structure, etc. This composition is about viewing a common event under a
different light. It is about constructing personal meaning through the creative use of language, telling the story through the manipulation of linguistic devices, in particular through an allegory and the use of aspect (see next chapter on aspect). Alice was asked about the importance of creativity for writing by the end of the course:

(37) Alice, LT3

ALICE: Con la primera composición no fui muy creativa porque … I was used to?

[With the first composition I wasn't very creative because … [how do you say] I was used to?]

T: Estaba acostumbrada.

ALICE: Yes, sí, _estaba acostumbrada a escribiendo en la forma de ensayo y con práctica puedo escribir con creatividad._ Y _en la composición pasada usé una metáfora extendida y me gusta_ [Yes, I was used to writing in the form of essay and with practice I can write with creativity. And in the past composition I used an extended metaphor and I like it] [Laughs].

T: ¿Te gusta … [You like …]

ALICE: Sí [Yes!]

T: … _la idea de usar metáforas_ …? [… the idea of using metaphors?]

ALICE: _Sí, es más interesante para mí cuando escribo y puedo usar mi imaginación y no tengo límites_ [Yes, it’s more interesting to me when I write and I can use my imagination and I don’t have limits]

Using an allegory is interesting for Alice because it allows her to engage her imagination and to explore meaning without the traditional constraints on language and the fear of moving beyond “basic sentences” (Alice, C1). Similarly, at the end of the course, Gulliver explains that he chose to be creative with his compositions because he enjoyed it, he was not penalized for making mistakes “when trying new things,” and
because he did not want to write “boring stories” but stories of which he could be “proud” (LT3). Just as Alice viewed creativity as a way of moving beyond her comfort zone, Scheherazade tried to be creative because “it probes the mind” (L2), and Ophelia enjoyed it “basically because it’s fun” (LT3).

Paradoxically, despite participants’ willingness to be creative, they reported their inability to exert their creativity due to the amount of work at school (Ophelia, LT3, Ulysses, LT3, and Lara, LT2) or being penalized for making mistakes (Alice, C1; Gulliver C2, LT3). This tells us about how little conventional education is concerned with creativity, which in turn forces literature to occupy an estranged—instead of an exploratory, creative, meaningful, and personal—place in the curriculum and in the students’ histories. This may also account for the fact that some students usually enjoy books in their leisure time while they dislike or even fear literature courses (see Barnes-Karol, 2002). Among the participants, all students reported liking some kind of literature, including Darcy, who manifestly disliked literature but enjoyed reading certain short stories for the vocabulary (Darcy, LT2). Juliet had even started a reading club with a friend in the past, and Dorothea and Lara had tried to read novels in Spanish during the summer holidays. However, participants either feared or disliked literature courses, or preferred to take what they perceived as “useful” courses, such as conversation, phonology, business, etc. due to their utilitarian view of learning. As Barnes-Karol commented, typically, foreign-language students see time spent reading literature as time robbed from more practical courses with an immediate application to their life beyond graduation—conversation courses, advanced grammar, and Spanish for special purposes (e.g., business Spanish or Spanish for health care providers).

(Barnes-Karol, 2002, pp. 13-19)
By humanizing (literary) discourse, the estrangement of literature in the foreign language curriculum may lessen. For example, students initially reported high interest in creative writing exercises with literary texts, especially when they were presented with a puzzle to solve. Here are some comments on the reconstruction exercise with Cortázar’s story: “Just excited to find out what this text is” (Juliet, P, Daily Log, February 5); “What the heck is going on in this story?” (Juliet, P, Daily Log, February 12); “I can’t wait to put the rest of the story together and see where it goes” (Ulysses, P, Daily Log, January 27); “We did a worksheet on reconstructing the story. I’m really interested in the rest of it. I want to know what’s going to happen” (Ulysses, P, Weekly Journal, Week 4, February 3-5); “Aprendimos más sobre el cuento esta semana y está poniendo más sordido e interesante” [“We learned more about the story this week and it is getting more sordid and interesting”] (Emma, P, Weekly Journal, Week 5, February 10-12); “Estamos anxious por saber y para ver qué pasa” [“We are anxious to know and see what is going on”] (Scheherazade, LT2); “It’s exciting to see the story unfold. I like mysteries a lot so I am excited to see where the story goes from here” (Dorothea, P, Weekly Journal, Week 4, February 3-5); “Esta semana en clase trabajamos en el cuento misterioso. Quiero saber qué ocurre en el cuento … estoy impaciente” [“This week in class we worked on the mysterious story. I want to know what happens in the story …. I am impatient”] (Lara, P, Weekly Journal, Feb 10-12). Reconstruction activities allow students to participate in literary texts, which humanizes literature by allowing students to make personal meaning out of it. This may bring into the classroom the interest and curiosity that students find in opening a book in a different context.

The lack of a place for creativity in the curriculum, the separation between literature and everyday discourse, the metaphor of text as a container of unambiguous information, and the traditional view of accuracy appear as manifestations of the
dominance of the logicomathematical mind in school. Egan and Gajdamaschko (2003), who criticize the traditional emphasis of the learners’ logicomathematical capacities to the detriment of fantasy and imagination in the school setting, emphasize how extreme emotions and feelings, such as those related to the limits of reality, transcendence, idealism, rebelliousness, etc., may serve as mediators of literacy. (See also note 2 in Chapter 3, and Chapter 6 of this dissertation on the dialectic relationship between emotion and cognition in the Sociocultural perspective. See also Moskowitz (1978) on the need of humanistic teaching in the foreign language class).

Egan and Gajdamaschko’s main argument is that dramatic mediators such as fantasy and idealism offer students a great engaging capacity for learning about reality or the real world. The authors draw on Vygotsky’s (1998, p. 154) view on the role of imagination in adolescence in close connection with thinking in concepts. In other words, writing about (im)possible worlds may compel students to explore sociocultural meanings and the culturally sanctioned forms that construct those meanings. For example, writing a narrative about a fantasy trip such as the time-machine assignment for the second composition requires the understanding of the system of meanings generated by the varying interactions between the narrator’s temporal perspective/ s and his/ her focus/ foci, and how the Spanish system of tense materializes these meanings. On the other hand, an academic text, such as an analysis, a commentary, an exposition, etc. on the same topic would rarely offer the same opportunities for exploring how temporal perspective and the experience of time are construed in a foreign culture – at least, as these academic genres are traditionally construed in the conventional curriculum. Therefore, talking of learning “useful” or “practical” knowledge, imaginative assignments may mediate the learning of the real world, i.e. the reality of another
culture, in ways the formal academic essay, with its emphasis on the logicomathematical capacities, may not allow.

As students are provided room for exercising imagination, ideals, emotion, and personal meaning, learners have the opportunity to connect their everyday experiences, motives, and goals to a more abstract, general system of meaning choices. Thus, the abstract can be instantiated in its possible materializations; links may be established between theoretical concepts and individuals’ everyday, personal, significant knowledge, and formal instruction can offer the tools to solve problems that do not exist yet (see Chapter 4 on Sociocultural views on prospective education). As Egan and Gajdamaschko explain:

The educational task, then, involves the resuscitation of knowledge from its suspended animation in symbolic codes. The task is to convert, reanimate, transmute the symbolic codes into living human knowledge in students’ minds. This is the challenge whether the knowledge is about earthworms or is a literary text. The codes do not carry guarantees of meaning. The instrument best able to ensure the transformation from codes to living knowledge is the imagination.

(2003, p. 95)

This is especially true in Alice’s case, whose previous history as a second-language writer had constrained her imagination by limiting her exposure to a reduced range of genres contrived only for the academic setting. This did not allow her to move beyond her comfort zone or her Zone of Actual Development (basic sentences, nothing literary, formal essays) for fear of mistakes. Creative, literature-like writing allows her to explore how meaning is constructed through linguistic concepts within her Zone of Proximal Development:

(38) Alice, P, Weekly Journal, Week 11, March 23-25

I liked this composition because T told us to give a literary account of a turning point in our lives. My first two compositions I wrote in essay format because that
was what I was accustomed to. I decided to challenge myself this time to see how well I grasp the written Spanish language. I used an extended metaphor to describe graduation from high school, and I am very happy with the outcome because I am stepping outside of my Spanish comfort zone. However, despite Alice’s realization of the value of texts other than class essays, history may have lasting and even hindering effects. The following comment shows that Alice’s real intentions for her third composition were even more radical, and that she is still afraid of ambiguity in texts that are going to be evaluated by an instructor:

(39) **Alice, LOG3**

The only thing that I would want to do different if this wasn’t for an assignment would be to never reveal what the actual event is. I think I would entitle the paper “la graduación” and I would never say what it actually was.

Alice had thought of making the entire story an allegory without a visible source term (her graduation) and leaving an interpretative clue in the title (similarly to Benedetti’s *A imagen y semejanza*). Alice still feels that she has to write differently for class assignments, and is again reluctant to move beyond the conventional limits and writing standards by being completely ambiguous and obscure in her allegory, by writing only between the lines and not in the propositional content. It has to be taken into consideration that Alice has spent many years writing for the conventional instructor instead of for a displaced reader.

Similar to Alice, Gulliver also found aspects of his learning history restrictive and limiting. When T insisted that he might experiment with language without being penalized for errors in the study course, he replied,

(40) **Gulliver, C2**
GULLIVER: That’s good. I think that encourages people to try new things. I certainly felt in the past that in some language courses, especially the earliest ones, that you are discouraged from doing anything and always incorrect because you’re penalized for it … and I really … that’s really prohibitive of any learning.

T: Yeah, exactly! And you’re always making mistakes!

GULLIVER: And you gotta choose either good grades or learning.

Just like Alice and Gulliver, Ophelia felt that she did not have leeway for linguistic exploration in the traditional foreign language curriculum. When asked if she had opportunities to be creative in the past, Ophelia replied:

(41) Ophelia, LT3

OPHELIA: No muchos. En español 3 tenemos bastante trabajo en el libro de texto. En 100, 200 solamente escribe sobre “yo soy Ophelia, soy de Washington,” como ensayos de introducción y ensayos de … no sé, no escribimos cuentas o poemas o algo… algunas otras cosas literarias de ensayos. [Not many. In Spanish 3 [last course of the beginning three-course sequence] we had a lot of work from the textbook. In 100, and 200 [the two courses of the intermediate sequence] I only wrote “I am Ophelia, I am from Washington,” like essays with introduction and essays with … I don’t know, we didn’t write short stories or poems or something … literary things other than essays].

T: Sí, un español enfocado en la “grammatical accuracy,” en una gramática muy correcta, pero con reglas limitadas. [Yes, a Spanish focused on “grammatical accuracy,” on a very correct grammar, but with limited rules]
OPHELIA: Sí, que … como estamos aprendiendo español para escribir un ensayo en la escuela, pero cuando graduarnos no nos importa de los ensayos. Queríamos hablar español, y escribir cuentas y cosas con el diálogo y poemas es una manera mejor de aprender español para hablar el español. [Yes, … like we are learning Spanish to write an essay in school, but when we graduate we won’t care about essays. We will want to speak Spanish and writing stories and things with dialogue and poems are a better way to learn Spanish to speak Spanish]

Although Ophelia had taken pride for writing an introduction, a body and a conclusion – according to her parents’ concept of good writing (C1) – in her first composition, she finally realizes the artificiality of traditional formal academic genres, the limitations of writing essays “with introduction,” and of learning by the book. Ophelia notes that other texts, such as stories, poems and texts with dialogues, have a greater resemblance with both oral and written everyday language. By the end of the course, Ophelia realized the value of writing a variety of texts in the classroom, especially literary texts, which connected her personal significance as a writer to her goals as a language learner. In the following section, I will analyze other ways in which literature-through-language connected with participants’ personal significance and intuition about language and texts.

8.2 Connecting personal significance, formal instruction and writing ability

Ulysses was one of the students who enjoyed writing about significant topics in his writing assignments, as well as the transformations and the constant challenge of making his composition increasingly engaging with each draft. The following interaction
between Ulysses and T reveals Ulysses' degree of enthusiasm about writing a creative narrative piece and transforming it in an intradiegetic story for the next draft:

(42) Ulysses, C2

T: [Reads from composition] “Quería cambiar el pasado, pero cambiaba el futuro” … [“I wanted to change the past but I changed the future”]

ULYSSES: I had fun writing this!

T: Did you?

ULYSSES: Seriously!

T: Oh, wow. I’m happy you had fun. I tried to suggest topics that could be fun for you.

ULYSSES: Yeah. And then changing it for the next one and adding this stuff … I had no clue how I was going to change it to that. I meet this guy now at a bar or something … But I think I did … I think I did pretty good.

T: Oh, great…

ULYSSES: Have you read this next one?

T: I didn’t have time yet, but can you tell me?

ULYSSES: I’m excited, so this guy, the new narrator, goes to the bar and he’s thinking about killing himself later in the day but he wants to have one last drink […]

For the first draft of his second narration, Ulysses had written about how he had traveled back in time to rescue his grandmother from an early death, thus saving the existing and subsequent family generations from the consequences of this tragedy. However, his plan changed everybody’s lives for the worse and sent him to an obscure limbo in which he realized that he would never be born and that his grandmother’s death had happened for a reason. In the second draft, Ulysses makes this story an
intradiegetic narrative, that is, he makes his time-trip adventure an anecdotal narrative related by a character that belongs to an encompassing narrative world (see the discussion on diegetic levels in Chapter 5). The second draft, in which the first-draft story had to become intradiegetic, starts with a man that decides to have his last beer before committing suicide. At the bar, he meets a stranger who tells him how he traveled in time to save his grandmother and how his well-intentioned actions had terrible consequences for everybody, including himself. The stranger’s story, followed by the stranger’s sudden vanishing act, dissuades the man from carrying on with his suicidal plans and makes him accept his own share of misfortune, lest his suicide change everybody else’s life.

It seems that Ulysses is motivated to write because his writing is a purposeful, meaningful activity. In the first place, he had the opportunity of writing about a personal topic, in which transcendental emotions and ideals (e.g. heroism, loss, love, struggle, catharsis, destiny, acceptance of fatality, optimism, the supernatural) were involved. In the second place, he had discovered through reconstructing exercises that language was a resource for meaning, that he could create effects such as suspense and emotion in texts, and, therefore, he could imprint his personal sense onto his narrative. His comments on his purpose for writing in this composition are numerous:

(43) Ulysses, LOG 2

My first draft was a narrative told in the first person point of view. I wanted it to be an intriguing story where the reader could see what the narrator was thinking during the story. I wanted the reader to have an urge to read on and see what happens next.

It is also significant that the student does not seem to write an intriguing story for the instructor, but for “the reader” (which seems to be an abstract reader).
The participant realizes the evoking power of language, especially of figurative language:

(44) Ulysses, LOG2

My goal in the first draft was to tell an entertaining story and make it literature full of metaphors and symbols. I wanted it to mean more than just the words on the page.

Ulysses had started to experience the meaning potential of language and started to write very differently from his first composition. It is important to remember that during C1, Ulysses was willing to combine short clauses into complex sentences, and divide his narration into an introduction, a three-paragraph body, and a conclusion just because that was the way one wrote in education (C1). Additionally, his first narration revolved around transmitting “information.” The story was interesting only because of its propositional content, but was not made interesting through its language. In addition, Ulysses’ comments in LOG1 reveal an earlier vision of language in which linguistic resources are accessory, optional, and synonymous with choices, having no impact or consequences for meaning, e.g. subject pronouns:

(45) Ulysses, LOG1

In my original draft, I used “yo” a lot and did not really know the reason why. I always thought that it was just optional and I always decided to use it. However, the most important thing I learned while writing this [Composition 1] is that every word is used for a reason. “Yo” can be used to have emphasis. No words are really simply optional. They are important to meaning of not only the sentence but the idea of the story.

Ulysses starts to notice the meaningfulness of language through a literary emphasis on his composition –versus a mere focus on ‘accuracy’ in the traditional sense as in
mainstream foreign-language education. He realizes how something as apparently insignificant as the subject pronoun “yo” impacts not only the meaning of a sentence, but also the overall purpose of the story (i.e. dropping the subject pronoun would place the emphasis on the idea of ‘I do,’ on the activity, while making the subject pronoun explicit emphasizes the idea of contrast, ‘I and nobody else’).

Reflections in C2 and LOG2 show how Ulysses starts to construct himself as an author and agent: “I think writing is art. The words are my paint” (Ulysses, LOG2), which contrasts with comments in C1 that were geared toward following instructions and meeting the conventional writing standards (e.g. combining short sentences to make longer sentences). Unlike in C1, the student does not assume that a story is interesting because it presents an interesting “situation.” Ulysses’ comments begin to center on his writing purpose (which is making his stories interesting through the ways he narrates them), and on the personal significance that he extracts from writing. For him language is a tool for meaning making that allows him to write between the lines and to “mean more than just the words on the page”:

(46) Ulysses, LOG2

Essentially, I wanted to entertain with this paper. Language is so amazing and can be used in so many ways to mean so many things. It can be manipulated into beautiful stories and suspenseful novels. I wanted to entertain and write something worthy of reading.

Ulysses’ comments on the meaning potential of language were also abundant. He finds it fascinating how language can create views of reality. Similarly to Alice, Ulysses realizes the role of figurative language in non-literary and literary texts in creating views of the world:

(47) Ulysses, P, Weekly Journal, Week 10, March 16-18
Finally we’ve gotten to figurative language. This is one of my favorite topics in English and I enjoyed it a lot this week. The things that can be done with words is amazing. There's almost a magical aspect to it. The way words can inspire visions in the head is an amazing feat. I cannot wait to see what [missing word] next week.

Unlike his first composition, Ulysses does not follow the introduction-three-paragraph-body-conclusion pattern for his second composition. Maybe it was because he was guided by the ways the family story was told to him, because of the emotional aspect of the events narrated, or because he narrated it in an intuitive way, in imitation of the short stories that he had read or heard in his past. Following are the opening sentences of his text:

(48) Ulysses, beginning of composition 2

El día empezaba como todos los sábados en el año 1972. Las árboles hablaban una mensaje de advertencia en el viento fuerte, pero ninguna persona no podía escuchar el grito del presentimiento de la madre Naturaleza. Ese día hace sol, pero la oscuridad en el mundo era perceptible a simple vista.

[The day was starting like every Saturday in 1972. The trees were speaking a warning message in the strong wind, but nobody could hear Mother Nature’s foreboding scream. That day is sunny, but darkness in the world was perceptible on sight].

At the end of this first paragraph, Ulysses’ grandmother becomes the victim of a drunk driver. The setting is ominous, but it does not anticipate “information” or provide structure for the rest of the composition, which happens in chronological order. There are no opening questions and theses. The second paragraph describes how the family’s life is altered by this tragic event. The third narrates how Ulysses travels back in time to
change this event, and finally, in the last paragraph the protagonist ends up trapped in limbo because he has changed his mother’s life, and because of this, he will never be born. In the last line, there is a coda about how changing one single event completely changes everything in the world.

It seems that Ulysses writes his second composition using his intuition or everyday knowledge about narratives. When specifically asked, he responds, “La estructura es cronológica y es un hombre camina en un bar y hay un hombre y bla bla bla bla y no hay un hombre y el fin” [“The structure is chronological and there’s a man who walks into a bar and there’s another guy, and yadda yadda yadda and there’s no man and the end”] (Ulysses, C2). In his first composition, Ulysses’ intuition contradicted constraining, empirical rules about temporal coherence, short sentences, repetition, and the introduction-body-conclusion frame. However, in this case, Ulysses is able to connect his everyday knowledge of narratives to the contents of formal instruction. That is, to the formal description of narrative in the literature-through-language pedagogy of the course:

(49) Ulysses, P, Weekly Journal, Week 7, February 24-26

I enjoyed this week in class very much. We looked at some jokes in English and Spanish and pointed out the similarities and then we went through the things that make a narrative a narrative. It was interesting when I found that I had all those elements in my composition number two. This composition was my favorite of the two to write.

Participants had been introduced to the definition of oral narratives by Labov. They had been warned that not all narratives (whether written or oral) needed to have all the elements that Labov described. For example, narratives could start without an abstract and an orientation (e.g. Cortázar’s Continuidad de los parques), and could
conclude without a coda. Oral narratives (more than written narratives other than letters and other spontaneous pieces) may require the evaluating component because of the synchronic occurrence of interlocutors and the ephemeral, unplanned conditions of spontaneous oral speech. In addition, depending on the effect intended, narratives could happen in diverse orders. For example, they could start in the middle of a complicating event, which is called ‘in media res,’ or in the resolution, which would force the narrator to use flashbacks to narrate the rest of the story. In addition, tenses and aspect could be used to highlight different moves in narratives. For example, changes of tense usually happen between the orientation and the complicating event in jokes. Students analyzed short narratives in class (among which there were jokes, oral narratives and micro tales) according to this scheme.

Ulysses still needed help to identify the different moves in his narrative during C2, but the notion of narrative provided in class was one that had the potential of integrating his intuitive, everyday knowledge into a more generalizable system of knowledge:

(50) Ulysses, C2

T: ¿Te acuerdas cuando vimos en clase la estructura de las narrativas, que tienen abstract, orientation, complicating event, evaluation, resolution and coda? ¿Encuentras que tienes una estructura similar a esto? [Do you remember when we saw narratives in class? We saw that they have abstract, orientation, complicating event, evaluation, resolution, and coda?] ULYSSES: I think so, off the top of my head, I don’t remember what they were but I remember, like, going over …
T: The abstract and the orientation would be like the setting or the background, and then the complicating event is the problem, and here you might … I mean, the encounter with this guy, who might not be somebody from the earth…

ULYSSES: Yeah.

T: …so that’s the complicating event, and then the resolution is that the guy decides not to kill himself.

ULYSSES: Yeah.

T: And maybe you have a coda. You may have a coda or not. A coda is something that links your story with the present of the interlocutor, in this case …

ULYSSES: … of the reader.

T: Maybe like a moral or something that you say about life or that you conclude about life.

ULYSSES: There is, but the character realizes it.

T: Ah, ok.

ULYSSES: It’s kind of like a message from the character. [Reads] “Me doy cuenta de todo pasa por una razón en el mundo y mi vida ha cambiado” [“I realize that everything happens for a reason in the world and my life has changed”]

T: OK, so “me doy cuenta de que todo pasa en el mundo por una razón” is a kind of coda: ¿por qué es esta historia significativa?, ¿qué relación tiene con la realidad del lector o con la realidad de cualquier persona? [Why is this story significant? What relationship does it have with the reader’s or anybody else’s reality?]

ULYSSES: Sí. Y hay un abstracto, yo entro el bar [Yes. And there is an abstract, I go into the bar]… I entered the bar that I’ve gone to after work …after a long
day of work for many years and then I present the fact that I didn’t want to live anymore… or the narrator doesn’t …

T: *Muy bien y ahí empieza el nudo*, the complicating event.

ULYSSES: Yeah.

Unlike the traditional introduction-three-paragraph-body-conclusion scheme, the explanation provided in class could apply to all narratives, whether they had no abstract, orientation, evaluation, or coda, or started in the middle of the complicated event, or offered an open-ended resolution. The twists of fate and the suspense in Ulysses’ second narrative could not have been understood and explained according to the old traditional introduction-body-conclusion frame.

Like in his first composition, Ulysses uses repetitious structures, but, unlike in C1, he does not suggest combining sentences to make longer sentences and avoid repetition:

(51) Ulysses, C2

T: *En esta enumeración dices: “Mis hermanos y yo nunca éramos nacido y mi madre se casaba un hombre muy malo y mi madre nunca era alegre con su vida.”* ¿Hay alguna razón por la que repites “y … y … y…” ¿Quieres crear algún tipo de efecto? [In this enumeration you say “My brothers and I were never born and my mother married a very bad man and mother was never happy with his life.” Is there any reason why you repeat “and … and … and…”? Do you want to create any type of effect?]

ULYSSES: Uh … ¿En inglés, por favor? [[Can I answer that] in English, please?]

T: *Sí* [Yes]

ULYSSES: I wanted to sound like “and then … this and this and this and this and this ... never happened.”
T: OK, like a chain reaction.

ULYSSES: Yeah.

Later, Ulysses further comments in LOG2:

(52) Ulysses, LOG2

Como mi abuela nunca moría, mi madre nunca tenía una madrastra mala, ella iba a la Universidad y nunca conocía mi padre y ellos nunca se casaban. Mi madre se casaba un hombre muy malo y mis hermanos y yo nunca nacíamos y mi madre nunca estaba alegre con su vida.

Finally, in this sequence of sentences, I tied them all together with the word nunca. This is called paralelismo. It tied the magnitude of all these events together and how they never happened because the past changed. It works in English and it works in Spanish as well!

Ulysses does not consider combining sentences to avoid repetition. Moreover, he gives a name to that type of repetition, which is parallelism. His empirical knowledge (“it works in English”) has been elevated by theoretical knowledge of figurative language (“this is called paralelismo”) and a different conception of language as a resource for meaning full of choices. T’s only suggestion during the interview was to order the events in chronological order—which was not the original sequence in the first draft-- so that the succession of events contributed to the snowballing effect that Ulysses was pursuing. Whereas rules of thumb would have overlooked intention and meaning in the use of repetition, theoretical knowledge of rhetorical figures allows Ulysses to integrate his empirical knowledge (“it works in English”) into a system of meaning that allows him to evaluate the consequence of his choice and validate it. There were other cases of play with repetition with Ulysses’ and Lara’ compositions, which for reasons of space I will not include in the present discussion.
On the other hand, in his third composition, Ulysses partially reverts to the old scheme. The participant had misunderstood the instructions. The idea for the third assignment was to write about some extreme experience in the participants' lives and recreate the feelings, emotions, impressions, and experiences involved with linguistic choices rather than through the propositional content alone. To illustrate this idea, T reminded students of Benedetti's ant story (*A imagen y semejanza*) in which the ant is depicted as small and effortful not by these explicit words, but by the large amount of text devoted to narrate simple actions, and the single line that describes how the human thumb smashes the little insect. In Labov's terms, the abstract, orientation, and above all, resolution are minimal in comparison to the complicating events that the ant has to face (it is not able to lift the items that it finds on its way and take them to the anthill). This is the way Ulysses understands the assignment and explains the structure of his narration:

(53) Ulysses, LOG3

My first draft is a descriptive narrative. Since we had to take a small amount of time and stretch it out using figurative language to represent the amount of time like the ant story, I decided to take the pole vault, which is an event that takes 20 seconds long to do and turn it into a very descriptive drawn out event. The buildup is long on purpose, while the action of the vault is very quick. I did that on purpose. It is a narrative because I have a narrator, a setting of the scene, a dilemma, the action, and a conclusion. These are all aspects of the narrative. I organized my text in a chronological order because that best suites the event, its buildup, its climax, and literally its falling action. The main purpose of my first draft was to get the basic idea down. Hopefully it was very much a piece of
literature. I wanted to work with some figurative language and see what I could do with it.

Ulysses is far from the introduction-three-paragraph-body-conclusion scheme of his first composition. However, he seems to replace concepts such as abstract, orientation, and complicating events by more everyday notions such as “setting of the scene,” “dilemma,” and “action.” Additionally, he still reverts to the idea of conclusion, probably because of his history or ill-formed notions of resolution and coda. Ulysses’ ending seems like the classical conclusion in a formal academic essay in that it is an external evaluation of the event and clinches the composition by returning to the main theme of freedom during the pole-vault:

(54) Ulysses, composition 3, draft 2

*Es muy difícil describir. Los sentimientos y los pensamientos pertenecen al saltador de pértiga. Ninguna persona sabe y yo no puedo describir más allá de las palabras anteriores. Es la vida de un saltador de pértiga. El instante libre es el instante que nosotros vivimos. El vuelo es mi fuga. El vuelo es mi vida.*

[It is very difficult to describe. The feelings and thoughts belong to the pole-vaulter. Nobody knows and I cannot describe beyond the above words. It is the life of a pole-vaulter. The free instant is the instant in which we live. The flight is my escape. The flight is my life.]

On the other hand, Ulysses is still oriented by meaning in his third composition. He creates certain effects, such as dragging out the vaulting moment, choosing a chronological sequence in order to construct the increasing intensity and decline of the sportive event, etc. This makes Ulysses’ rationale and choices meaningful versus his meaningless adherence to empirical rules about writing texts in C1 (e.g. ‘that’s the way you write in education’).
For the second draft of the same composition, Ulysses thought of writing a poem, but eventually he decided against it because it was the end of the semester, and he did not have the necessary time to devote to the task. However, he did write an interesting comment about his rationale for such a transformation.

(55) Ulysses, LOG3

b. My second draft is once again a narrative containing all the elements I had in the first draft. In all actuality, since I feel the pole vault is an art form, I would have loved to have changed the genre to poetry. However, I did not have enough time to come up with a piece that would have been good enough. Maybe someday I will turn this into a poem. The main goal of my paper is to allow a non pole-vaulter to experience the thrill and sensations of someone who has competed in that event. I feel confident I was able to get that across through the language I used. Also, I wanted to generalize the story to every time that I have ever vaulted, not just one. That’s why it is presented in the present tense.

c. Like I said before, poetry would be my form of expressing the pole-vault. The movements are so fluid that they flow like the language in a poem. I would increase the tempo at the fast runway part while mellowing it out when I’m in the air and loudening the language as I come crashing back down to earth. Poetry would be amazing for this piece.

Ulysses, just as in the origins of art, is focusing on the artistic form of pole-vaulting, independently of its social function. That is, he is stripping pole-vaulting of its sportive aspect and focusing on its form. This is something that Ulysses had also done in the activity of describing a bullfighting scene through the metaphor of art. Ulysses focused on the formal aspects of bullfighting and saw it through the metaphor of classical dance:
“I just see bullfighting as a classical form of dance. It’s poetry in motion full of respect for the creature. It’s artistic, traditional and symbolic” (Ulysses, P, Daily Log, April 15). As the formal properties of pole-vaulting become the focus of Ulysses’ attention, he reflects on how the formal properties of a poem could mimic the changing tempos of pole-vaulting. Students’ attention had been directed in the LTL course to pronunciation beyond the word, and to rhythm. Learners had been taught how Spanish is a syllable-timed language and were explained how schemes in Spanish poetry are based on the number of syllables of each line (in contrast with the structure of feet in English, which is a stress-timed language), the occurrence of rhyme, and stresses. Ulysses did not know until this class that Spanish, unlike English, is a syllable-timed language in which chunks of syllables are joined by linking and syneresis:

(56) Ulysses, P, Weekly Journal, Week 6, February 17-19

We worked on pronunciation this week. It is interesting to see how rhymic [sic. rhythmic] language is. Generally speaking, Spanish is spoken in chunks grouped by the stresses. We then looked at some words on Thursday. Pronunciation takes practice. When I read now I try to find some sentences and work on my pronunciation. Finally we looked at how language that is literary or poetic is actually used in common language. All in all it was a good week.

Ulysses’ comment reveals how little work is done on linking words in oral discourse in the foreign language class. By teaching poems earlier in the foreign language classroom, not only would students be able to understand how poems are rhythmic, but they would also be learning about pronunciation of chunks bigger than words.

43 In addition to the explanation that follows about stress and words joined in chunks, the student talks about “rhythm,” not rhyme, in the learning log of this particular day (February 17th).
Just as with Ulysses, Ophelia’s comments reveal how much meaning potential students are missing by not being taught to write poems in the foreign language curriculum. Ophelia tried to write a poem without much success. T asked Ophelia what might be the problem, what made a poem a poem, and what was missing to some extent in her own poem. Ophelia responded that her piece was lacking patterned language and rhythm. T reminded Ophelia that Spanish is not a stress-timed language and that rhythm in Spanish poetry is based on the number of syllables and the place of stressed syllables. Ophelia replied,

(57) Ophelia, C3

_Y esto es tenía muchos problemas con [sic] cuando estaba escribiendo porque no pienso como poeta española. Tengo las ideas de la poesía inglesa en mi cerebra … cerebro or whatever y es difícil mezclar a los dos tipos._

[And that is what I had problems with when I was writing because I don’t think like a Spanish poet. I have the ideas of the English poetry in my brain and it is difficult to mix both types]

Ophelia not only faced problems with how to create patterned language in Spanish but also with how to create rhyme since she was not sure what words rhymed in Spanish. In spite of having read Spanish poems in the past, Ophelia had not anticipated all these issues until she actually started writing the poem. The author position forced her to make choices based on some kind of knowledge that had to be applied. The student’s active position with respect to texts brings needs and problems to the fore and makes language and, in this case, rhyme and rhythm, visible. The implications for a pedagogy of literature is that it is not safe to assume that students will literally see the formal aspects of language in literary texts if they are not placed in the author position and given appropriate instruction. Therefore, unlike in mainstream education, rewriting and
transformation should precede analysis; for true appreciation of literary works, analysis or commentary of literary works should be the last step, not the first.

So far, I have analyzed how students have made decisions and choices within texts. The choices examined thus far affected genre, frames, and repetition. Another interesting question is how text-based instruction impacted students’ attention to lexicogrammar. I examine this question in the following section.

8.3 Texts and the particulars

One of the underlying beliefs behind postponing texts to the more advanced stages of the foreign-language curriculum is that students first need to learn the grammatical basics in order to be able to deal with larger units of language, such as texts. This constructs text and issues related to genre as an external tier or layer separable from lexicogrammar, and it makes it seem as if students can only focus on either the general formal aspects of texts (such as schematic structure) or local grammar. This separation between macro and micro components in discourse is not exclusive of writing, but also of reading. In traditional second-language pedagogy, the so-called reading ‘skill’ is usually divided into four subskills – namely, scanning, skimming or reading for the gist, extensive reading, and intensive reading- according to attention to the general frame or to the detail, the general purpose of a text, and the particulars. As to oral skills, one of the premises of the weak version of the Communicative Method is that a focus on accuracy may distract students from fluency, and the other way around. In addition, a focus on the ‘overall meaning’ and a de-emphasis on the particulars is supposed to maintain a low Affective Filter, which is assumed to afford acquisition (see
Lee and VanPatten’s 1995 popular work). Therefore, a focus on overall meaning is encouraged in the early language-learning stages.

Not only does this foster a dismembered, fragmented view of language, but it also contributes to learners’ focus on propositional content, or, what they call the ‘information.’ It also facilitates learners’ lack of linguistic awareness of the synergy between lexicogrammar and text that construes a vision of reality, which may or may not be explicitly related in the content. Some of the participants’ attitude to “details” reflects this view of language learning. In C1, T directed Ernest’s attention to “cuenta” (account, versus the intended word “cuento,” that is, “story”). He commented:

(58) Ernest, C1

It’s just one of those things when I’m … when it comes to me I’m very much concerned with the grand theme of writing and not with all the specifics: oh this should be an “a,” oh this should be an “o,” oh bla bla bla … and so … I do this with English all the time … you know what I’m saying? Like … what…?

[laughs]

This attitude towards “details” was also reflected in the initial phases of the reconstruction activities. For example, students did not notice “details,” such as the unconventional use of aspect in Cortázar’s short story: “Primero entraba la mujer, recelosa; ahora llegaba el amante, lastimada la cara por el chicotazo de una rama” [“First, the woman entered-imperfect fearfully; now, the lover arrived-imperfect with his face slashed from an encounter with a branch”]. The striking aspect of this issue was that the use of “entraba” and “llegaba” were unconventional from the point of view of the empirical rules to which students were accustomed (preterit, not imperfect, for short, quick finished actions and events). Students explained that they had not realized that it was imperfect, just vaguely some form of past, but even if they had realized that it was
imperfect, they would have shrugged it off as one more exception (February 24th class). At that point, T decided to combine the jumbled-text activity with a fill-in-the-gap exercise, focusing on verbs for the next class. The concepts of aspect and tense had to be introduced so that the students could create and contrast different versions of the story and see how these options made the text mean.

As students are used to focusing on the general propositional content of texts, it is difficult to alter their awareness after many years of behaving either intuitively or reacting automatically to meaningless rules. Zuckerman (2003) comments that creating learning activity is a challenge, especially “when most students entering school are eager to act on the spot manifesting little or no observable propensity for preliminary orientation in their future actions” (p. 180). For example, Juliet explains that she pays attention to “lo que suena mejor y makes more sense” [“what sounds better and makes more sense”] when it comes to choosing the preterit and the imperfect (LT3), which shows lack of preliminary orientation. Dorothea comments on how she uses her intuition or empirical knowledge to punctuate instead of referring to the essential function of each punctuation mark:

(59) Dorothea, P, Weekly Journal, Week 3, January 27-29

This week in Spanish we learned about the use of punctuation in writing. I have known how to do punctuation, but I have never actually learned the definition of a comma or semicolon. It has always just come natural to me. It’s difficult for me to pay attention to rules when using punctuation.

In light of the concept of utterance that is advocated in the present study, the atomistic and summative notion of text as the general plus the particulars is as unrealistic as it is detrimental for learning. All choices, whether local or structural, have a synergetic effect on the overall meaning of a text. The attention to general ‘meaning’
(with a de-emphasis on the particulars), which prevails in the beginning stages of the traditional curriculum, may lead to unawareness and unfocused actions based on intuition and the fallible feeling of ‘what sounds better.’ On the other hand, from the Sociocultural point of view, attention and control can be learned. Whereas the view of mind as an epistemological or psychological organ seems to underlie the idea that students need to be ‘prepared’ before dealing with texts, the Sociocultural notion of mind as a discursive process (Harré and Gillet, 1994; Frawley, 1997; Frawley and Lantolf, 1984; Wittgenstein, 1953; Roebuck, 2000) or a psychocultural organ underlies the idea that attention and creative-critical capacities can be learned. Arievitch and Haenen (2005), seconding Galperin and Kablynitskaia (1974)’s ideas, explain, “the activity of monitoring and checking one’s performance is a material prototype and the source of psychological processes of attention;” therefore, students can “be taught to be attentive through organizing their material activity in such a way as to allow for a systematic control of performance” (p. 162).

If we apply these concepts to LTL pedagogy, puzzles posed in discourse-based, meaning-oriented reconstruction activities forced learners to contemplate all possible solutions to a problem and the overall consequences of each choice within the text, which are forms of monitoring and paying attention to one’s performance. As students were provided with orientation in the form of diagrams and charts based on theoretical knowledge of language concepts, they started to perform these operations “materially” (for example, choosing determination in Lorca’s poem by using the Spanish determination diagram in Appendix A). With time, these operations may be internalized by learners, and they may end up carrying them out “mentally,” thus developing control of those operations.
Students’ comments point to the idea that puzzles posed in texts made them pay attention to language and the consequences of their choices. Below, Dulcinea comments on the jumbled-text activity:

(60) Dulcinea, P, Weekly Journal, Week 9, March 16-18

This week we finished with the story. We worked in groups to determine possible interpretations of the story and tried to understand what it meant. During our conversation in class, it helped to further clarify the use of the preterit and imperfect. I think that looking at a text in the manner that we did, helped me to understand the different effects created when you use different words and tenses and also that punctuation certainly creates an effect for the text. By [sic] breaking the text up into fragments that we had to put together made us look at placement of words in a sentence.

Dulcinea is clearly attributing her understanding of how “different effects” for a text can be created with various words, tenses, and punctuation to the jumbled-text activity. Dulcinea specifically comments on how having to put the fragments of a text together made her pay attention to the “placement of words in a sentence.” On a significant note, the participant comments on the impact of words, tenses, and punctuation on the text, not on specific sentences or contexts. In line with this, the next chapter, on aspect, will show how students started to consider grammatical points, such as aspect, in terms of their role within texts rather than sentences.

In the comment below, Ernest accounts for the use of the preterit and imperfect not in terms of the rules of thumb, but in terms of “showing” different parts of the development of an event or action. However, he still uses the word “tense” as a synonym of verbal form and to refer to the preterit and the imperfect, which is a remnant of his history and applicable to other students as will be seen in Chapter 9:
This week we finished up the story and continued to examine the difference between the tenses. In general terms, imperfect is used to show the events as they unfold and the focus is placed on the action. Preterit is used more to show completed actions or to place focus on the action as a whole including the ending. **We also looked at how the author used this idea to play with the concept of reality.** It was a really good story. I enjoyed the confusion and open-ended nature of it. **Stuff like that makes the reading more interesting. It was fascinating how the use of the preterit could create the feeling of reality and however the author with minor changes in the wording could create such confusion.**

Aspect is used “to play with the concept of reality,” and Ernest seems to be fascinated by the awareness of how “minor changes” can have a great impact on the story. His appreciation of the text and the author’s linguistic choices comes from a more meaningful understanding of aspect, which is still emerging, and the contrast of different versions of the text. In addition, Ernest discusses the choice of preterit and imperfect within the context of Cortázar’s story (as opposed to individual sentences), as a way of creating a particular discourse, that is, a view of the boundaries between reality and fiction.

Through the comparison and transformation of multiple texts, Ernest also realized how certain effects motivate choices of tense within texts and between moves in genres, which lead the participant to establish connections between text and lexicogrammar:

We looked at tenses in the context of a news report which made it interesting because **the contextual meanings of the tenses change depending on the rhetorical situation of the piece of writing**. It was interesting to see **which tenses were chosen and why, and what effects that creates**.

Again, these connections are easier to establish when students’ are placed in the author’s role and are able to experience the differing effects of various versions of the same text. Some participants were taking traditional literature courses simultaneously. Gulliver mentioned in LT2 that they are reading Cortázar’s stories in another class, but with a different methodology, consisting basically of the conventional procedure of learning content about the author and the literary movement first, then reading the story on their own, and finally analyzing the work. Gulliver was asked to evaluate the alternative pedagogy in light of the more traditional one.

(63) Gulliver, LT2

T: Do you think that reconstructing the story helped you understand how the story was constructed?

GULLIVER: *Si con la comprensión de los eventos* [It did with the understanding of the events]… **When we put it back together, it helped a lot with actual grammar and how the word order matters a lot and like that**. But like, the overall understanding of the story, the plot, probably it would have gone either way, in the same level at least. **But it definitely helps, like, to get the order right. When you take it apart and put it back together, you learn… you learn less about the story and more about the language.**

Reconstructing the jumbled text forces students to pay attention to language, and not to rely merely on the plot or propositional content to know the story. Reconstruction activities compelled participants to pay attention to how language could be manipulated
to construct meaning. Below, Ernest, who was taking a conventional literature course, is asked if there is transfer between the two courses:

(64) Ernest, C2

T: *Notas que este curso* [Literature Course] *te ayuda con 300* [LTL course] *o 300 con este otro curso?* [Have you noticed whether this course [Literary Course] helps you with 300 [LTL course] or does 300 help you with this other course?]

ERNEST: *Ah, sí. Creo que es más que 300 me ayuda en* [Literature Course] *porque* [Literature Course] *es más como leyendo y hablar de movimientos de la literatura y cosas como esto.* [Uh, yes. I think it’s rather 300 helps me with [Literature Course] because [Literature Course] is more like reading and talking of movements of literature and things like that]

T: *Entonces crees que 300 te ayuda más … ¿por qué?, ¿qué cosas …* [So then you think that 300 help more … why?, what things?]

ERNEST: …*cosas como una enten… understanding?* [Things like an unders … [how do you say] understanding?]

T: *Entendimiento.*

ERNEST: … huh! That’s right … *entendimiento del … de la lengua y cómo la lengua puede … puede ser … twisted? para el significado.* [Understanding of … of language and how language can… can be … [how do you say] twisted? for meaning]

T: *Puede ser manipulada.* [Can be manipulated]

ERNEST: …*manipulado para el significado.* [Manipulated for meaning]

Ernest’s, Gulliver’s, and Dulcinea’s comments seem to point to the fact that a discourse-oriented framework forces students to pay attention to “details,” and that attention, in the form of monitoring and checking composing-interpreting operations, can be learned or
appropriated. The above comments revolved around the (literary) texts used for the co-authoring activities in the LTL course. By the creative-critical principle and according to the notion of development in the Sociocultural perspective, participants should be able to recontextualize the linguistic resources and processes appropriated in the co-authoring activities in the LTL course to other texts. Because of this, the following section will discuss whether students paid attention to “details” in their compositions in addition to the texts used for the LTL course co-authoring activities. That would translate into the students’ creative and meaningful deployment of linguistic resources (such as aspect, tense, punctuation, different types of utterance, etc.) in their own texts.

8.3.1 Learned attention and learners’ compositions

In Chapter 7, we discussed how students could only improve their first composition by adding additional “information” in the form of anecdotes, examples, further details, adjectives, and (sometimes too clichéd or somewhat stale) literary figures to enhance very concrete descriptions (compare Table 7.2 with Table 8.1 below). Resources for constructing and enhancing meaning were generally poor, unoriginal and mainly related to vocabulary. Except for a few exceptions, students did not employ (or were not aware of) lexicogrammatical and textual resources in their own compositions, and, when a lexicogrammatical or schematic resource was used, it was mainly intuitively and easily invalidated by traditional formal knowledge of language and texts.

Learners also listed and commented on the linguistic resources that they employed for the rest of the compositions in C2, C3, LOG2, and LOG3. Table 8.1 (below) reflects the resources for which students had shown preliminary orientation, personal meaning, choice, intention, and conscious awareness, and for which students
were able to provide a meaning-based explanation (rather than posterior, rule-based rationales).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COMPOSITION 1</th>
<th>COMPOSITION 2</th>
<th>COMPOSITION 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>dialogue, additional adjectives, synonyms, *metaphors, *similes</td>
<td>dialogue, + metaphors, + similes, (+ hypallage)</td>
<td>++ allegory with withheld (source term), negative vocabulary to sustain (allegory), (+ personification), (fictive motion), + parallelism, punctuation, (utterances other than sentences), short sentences, aspect, voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>*metaphors</td>
<td>dialogue, original wording, addition of the character’s thoughts and feelings</td>
<td>descriptive words, *metaphors, ++ personification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juliet</td>
<td>personal tone, real-life example, interjections, exclamations points, past tense, additional adjectives, + metaphors</td>
<td>examples, personal tone, (leading) questions, humor, ++ parallelism</td>
<td>personal anecdote, personal reactions, dialogue, ++ parallelism, ++ personifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheheraz.</td>
<td>descriptive vocabulary</td>
<td>(*hyperbaton)</td>
<td>dialogue, ++ allegory, stream of consciousness, short sentences, aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulysses</td>
<td>(*hyperbole), (intradiegetic narrator), (polysyndeton with patterned short clauses), circular structure</td>
<td>++ similes, ++ personifications, ++ parallelism, */ ++ metaphors, narrative schematic structure with ominous setting (pathetic fallacy), aspect</td>
<td>(sophisticated) vocabulary (to describe sensorial phenomena), */+/++ hyperboles, ++ paradox, */ ++ similes, */+ ++ metaphors, *onomatopoeias, aspect, tense, (long abstract, orientation, and complicating event; short resolution), (utterances other than sentences), short sentences, repetition, punctuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulliver</td>
<td>++ metaphor, (++personification), (media res), (manipulation of tense in one sentence)</td>
<td>repetition, (sophisticated) vocabulary (to describe sensorial phenomena), short sentences, (media res), manipulation of tense (with different narrative moves)</td>
<td>(sophisticated) vocabulary, ++ personification (++ fictive motion), */+/ ++ metaphors, change of tense (with narrative moves), aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character</td>
<td>Features</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest</td>
<td>+ anaphora, + similes (dramatic vocabulary), + paradox, (utterance other than a sentence), no gender markers for the protagonist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>*/ ++ metaphors, + similes, dramatic vocabulary, (++ personification), (media res)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>&lt;preview/ detail&gt;, warning signs, flashforwards, flashbacks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothea</td>
<td>anecdotes of her life, her personal motto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>+ / ++ comparisons, + / ++ metaphors, colorful, expressive vocabulary, detailed description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulcinea</td>
<td>specific vocabulary, subject pronoun drop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darcy</td>
<td>less common words, (sophisticated vocabulary), +/- ++ metaphors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ernest</td>
<td>less general vocabulary, description, (dramatic) imagery, + extended metaphor of light, aspect, tense, (implicit resolution) with a final question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>+/-++ metaphors, + personifications (fictive event), repetition, aspect, (implicit resolution) with final symbol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ophelia</td>
<td>repetition, (temporal perspective), (omniscient narrator), representation of speech and thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorothea</td>
<td>two characters' perspectives, more action to the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>more description, (+ hypallage), tense, aspect, representation of speech, repetition, magical element providing an (implicit resolution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulcinea</td>
<td>mystery vocabulary, hesitant play with (aspect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darcy</td>
<td>sophisticated vocabulary, ++ metaphors, ++ similes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* clichéd/ everyday literary figure (e.g. I let my hair down, Dorothea, LOG3)  
+ mildly original literary figure (e.g. the stormy sky was angry, Ulysses, LOG2)  
++ original literary figure (e.g. the ditch ran to me and opened its mouth to consume my front wheel, Gulliver, LOG3)  
( ) the specific term within brackets was not used by the student; the learner provided only examples or used a more general term  
< > the student uses this term, but the term is not appropriate or does not really apply to the student's text

Table 8.1: Lexicogrammatical and textual resources used by participants throughout the course
As can be seen in the table above, students’ figurative language became more sophisticated. For example, although they were aware of everyday and clichéd lexical metaphors (*), they began to use more original literary figures (+ / ++) in compositions 2 and 3. These literary figures are usually extended metaphors and do not just serve the purpose of enhancing punctual descriptions, but of presenting a whole state of affairs under a new light.

We have commented on Alice’s allegory of high school graduates as soldiers launched into a battle. In addition, in her third composition Scheherazade used the allegory or parable of kayaking on a river to represent life, with its smooth moments, its surprises, its beautiful landscape and its accidents. She constructed the sometimes placid, other times vertiginous, and occasionally abrupt contours of the river through stream of consciousness, free direct speech, aspect, and the length of sentences, thus giving lexicogrammar a textual, creative, meaningful treatment. Just as Scheherazade, Lara manipulated the representation of speech and thought, and repetition in her third composition with the intention of portraying the mind of an adolescent under a panic attack before a viola performance in high school.

In addition to figurative language, students also began to manipulate aspect and tense creatively. Gulliver had played intuitively with tense in one specific, isolated sentence in his first introduction-body-conclusion narrative-like composition. For his second and third compositions, the student wrote entertaining narratives with the appropriate narrative schematic structure, and marked narrative moves with tense. For example, in his second composition, Gulliver used present tense to narrate the moments right after he exited his time machine and was exposed to the first momentous sight of the world during the age of dinosaurs, that is, before the human being began to exist (the first complicating event):
Las teorías habían tenido razón. El paisaje tenía más en común con luna como la Tierra. Hacia frío. Un estrato compacto de ceniza negra cubría el
suelo y nubes finas de polvo gris cubría el sol. No podía ver mucha de la vida excepto pocos árboles sin hojas y manchas de hierba resistente, pero era lo que yo había esperado.

[Theories had been right. The landscape had more in common with the moon than with the Earth. It was cold. A compact layer of black ash covered the ground and thin clouds of grey dust covered the sun. I could not see much life except for a few trees without leaves and resilient patches of grass, but that was what I had expected.]

Following is Gulliver’s explanation for this switch of tense:

(67) Gulliver, LOG2

I manipulated the temporal feeling of the verbs to add to the content of the story. When I wanted the reader to feel as if he/ she were alongside the protagonist, I used the present. When I wanted the reader to feel left behind in the present while the protagonist traveled back in time, I used the past tenses. I feel that this worked very well.

Just as with the beginning, Gulliver brings actuality and live quality through the use of present tense to the end of his story again, when the protagonist travels back to the future, and exits again the time machine to find out that he is the only man on earth:

(68) Gulliver, end of composition 2

Un momento después, salgo de mi máquina otra vez, pero me doy cuenta de que he llegado al tiempo incorrecto. Vuelvo a la máquina para consultar los indicadores.

“No es posible” Los indiquen [sic éstos indican] que he llegado al tiempo y lugar correcto. De repente, un pensamiento espeluznante entra en la cabeza. Mi corazón brinca un latido. Entiendo lo que he hecho. Según la teoría del caos,
la aleteando inocente de las alas de una mariposa en Norteamérica cause un ciclón fatal en China.

[A moment later, I exit my machine again, but I realize that I have arrived at the incorrect time. I come back into the machine to consult the meters.

“It’s not possible.” They indicate that I have arrived at the right time and place. Suddenly, a terrifying thought crosses my mind. My heart skips a beat. I understand what I have done. According to the theory of chaos, the innocent flutter of a butterfly’s wings in North America causes a terrible typhoon in China.]

Gulliver uses tense within the scope of the text in this and his third composition, not because of contextual, sentence-based cues or rules of thumb, but because of his intention and perspective of choice at different moments of his narrative. In addition, Gulliver’s reflection in LOG2 explicitly comments how his manipulation of the story contributes to constructing the “content” of his narration. Meaning is constructed implicitly, between the lines through lexicogrammatical choices within the scope of discourse.

In LOG3, Gulliver writes additional comments on how grammatical choices construct meaning and content implicitly in stories. Gulliver writes on his manipulation of tense and aspect to describe a bike ride full of little accidents in his third composition:

(69) Gulliver, LOG3

At the level of the text, I used different tenses to add meaning. In other words, I used grammar to alter the meaning, which we saw in the poem we just did for the oral interview (about oblivion) [refers to Cernuda’s Donde habite el olvido]. In other words, as the story progressed, so did the tenses. It started off in the imperfect, then moved to the present perfect, then to the present to give the impression that the reader was “catching up” with me as a [sic I] fell.
In this comment the student refers to a lexicogrammatical choice such as tense as a matter of text (“at the level of the text”), which amply differs from the sentence-based treatment of tense and aspect in traditional foreign language instruction. In addition, the student insists that grammatical choices construct meaning in his composition, and connects this idea with the poem that he had discussed with T in LT3. As will be remembered, this was the poem in which Cernuda constructs what T called a “grammatical suicide” through the choice of gloomy juxtaposed adverbial clauses, an illustrative example of how literary works construct meaning through form in very conspicuous ways, and are, therefore, of great advantage for (foreign) language teaching.

Additional examples of how students started to pay attention to lexicogrammatical resources within their own texts will be discussed Chapter 9, which is devoted to the impact of LTL pedagogy on aspect.

In addition to the increasing quantity and quality of resources employed by students to construct meaning in compositions 2 and 3, another indication that students were paying attention to “details” within texts was the fact that some participants started to externalize their preliminary orientation and their creative-critical thinking on paper. Alice typed the first draft of her third composition and then she wrote comments in pencil. This mediational writing reflects the kind of thinking about choices and meanings that had taken place in the reconstruction activities and in interviews. Alice had appropriated the mediator’s (T’s) regulation. Due to format constraints, I have inserted those comments within square brackets in the text next to the item to which the comments refer, instead of on top of them:

(70) Alice, composition 3
El cielo gris amenazaba por encima de la cabeza, [I used a comma because there are two separate thoughts] y el ruido de truenos fue oído [passive voice] a la legua. De vez en cuando un rayo brillante iluminaba [didn’t just start and stop] el cielo, se mofrando la multitud debajo, [I’m not sure whether or not to use a comma here] amenazando a terminar este acontecimiento de gran trascendencia […]

De repente un hombre fue oído [passive] por el altavoz y todos, [commas because this thought could be left out] los espectadores y los soldados, estaban de pie con atención. Él escupió [start and finish] instrucciones breves y los soldados formaron una línea sobre el campo temblando de expectativa y miedo. Estaban de pie en la atención esperando por los mandos de las autoridades. La música comenzó [start] ocupando [I’m not sure if this is the correct way to express this] los pensamientos de la multitud, [new thought] y el primer soldado dio [start] un paso hacia delante. Hombre a hombre, mujer a mujer, los soldados entraban en fila. Saltaban los flashes de las cámaras como si lucharan [imperfecto de subjuntivo after como si] contra los rayos. Entonces los aplausos llegaban. Y los soldados marchaban con más seguridad. Cada soldado se aproximó al comandante para recibir un papel que prometía un futuro esperanzador. Mi corazón palpitaba. No podía esperar por un minuto más y preocupaba que perdiera [I wasn’t sure if I should use the condicional to express “would lose” but it followed an imperfect emotion and que which usually requires imperfect subjunctive] mi calma en este instante importante.

More comments like these followed until the end of Alice’s composition. As can be seen, many rules of thumb resurfaced in relation to mood and punctuation. However,
the significant part is that the student externalizes her thought processes in order to regulate her attention to language and monitor her performance. Alice even focuses on the commas of the text (we will see in the following chapter how Alice manipulates punctuation in order to create aspect). This is significant because most students did not see punctuation as a legitimate part of language by the end of the course, as will be seen in the next chapter. Additionally, Alice chooses the part of the structure of the action on which she wants to focus: beginning aspect [start] (comenzó, dio un paso), ongoing aspect [didn't just start and stop] (iluminaba), and completed aspect [start and stop] (escupió), regardless of whether these actions are short, quick, and completed in the past (for example, “iluminaba,” that is, lit-imperfect).

Noteworthy is Alice’s insistence that certain verbal forms are in the passive voice because the concept of voice was not examined in the LTL course; however, Alice treats the notion of voice meaningfully rather than based on the empirical rules. This is significant because Alice had learned the passive voice in Spanish 100 according to rules of thumb. Traditionally, students are provided contextual cues for using active or passive (use passive when the subject of the active sentence is specific; use passive with “se” if the subject in the active is general, non-specific, or implied, etc.). Passive voice has been conventionally associated with certain texts, such as scientific, medical, and journalistic texts, and with an ‘objective,’ ‘neutral’ writing style. However, Alice treats voice in a more meaningful, intentional, and purposeful way. As she commented, the use of passive voice was necessary as part of her allegory of naïve, obedient high-school graduates as army soldiers launched at a hostile, battling world upon graduation. Therefore, Alice seems to have been oriented by meaning and the pursuit of a specific effect, rather than by contextual cues or norms:

(71) Alice, C3
T: Can you comment on the use of passive? Why did you choose to use passive? How do you think that passive voice contributes to your story? For example, here you say: *se escuchó, se oyó, fue oído, fueron esperados* … [was heard, was heard, was heard, were waited for]

ALICE: Sí. I think that active is like, it’s the action and it’s happening. I think that the passive is more ambiguous and that is just contributing to this uncertainty that I’m trying to create that you don’t really know what’s happening. Also … like the crowd, I don’t know how to say but… the crowd… they are this group of people, they’re just there and so they’re here in this, but they’re not being active, they’re not really participating, they’re just … It’s just happening to them. So the soldiers … they just have to be there so …

Alice was also asked to contrast the active voice and passive voice in the same passage:

(72) Alice, C3

ALICE: I think that if I said, I would say “the crowd heard the man” and then that would be giving action to the crowd, which … I don’t really want to focus on the crowd, I just want them to be there. And then “the man was heard by the crowd” is saying that they’re just following orders again, the students are following orders, they’re just taking what is given to them. So they can’t help it, they’re just here.

From Alice’s treatment of voice, it seems that she had started to develop an orientation towards language as choice and as a resource for personal meaning, which included grammatical concepts not seen in the LTL course and that she had previously studied with a rule-based orientation. With her parenthetical comments, Alice shows that she understands that choices matter and have meaning consequences in the overall
construction of the world presented in her narrative. This is evidence of a change of orientation to meaning (rather than form) affecting all aspects of language, and, therefore, it is evidence of Alice’s linguistic development. Alice has learned to pay attention to language because she has internalized meaning-making processes that she begins to apply to all contexts.

Similarly to Alice, Lara includes questions written in pencil within her second and third compositions. I include the comments in her third composition because the comments in the second are mostly general questions while the comments in the third reflect the work in class on the literary cline. Lara typed those comments in brackets, but I make those metalinguistic comments bold for easier reading:

(73) Lara, composition 3

En el cuarto posterior, estoy sentado en el piso enmoquetado blanco (que está enmoquetado blanco: “white carpeted floor”) con las piernas cruzadas debajo de yo. Mientras agarro el instrumento, el que ha sido una parte de algunos tiempos mejores y de algunos tiempos peores de mi vida, mientras lo agarro contra el pecho manos pegajosas, miro el cuello de madera pulsa contra el pecho mientras el marchado ejército interior (does this mean the marching army inside?) pisa fuerte en un tiempo pesado […] Sorprendido, estoy lanzado (thrown back) en el cuarto climatizado […] “Se arremolinan más rápido … las horas de practicando las notas, construyendo el cansado, el compás de la presentación, y el entrenamiento de la mente para mandar la posición de los dedos han concertados en este momento del tiempo (blend all together as one word?)

Al instante, el torbellino en la cabeza metido a negro y el monstruo del cuerpo y el ejército en los oídos dejan como (here I want to say “bow” as in the part of
a stringed instrument... I looked up the meanings and could not find one that seemed to work) se estrella abajo en el acorde de apertura.

Lara made many mistakes related to the direct translation from her L1, but, on the other hand, many of Lara’s questions are related to lexical metaphors ("marching arming inside," “thrown back,” “bow”), which reveals awareness that certain expressions may not translate literally. This awareness of lexical metaphors connects with the student’s request for assistance during office hours with other potentially non-translatable expressions while she was in the process of writing the third draft of composition 2. Following a class on the description of path and mode of movement in both Spanish and English, Lara asked whether the proposition “I climbed into my car” should be translated simply as “I got into a car.” The student also needed confirmation with regard to “sipping away my problems, my frustrations, and my stress,” which she had reformulated as “sorbiendo para drawn my problems, my frustrations, and my stress.” Lara also wonders whether spelling and punctuation should be violated (“blend all together as one word?”) in order to mimetically construct the viola player’s overwhelming, confusing feeling of anxiety.

Juliet also began to circle phrases of which she was unsure in her third composition. Here are some examples (circled items appear within braces): {en} muchas maneras; …quien no es {una extranjera} a mis composiciones; …ha {aplicado por}; …el compañero de Brian, Ian, todavía {fue en cama}…; …mis ojos {bebían} las vistas ….; {tomamos} un viaje a Albany…. Unlike the other two interviews which had started with T’s questions on Juliet’s compositions, C3 started with Juliet’s questions concerning the translation of words and expressions that she had translated literally until that point. Juliet’s questions involved chunks of language larger than words (such as prepositional phrases and verbal phrases), collocations, and some metaphorical language (such as
mis ojos bebían las vistas.") The student also circles verbs in the preterit and the imperfect because she has problems with choosing aspect: usaba, encontré, leí, había, era, paré, pensé, tenía, fue. This is significant because the student had not questioned language in her first two compositions. Until that moment, as she had commented in her portfolio, when she wrote, she used her intuition and chose “what [sounded] better.”

Gulliver and Ernest did not leave marks on the paper, but they both showed signs of attention and self-monitoring. For example, just as with Juliet, while C1 had started with T’s questions on Gulliver’s composition, both C2 and C3 started with Gulliver’s questions and request for assistance. The following comment by Ernest also shows that he monitored his own performance while writing, which is something that he did not especially enjoy, because he preferred to write without planning, intuitively, acting ‘on the spot’, that is, without preliminary orientation:

(74) Ernest, C3

T: Cuando estabas escribiendo esta composición, ¿cuál fue la parte más difícil para ti? Es decir, ¿cuáles fueron las principales dificultades al escribir este tipo de composición? [When you were writing this composition, what was the most difficult part for you? I mean, what were the main difficulties in writing this type of composition?]

ERNEST: Creo que cuando escribiendo … oh, escribí… [I think that when *writing it … oh, *wrote it]

T: Cuando lo … [When I …]

ERNEST: … escribo? […] write?]

T: … escribía […] wrote]

ERNEST: Escribe. No me gusta pensar sobre cosas literarias y planear este tipo de escribiendo, pero … Sí, por eso creo que lo más difícil era que yo
necesito pensar sobre cada palabra y por qué estoy usando esto ... esta palabra. [Wrote. I don’t like to think about literary things and plan this type of writing, but .... Yes, because of that I think that the most difficult part was that I needed to think about every word and why I’m using it].

The next section examines (to the extent that possible, given the limited amount of data) whether students applied the same meaning-making processes to other courses following completion of the LTL course.

8.3.2 Beyond the LTL course

In order to examine how literature-through-language pedagogy impacted participants’ behaviors in other courses, a follow-up interview was carried out a semester after the LTL course ended. Only Lara, Juliet, and Emma volunteered to participate in the follow-up interview. This fact together with the limited scope of the study made it even more difficult to examine the question in the depth that it deserves. Participants were asked in the follow-up interview about whether the contents of the study course had been of any benefit to them in other courses. Lara’s and Juliet’s comments mostly focused on figurative language. Lara also commented how both reconstruction and analysis had been useful to understand Cortázar’s story. She added that she would not have nearly understood what was going on in the story as much as she did had they not reconstructed the fragments in the LTL course, because that allowed her to “know the story inside out” (Lara, F).

Emma reported that thanks to the LTL course, she was able to recognize metaphors and non-conventional uses of aspect in the magazines that she had to read for an oral expression course. When asked about a literature survey in which she was
also enrolled, she commented that it was easier to read longer works now than in the past. She added:

(75) Emma, F

EMMA: El leer hace más fácil, pienso que porque el semestre pasado construimos una obra de las clases y necesitaban juntarlos y me ayudaba a entender la estructura más fácilmente pienso y también con la … las … los detalles fue más fácil después de escribir las cosas del semestre pasado. Mis notas fueron muy muy buenas este semestre y pensé que es porque trabajaba con los ensayos de español como esto. [Reading is made easier, I think it is because last semester we constructed a work in class and we needed to put it all together and it helped me to understand the structure more easily, I think, and also with the … the… the details were easier after writing the things we wrote last semester].

T: ¿Y qué aspecto de los ensayos de español 300 [Study Course] te ayudó? [And what aspect of Spanish 300 [Study Course] writing assignments helped you?]

EMMA: Fue que … que necesitaba … es like I had to write the same things over and over y pienso que fue más fácil correctar mis propios errores, cosas que necesitaban hacer en mis ensayos de este semestre sin la ayuda del profesor. [It was that … that I needed … it was like I had to write the same things over and over and I think that it was easier to correct my own mistakes, things that I need to do in my essays of this semester without the professor’s help]

In the first place, Emma attributes her comprehension of structure and the subsequent easiness with which she reads to the reconstructing activities in the LTL course. The reconstructing activities made texts visible and within the students' ZPD. Additionally, the
transforming exercises in the compositions provided Emma with room to rewrite her drafts, which helped her edit and improve her compositions with less assistance from the professor the following semester.

8.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined how students changed from rule-based to meaning orientation in relation to textual schemes, frames, repetition, and generic choices. Learners, for the most part, meaningfully chose narratives with the appropriate schematic structure for the third writing assignment. Ulysses specifically commented on how the description of narrative provided in class perfectly applied to his second narrative, which he had written intuitively. The theoretical definition of narrative provided in the course allowed students to describe all narratives, to be creative with the narrative textual frame, and to integrate their writing abilities, intuitive knowledge and literary experience into an abstract, generalizable system of choices. It also allowed students to validate their choices without always depending on the instructor as a source of regulation. For example, while Ulysses considered eliminating repetition in his first composition in accordance with traditional beliefs about texts, the study of literary concepts on the literary-to-the-non-literary cline allowed the same student to recognize the effect of repetition in his second composition and to classify it as an appropriate, valid, meaningful literary figure (“this is called paralelismo”).

In addition, some students (e.g. Ophelia and Ulysses) started to consider writing in other literary genres such as poetry to suit their communicative purpose. The (co-) author position forced students to reflect on how patterned language in poetry could help their communicative goal, and on how rhythm was created both in their L1 and their L2.
Students connected this and other literary genres with everyday forms of communication. For example, Ophelia commented that learning language with stories, poems and “things with dialogue” was a better, more realistic way of learning a language than essays with introduction, body and conclusion.

The students also commented on how the reconstruction activities with Cortázar’s *Continuidad de los parques* had forced them to pay attention to how language (more specifically to sentence structure, punctuation, and word order) had been manipulated in the story. For example, Ernest commented on the blurred line between reality and fiction in Cortázar’s *Continuidad de los parques* based on “minor wording changes,” such as the manipulation of aspect. In addition, allowing students to participate in Cortázar’s narrative seemed to exacerbate their curiosity about the story, which reflected in copious portfolio comments.

The impact of LTL pedagogy on the students’ underlying conduit metaphor of communication was manifested in the fact that students not only began to read but also to write between the lines. It appears that the students paid increased attention to issues of lexicogrammar through text-based instruction. Learners began to write less explicitly and more evocatively, deemphasizing on the propositional content and highlighting the relevance of lexicogrammatical choices, as was examined in Table 8.1. In addition, these lexicogrammatical aspects attained a discursive dimension and textual transcendence in the students’ compositions. We analyzed Alice’s allegory or parable in her third composition to represent life after high school graduation, and how Gulliver used tense to mark different moves in his second and third narrations. This focus on lexicogrammatical choices was accompanied with students’ comments on personal motives for writing and on the artistic (“almost magical”) potential of language.
This chapter only analyzed a limited sample of the lexicogrammatical resources employed by students in their second and third compositions. As an analysis of all resources would be impossible due to constraints of space, the following chapter will only focus on the analysis of participants’ attention to aspect. I will analyze the students’ histories with the ‘uses of preterit and imperfect,’ and how a meaning-oriented, discourse-based account of aspect within literature-through-language instruction impacted participants’ understanding of this notion.
Chapter 9

Data analysis: from rule-based knowledge to emerging aspect

“Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire”

(William Butler Yeats)

Chapter 7 examined some of the effects of traditional foreign language instruction on the LTL participants’ conceptualizations of text, genre, language, communication, and writing. In particular, it discussed the repercussions of empirical knowledge of academic genres, and the conduit metaphor underlying the conventional language curriculum for the construction and interpretation of academic texts, non-academic texts, and literary discourse.

Chapter 8 examined the impact of LTL pedagogy on students’ interpretive-creative activity with texts, especially with respect to schematic structures, repetition, and generic choices. This analysis revealed that learners started to construct texts that evocatively invited abstract readers to enact particular discourses, as opposed to their previous treatment of texts as standardized containers of explicit information. In addition, students’ comments with regard to the construction of their subjectivities through the creative use of language in their compositions seemed to point to the emergence of a concept of language as a tool for personal meaning, rather than as a neutral code constricted by rules.

Chapter 8 also hinted at the emergence of learned attention to what students called “the details” within texts. The notion of “details” refers to lexicogrammatical choices (such as aspect and tense) rather than to structural concerns (e.g. textual frames) --although, obviously, lexicogrammatical choices conform to, are shaped by, and come into irreducible synergy with the whole meaning, form, and function of a text. In
this chapter, I will focus on details of lexicogrammatical choices, in particular as these relate to the manipulation of verbal aspect.

To start with, I will present the traditional, textbook empirical rules of the ‘uses’ of imperfect and preterit together with examples from the students’ compositions and composition interviews, which will illustrate the participants’ past learning histories, and their initial orientation to form in the LTL course. Secondly, I will analyze some of the students’ conflicting reactions to the introduction of the meaning-based explanation of aspect, as well as examples of the participants’ play with this concept in their compositions. Thirdly, I will examine the learners’ comments on the viability of theoretical knowledge of aspect in other language courses, as well as one participant’s comments on this concept a semester later in a follow-up interview.

9.1 An aspect of history without a history of aspect

"Very simple was my explanation, and plausible enough - as many wrong theories are!"

(H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*)

In traditional curricula, students are not usually introduced to the concept of aspect until they enroll in linguistics courses in the advanced stages of the curriculum. As most conventional learners of Spanish, the LTL students had learned about the ‘uses’ of preterit and imperfect, not about the concept of aspect, as a semantic perspective for thinking and talking about time. All participants in the LTL course, except Darcy, had taken Spanish 100 (the first course of the intermediate grammar and composition sequence at the time of the LTL study) at The Pennsylvania State University, and, therefore, had been instructed in the traditional rules of thumb approach to use of preterit
and imperfect. Darcy had learned about empirical rules in high school, and, like the other
students, was oriented to form rather than to meaning.

In order to corroborate the type of instruction that the students had received, they
were asked to explain when they used preterit and imperfect. The participants recited
the conventional set of rules with standard examples. The rules listed below sum up
what the students recalled; the examples have been extracted mostly from the students’
first composition interviews and LOGs. These examples reveal the persistence of
empirical knowledge even after discussions on the concept of aspect and work on
Cortázar’s story and other non-literary texts in the LTL course.

9.1.1 The ‘uses’ of the preterit in conventional foreign language instruction

The White Rabbit put on his spectacles. "Where shall I begin, please your
Majesty?" he asked.

"Begin at the beginning," the King said, very gravely, "and go on till you
come to the end: then stop."

(Lewis Carroll, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland)

1. The preterit is used for finished or complete actions in the past.

One of the many problems with this empirical rule is that students are rarely
taught that preterit can also refer to the beginning segment of an event or action. As
Alice commented, “I didn’t ever [sic even] know before that it's not simply a completed
action where you used the preterit tense. However, you use it at the beginning or end of
something” (LOG2). However, the most serious problem with this rule of thumb is that it
constructs time in “objective,” rigid terms, that is, always from a single future perspective
(i.e. from students’ present, which is posterior to the narrated state of affairs), and based
on contextual triggers such as “ayer” [yesterday], “el año pasado” [last year], etc.. This view of language as a neutral code that depicts events and other states of affairs in ‘objective’ terms is congruent with the conduit metaphor of communication discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

The view of language advocated throughout the LTL course, instead, both acknowledges and encourages subjectivity and personal meaning. In such a view, the selection of aspect depends on the perspective and focus that the speaker or writer wants to adopt. Therefore, completion is relative to a recalled point or narrative point (also called “narrated point” or “focus” in the LTL course) of choice. In the parabolic metaphor of aspect based on Turner’s notion of perspective (1996) used in the LTL course, events in the past are viewed from two temporal perspectives and with respect to two foci. The first perspective places a primary focus on the past, which projects a second perspective. The chosen focus of this second perspective (which is comparable to the notion of “recalled time” in Bull’s terms, see discussion in Chapter 4) can intersect with the beginning, middle or end of an event. The speaker or writer can also choose to focus on the whole bound state of affairs.

The idea of the second focus or “recalled time” (or “narrated time”) was difficult for learners to assimilate, and they occasionally continued looking at the event from a single, rigid future (i.e. posterior to the focus) perspective, or automatically reacting to contextual cues (e.g. temporal adverbials, specific verbs, habits, descriptions, emotions, etc). For example, Jane (C1), who wrote about her childhood with her two sisters, could not understand why “estábamos envueltas en muchas actividades” [“we were involved-imperfect in many activities”] was right if they were not involved in those activities anymore. In other cases, her answer was ‘right’ for the wrong reason:

(76) Jane, C1
T: OK. *Aquí dices “todas tuvieron [personalidades diferentes]...* [Here you say “all of them had-preterit [different personalities]”]

JANE: Oh, so it would be ... [5-second pause] *tenían [had-imperfect]*?

T: *Tenían? [Had-imperfect?] Why?*

JANE: **Because we still have different personalities.**

T: Because what?

JANE: **Because our personalities are so different, they didn’t stop being different.**

T: It’s an ongoing thing. The action of having different personalities is something happening at the moment, at the moment that you’re narrating. And what about this: *“pudieron tener peleas” [“they might-preterit have arguments”]?*

JANE: **That should be in the imperfect too, because ... [doubtingly] we still have fights.**

While preterit is also possible in all the above examples, it would be incoherent with the perspective in Jane’s narration (in which a series of events were narrated at a recalled time).

As with the examples above, other corrections made by Jane in composition 1 were ‘right’ only on the surface. Her comments reveal that she continued to apply the same rule-of-thumb-based rationale to similar cases. For example, in *“Tuvieron un influencia *mejor en su vida*” [“They had-preterit a major influence in her life”], preterit was the most conventional choice because, given the context that the student had created, one would normally look at this event as encapsulated in the participant’s lifetime. Jane considered changing it to *“tenían una influencia mejor en su vida” [“They had-imperfect a major influence in her life”],* not because she chose to place the narrative focus on the ongoing development of the action, but because her sisters still
exerted a major influence on her life at the present time. Thus, the same rule of thumb ('preterit is used for complete events') yielded both 'right' and 'wrong' answers (in the traditional sense), but always based on a wrong rationale.

2. Preterit for actions that happened once.

In the following example, Alice was asked to find possible mistakes in “fui selecta participar,” which should have been “fui seleccionada para participar” [I was-preterit chosen to participate]. Alice immediately suspected the preterit form of “ser”:

(77) Alice, C1

ALICE: OK. [Pause of 10 seconds] Is it “fui”?
T: “Fui” is fine. Why did you choose “fui” there? Why not “estaba” or “era”?
ALICE: Because … First of all, I use past because it’s one-time I was selected to participate and then I used … “ser”… yes, “ser” because I guess to slow it, I don’t know …
T: So what form of the verb is “fui”?
ALICE: First person past tense of “ser.”

It is not clear from Alice’s answer whether she realizes that she is using the preterit form of the copula “ser” since she describes her choice as a form of “past tense” on two occasions. This seems to reveal a lack of linguistic awareness because Alice is not only confusing aspect with tense, but also she is apparently unable to recognize whether the verbal inflection corresponds to the preterit or the imperfect forms. “Fui” was appropriate in that context, but not because preterit is used for ‘one-time events.’ For example, Antonio Machado nacía en Sevilla en 1875 [Antonio Machado was-imperfect born in Seville in 1875] is not an exceptional way of depicting a one-time event such as one’s birth. In traditional instruction, Alice’s choice of the preterit form and her rationale based on a contextual cue (number of times that an event occurs) would be accepted as
correct, despite the lack of meaning, intention, and choice on her part, and regardless of equally correct utterances (probably shrugged off as “exceptions”) such as the one about Antonio Machado’s birth above. However, Alice’s choice is appropriate in the context that she created because the event of “being selected to participate” would conventionally be viewed as bounded (although one could also choose to view the ongoing aspect of the same event).

Another problem with this rule of thumb is that many events and actions that just happened once may fall into the categories of descriptions, emotions, weather phenomena, and actions in the process of happening, which, according to traditional rules, should be expressed with the imperfect form. In other words, this rule can potentially enter in contradiction with other rules, which clearly evidences the lack of systematicity of rule-of-thumb-based instruction.

The following excerpt from Dulcinea’s C3 is just one example of the possible contradictions in which students can incur because of the unsystematicity of rules of thumb. Dulcinea was writing about her arrival for the first time at university after a long period of anticipation and impatience. Dulcinea and T discussed an excerpt about the student’s feelings when she was finally in one of the university halls after her parents left, a situation that she had tried to imagine over the whole summer. The participant was asked to explain why she chose imperfect in “Finalmente estaba aquí” [“Finally I was-imperfect here”]:

(78) Dulcinea, C3

DULCINEA: I used it just to kind of describe more of me being here cause I was going to go into more detail about my experience being here at first, but it could also be preterit just because I was here at one time, like … like I got here once so that’s … it’s never going to happen again…
T: OK, so if you look at the context, what do you want to emphasize, that you began and finished being there, or do you want to emphasize that you’re in the middle of being there? [Student’s silence] I mean, in that context.

DULCINEA: I want to focus on the “I was there” at one time, like …. Like, you won’t make it home for your first time once…

Dulcinea is trapped between two contextual cues that prompt her to choose opposite forms: description, which ‘triggers’ imperfect, and one-time events, which ‘triggers’ preterit. Finally, the rule of preterit for one-time events prevails. Despite work in class with perspective, Dulcinea’s history makes it difficult to frame the question in terms of aspect, as the student insists on emphasizing that she was at university for the first time only once, which is a choice of meaning that aspect alone in Spanish cannot depict.

3. Preterit for actions that happened quickly.

This empirical rule is another example of the unsystematicity of traditional rule-based instruction, for one can but assume that actions that happen slowly are then to be expressed in the imperfect. But what if an action happens slowly (but happens after all), and it is now completed? Which of the two rules of thumb is to prevail? Gulliver below faced this conflict when he was talking about parachuting and wanted to change “las tiras que le conectan a su pareja” [the straps that connect him to his partner] to the past:

(79) Gulliver, C1

T: In what form of the past would you write “conectan”?

GULLIVER: Yeah, probably in the preterit.

T: In the preterit?

GULLIVER: Or in the imperfect.

T: In the imperfect? Why the imperfect?
GULLIVER: 

*Cause he's been connected probably for a while.*

Gulliver chose preterit initially probably because the parachute straps no longer connected him to his mate (completed action), but T's question most likely gave him pause with regard to his choice of preterit and he then switched to consider the imperfect. It was not difficult for him to find a meaningless rule a posteriori to justify his change of mind --even if the latter rule contradicted the former.

9.1.2 The ‘uses’ of the imperfect in conventional foreign language instruction

1. Imperfect is the equivalent of to be + -ing. It is used to talk about incomplete actions and events in the past and to describe people or objects in the past.

Again, it is not difficult to incur in a contradiction with the above rule of thumb: what if the qualities or the object described no longer exist? Darcy (below) faced this contradiction in his historical comment on the Roman Empire. Darcy intended to write, “wisdom bloomed” or “was blooming,” but such a description was about something that already happened and was completed in the student’s present:

(80) Darcy, C2

T: ¿Puedes explicar por qué has usado el imperfecto aquí [“la arquitectura parecía maravillosa”] y el pretérito aquí [“el saber floreció como una charca llena de peces”]? [Can you explain why you used the imperfect here [“the architecture looked-imperfect wonderful”] and the preterit here [“knowledge bloomed-preterit like a puddle full of fish”]?]

DARCY: *Siempre los profesores me enseñaron que con adjectivos y descripciones siempre es imperfecto y aquí [“la arquitectura parecía*
maravillosa”] es lo que hizo... es lo que hice, pero aquí [“el saber floreció como una charca llena de peces”] yo no sé, yo debería haber po... yo debería haber puesto “florecía.” [Professors always taught me that with adjectives and descriptions you always use imperfect and here [“the architecture looked-imperfect wonderful”] it’s what he did ... I did, but here [“knowledge bloom-preterit like a puddle full of fish”] I don’t know, I should have writ... I should have written “bloomed”-imperfect]

T: ¿Por qué “florecía”? [Why “bloomed”-imperfect?]

DARCY: Porque está describiendo el ambiente del una charque llena de peces [Because it’s describing the environment of a puddle full of fish]

T: ¿Y puedes describir algo... [And can you describe something ...]

DARCY: ... tampoco es un start-stop finish [it isn’t a start-stop finish either]

Darcy realized through T’s question that the rule of thumb ‘you use imperfect with descriptions,’ which applied to the first case (“the architecture looked-imperfect wonderful”), might equally well apply to the second (“knowledge bloom-preterit). The participant then tries to reason to himself that it should be “florecía” (bloomed-imperfect) because it is not a “start-stop finish,” but a description. However, his first choice of preterit may be due to the possibility that he initially considered “bloomed” as a “start-stop finish” or a completed action. His need to reason the rule aloud to himself may be because both rules are colliding.

Darcy’s contradiction manifested again later when T explained that the selection of imperfect would have nothing to do with the idea of description, but with the fact that the event would then be presented as ongoing at the narrated point, to which Darcy replied, “How is it ongoing if it happened?” (C2). Just as with Jane, Darcy, because of
his history, had difficulty understanding the notion of recalled point of time / focus / narrated time, and the different perspectives involved in the past forms.

2. You use imperfect for habitual actions in the past

Just as with the development of a single event, the internal structure of habitual or repeated actions can be subjected to different perspectives and foci. However, students are usually taught that habits can only be expressed in the imperfect.

In the example below, Dorothea had used the preterit for a habitual action: “volé todo tiempo” [“I flew-preterit all the time”]. An arrow was placed on top of “volé” [flew-preterit] so that Dorothea commented on her choice of aspect in LOG2. Participants knew that arrows were items (not necessarily mistakes) that had to be explained in LOGs, although, occasionally, arrows were also calls to attend to a particular feature (e.g. a problem that had been ignored draft after draft despite T’s comments). Below is Dorothea’s reflection on flew-preterit:

(81) Dorothea, LOG2

Volé todo el tiempo, pero tuve una experiencia mala y ahora no prefiero volar. [I flew-preterit all the time, but I had a bad experience and now I prefer not to fly]

Volaba [I flew-imperfect]

Need the imperfect because he was in the habit of flying all the time, a habitual action.

Either the participant interpreted the arrow as a call for correction, or her original version of the sentence had been an oversight of the old rule of thumb (i.e. ‘habitual actions should be expressed in the imperfect’). Given the student’s explanation and her reliance on traditional rules (she listed them on her first two LOGs), the latter seemed the more likely scenario. In either case, the learner’s traditional empirical knowledge
prevailed and surfaced, and the student showed a lack of conscious awareness of language.

3. Imperfect for saying date, telling the time, describing the weather, talking about seasons, etc.

Dulcinea’s case below was similar to Dorothea’s. Dulcinea had used the preterit to describe weather in “una noche hizo mucho frío y viento” [“one night it was-preterit very cold and windy”], but she changed it to imperfect when an arrow was placed on the verb for comment in LOG2:

(82) Dulcinea, LOG2

The imperfect should be used with the description of weather, and also it should be used because you see the action of it being cold and windy, not the completed action.

Una noche hizo mucho frío y viento [One night it was-preterit very cold and windy]

Una noche hacía mucho frío y viento [correction] [One night it was-imperfect very cold and windy]

From the comment above, it appears that Dulcinea had originally used preterit because of an oversight of the rule of thumb or because it was a finished event. She uses the idea of perspective provided in class about aspect (“you see the action of it being cold and windy, not the completed action”) either to eliminate the contradiction between the rules or because she knew that T would not validate a rule-based explanation.

Despite the fact that Dulcinea alludes to ways of looking at states of affairs, a subjectivity component is missing in the participant’s explanation. This is because the
correction is not presented as a question of what she means, but as a question of what seems to be an ‘objective,’ ‘correct’ answer (“imperfect should be used,” “you see the action of being cold and windy, not the completed action”).

4. **Imperfect is used with verbs that denote emotion, and mental or physical states.**

The excerpt below exemplifies how rules of thumb are not generalizable to all contexts, and how students can get far-flung with their explanations when easily identifiable contextual cues are missing. In this case, Juliet applies the rule that “imperfect is used to talk about past emotions and states of mind” to "esto era la verdad" [this was-imperfect the truth], just because this sentence represents a conviction that the student had during her adolescence, a phase in life usually characterized as highly emotional:

(83) Juliet, C1

T: In the second draft you have “era” [“esto era la verdad para nuestra heroína”] [“this was-imperfect the truth for our heroine”]. Why did you choose “era”?

JULIET: Because … [5-second pause] I think … now that I think, I think that it should be “fue” [was-preterit]? … **Because I’m talking about the teenage years**, but, like, I think I was just thinking about, like, **the confusing nature of the years which is more like an emotional thing, which is more like imperfect because it’s a state of mind.**

T: So …

JULIET: **But I would be OK with changing that.**

In her afterthought about aspect, Juliet shows no agency, personal meaning or communicative purpose. She had chosen “era” [was-imperfect] with no preliminary
orientation, but when T’s question compels her to pay attention to her choice, she first thinks of changing it to “fue” (probably because her thought is completed now), and then rationalizes “era” with contextual cues (emotion, state of mind, “the confusing nature of the years”) and the corresponding rule of thumb. In the end, Juliet is willing to change her choice to whatever the linguistic ‘authority’ (T in this case) considers as correct (“but I would be OK with changing that”); thus, the student seems to have gained little self-regulation and agency after years of rule-based instruction.

In empirical teaching/learning, reacting to cues is problematic because there may be no cues in some contexts, as in the example above, but also because, when there are, they may relate to too many grammatical notions. For example, emotion is mentioned in the list of rules of thumb of the subjunctive, of the imperfect, and of ser versus estar. Therefore, it is not unusual for learners to mix notions when such common denominators are present in the same sentence:

(84) Jane, C1

T: Here [“era de Boiling Springs” [she was-imperfect from Boiling Springs] you use the imperfect …

JANE: Uh-huh.

T: Why…? [Student sighs apprehensively] … No, but this doesn’t mean that it’s right or wrong. Why do you think that you need imperfect?

JANE: [After a 7-second pause] I’m not sure … Cause I think I was … like trying to say “I was born.”

T: Would that be better conveyed with the idea of nacía [was-imperfect born] or nació [was-preterit born]?

JANE: Nació [was-preterit born]
T: Nació [was-preterit born]? Why do you think nació [was-preterit born] would be … [Student sighs again] … would be better?

JANE: **Because it’s a definite thing, I know there’s no personal “a,” and there’s nothing questioning it, I guess.**

In the example above, Jane just throws all the rules that seem to apply to the context of her sentence probably in the hope that one of them will do, which shows how meaningless, unsystematic, and vague rules of thumb can be. By applying all the rules apparently relevant to the context in question, Jane mixes traditional notions as disparate as subjunctive (“there’s nothing questioning it”), personal “a,” and the definite article or the preterit (which, according to the traditional rules of thumb, are both used when we talk about “a definite thing” or a ‘definite event’ in the case of the preterit). However, the participant fails to discuss aspect, which is the key in this case.

In addition, Jane’s reasoning reveals that, more often than not, rules of thumb, with their myriad of triggers and exceptions, are used in ad hoc fashion to justify choices a posteriori, but rarely do they serve as appropriate tools for preliminary orientation to meaning. However, despite the unsystematicity of the rules and their lack of meaning, students had difficulty in letting go of these devices.

The introduction of a new object of pedagogy that required a different orientation towards language was met with confusion, resistance, and reservation. The use of rules of thumb in the past seemed to deepen and accentuate rather than bridge the schism between the beginning and the intermediate levels on the one hand, and advanced knowledge on the other, as the next section discusses.
9.2 Rule-based instruction: bridging the gap or burning one’s bridges?

T: What do you think of the concept of aspect?

EMMA: It really hurts my brain.

(Emma, C3)

As can be expected from the ongoing discussion, the explanation of aspect and tense provided in the LTL course (see discussion in Chapter 4) contradicted the students’ histories because of its orientation to personal meaning and because of choice. For example, Lara commented:

(85) Lara, P, Weekly Journal, Week 7, February 24-26

No sabía que no hay reglas estrictas con relación a los tensos diferentes de los verbos. Depende del significado que el escritor quiere indicar el tenso que es necesario. Cada uno de los tensos tiene un nuance diferente y concepto del tiempo.

[I did not know there were no strict rules with respect to different verbal tenses. It depends on the meaning that the writer wants the necessary tense to indicate. Each of the tenses has a different nuance and concept of time]

At the time that Lara wrote this reflection, she still subsumed aspect under the notion of tense. The student commented with surprise on the idea that formal choices were based on the writer’s or speaker’s intention rather than on strict rules, but what is even more surprising is that this realization about the meaningful nature of language happened after so many language courses supposedly based on communicative approaches to language learning.

Some students, such as Gulliver and Ulysses, found this creative, personal component appealing, a call for originality. For example, Ulysses commented:
Ah, the dreaded imperfect-preterit debate. Every person learning Spanish must experience it sometime. However, this time we learned it differently than before. Instead of strict rules, there’s more towards the discretion of the writer. It’s a neat way to look at the preterit and imperfect. I’m gonna try to have it incorporated in my compositions.

Similarly, Darcy, who, just as Lara, used the word “tense” as a synonym of “verbal form,” commented on the ‘novelty’ of personal meaning and choice as well: “In Spanish there are two past tenses [:] the preterite [sic preterit] and the imperfect. They can both be used, but one has to know what they want to say” (Darcy, P, Daily Log, March 2). However, unlike with Gulliver and Ulysses, this was a problem for Darcy, because it implied the abandonment of the security of traditional rules to the undetermined liberty of one’s own meaningful intention. As he had been successful in the traditional foreign language curriculum, the student expected each question of aspect to have just one right answer, which made him struggle with the idea of choice:

The Imperfect and the preterit have always been hard for me. Today I was very confused, because it kind of went against all that I learned before. It will get cleared up though.

For example:

\textit{La fiesta era divertida}

\textit{La fiesta fue divertida}

Very Confusing!!!

Just as Darcy, Dulcinea, among other participants, explicitly commented on the contradiction between her past history and the new object of pedagogical attention:
This week we learned about aspect and perspective. I feel that I am starting to understand that there are many more uses for the preterit and imperfect than those introduced in textbooks. It is confusing however to grasp the idea that the preterit can be used to describe something in the past, when we have been taught the “rules” that the imperfect is used for description in the past.

Although Dulcinea mentions the notions of aspect and perspective and questioningly writes the term rules within inverted commas, the participant’s comment seems to indicate that she interpreted the description of aspect as an expansion of the ‘uses of the preterit and the imperfect,’ rather than as an alternative explanation based on meaning and perspective. This was a common interpretation, at least initially, of the new notion in the LTL class, because of the learners’ language histories.

The next section examines how the meaning-based explanation of aspect provided in the LTL course conflicted with the students’ previous learning histories. I will more specifically center on Darcy’s conflict with the new object of pedagogy, since he offered the most extreme case of resistance to aspect in the course.

9.2.1 Mind the gap: traditional histories, the LTL course, and uncertain futures

“You need chaos in your soul to give birth to a dancing star”

(Friedrich Nietzsche)

Due to their learning histories, some students construed the meaning-based explanation of aspect as an advanced-level addendum of potential ‘exceptions’ to the rules of the imperfect and the preterit. For example, Alice commented on the lessons on
aspect, “Of course there are basic rules to follow when using the preterit and the imperfect, but the more advanced Spanish student realizes that there are exceptions to every rule” (P, Weekly Journal, Week 7, February 24-26), which made the new controversial explanation congruent with and complementary to her learning history.

Probably on the same spirit of congruence with their previous histories, Darcy and Dorothea kept listing the rules of thumb and examples of the preterit and the imperfect in LOG1 and LOG2. Ophelia did the same in LOG1. In turn, T challenged the traditional rules by offering counterexamples in the participants’ composition logs, referring students to the meaning-based explanation in class, reframing the same examples in terms of aspect, and contrasting the meaning of the same sentence with different choices of aspect.

Despite T’s mediation, the empirical knowledge of preterit and imperfect was too ingrained in some students. For example, Darcy, who had received multiple comments in his portfolio and LOGs about the fallibility of traditional rules --to which he always turned--, only started to mildly question them towards the end of the LTL course. However, as the student had not fully developed an understanding of the concept of aspect yet, he continued to resort to entrenched empirical rules in composition interviews despite his doubts about them, as the following series of excerpts show.

Darcy describes the moments before giving a speech in front of the class in high school:

(89) Darcy, C3

T: [Reads] “La profesora escogió nombres de una caja, mientras yo rezaba a Dios” … aquí usas imperfecto… [“The professor picked out names from a box, while I prayed-imperfect to God …” Here you use imperfect…]

DARCY: Uh-huh

T: ¿Por qué?[Why?]
DARCY: Unos otros profesores me enseñó que cuando el pretérito está enfrente y después “y recía” [sic rezaba] y después siempre es imperfecto. No sé [si] es verdad, eso es lo que ellos me enseñaron. [Some other professors taught me that when the preterit is at the front and then “and I prayed” and then it is always imperfect. I don’t know if that’s true, that’s what they taught me].

The rule in the above example is based on the superficial generalization of a contextual cue, which, en passant, is quite vague (“the preterit is at the front”).

The student proceeds in a similar way later on in the composition by selecting the imperfect form because of the surrounding context. T asks Darcy about the aspect of quedan [remain, to be left] in “cuatro minutos quedaron … tres minutos quedaron…” (“four minutes were-preterit remaining … three minutes were-preterit remaining…”) etc..

In this case, Darcy’s laugh seems to indicate a certain disbelief in the explanation that he is providing:

(90) Darcy, C3

T: ¿Quedaron o quedan? [Were-preterit remaining or were-imperfect remaining? ]

DARCY: [5-second pause] Quedaron. [Were-preterit remaining]

T: ¿Quedaron? [Were-preterit remaining?]

DARCY: Uh-huh.

T: ¿Por qué quedaron? [Why were-preterit remaining]

DARCY: Porque … uh …. Now I have to think about that lesson [may refer to explanation of aspect in class or T’s explanation of aspect with respect to another problem in composition 3 during C3] [5-second pause] … Um … er…. Puesto que todo eso [points to an indeterminate place on the page] es en imperfecto,
eso [laughs] será en imperfecto también creo. [Given the fact that all that [points to an indeterminate place on the page] is imperfect, that [laughs] will be in imperfect too, I think].

The student’s struggle with the idea of acting with preliminary orientation is manifested in the above comment, “Now I have to think about that lesson,” which goes against his tendency to act on the spot. In comparison to the complexity of the meaning-based explanation of aspect, the contextual cue (“puesto que todo eso es en imperfecto, eso será imperfecto también”) appears as thoughtless, meaningless, and opportunistically stretchable. The participant’s handy traditional rules seem to be useful to justify forms a posteriori, but not to materialize his personal sense.

The following entrenched rule is grounded in a superficial generalization based on the contexts in which certain verbs appear in the imperfect form:

(91) Darcy, C3

DARCY: Una otra regla fue querí … “querer” siempre es imperfecto en caso de que estés usándolo por “refuse” …

T: …como …

DARCY: … como “no quise pagar lo”

When Darcy tried to explain his choices in terms of the aspect (beginning, ongoing/ middle, end) of events, his history interfered and manifested again in his insistence to observe states of affairs from a single, present perspective, instead of in intersection with a recalled point or second focus. For example, in the following excerpt, Darcy explains his choice of preterit with “ser”:

(92) Darcy, C3

T: [Reads] “Fue como un sentimiento de miedo que me rodeaba como una serpiente” [“It was like a feeling of fear that enwrapped me like a snake”]
DARCY: Estoy describiendo a “balbucear” y puede ser … pero es como hace tiempo, no es ongoing. [I’m describing “falter” and it can be … but it’s, like, some time ago, it’s not ongoing].

Darcy chooses preterit in “fue como un …” because he is describing his faltering speech in sixth grade, which happened a long time ago, and cannot, therefore, according to the learner, be described as ongoing.

The student needed mediation to materially visualize the notion of “recalled point” or “narrated moment” to understand how things could be ongoing even if they had already happened. The next excerpt illustrates one of the occasions in which this type of mediation was provided to the student during composition interviews:

(93) Darcy, C3

T: [Reads] “Él [God] deseó que yo fuera a mi muerte” … OK, ¿podrías usar … OK, ¿cuál crees que sería la diferencia entre “Él deseaba que yo fuera a mi muerte” y “Él deseó que yo fuera a mi muerte”? [“He [God] wished-preterit that I went to my death” … OK, could you use … OK, what do you think is the difference between “He wished-imperfect that I went to my death” and “He wished-preterit that I went to my death”?]

DARCY: A ese tiempo Él deseó, pero no es lo que voy a decir porque siempre Él no creo que … o Él no quería que yo … muriera. [At that time He wished-preterit, but it’s not what I’m going to say because I don’t think that He always … or He did not want-imperfect me to … die].

T: No es siempre. Si dices “Él deseó” … [It’s not always. If you say “He wished-preterit…”] This is the narrated moment [draws a vertical line on a piece of paper] or the moment that you’re narrating.

DARCY: Uh-huh.
T: Si dices “Él deseó que yo fuera a mi muerte” [If you say “He wished-preterit], it’s, like, the moment that she [the teacher] got the name … [draws a horizontal line representing the aspect of “deseó” finishing at the vertical line that represents the recalled point]

DARCY: Entonces, “deseaba” entonces … [Then, “wished-imperfect” then]

T: … and “deseaba” [wished-imperfect] means at that moment His wishing is …

DARCY: …[whispers] the whole time…

T:… [draws a line with a solid middle and dotted extremes disappearing in opposite directions, and intersected in the middle by the vertical line representing the narrated moment or recalled time] ongoing.

DARCY: … [unintelligible whisper].

T: Ajá, ¿entonces cuál quieres tú …?

DARCY: Deseaba [wished-imperfect].

Despite the fact that Darcy switched from “Él deseó que yo fuera a mi muerte” to “Él deseaba que yo fuera a mi muerte” after T’s explanation and graphic representation of desear [to wish] with each choice of aspect, Darcy’s whisper (“the whole time”) casts a shadow of doubt on the student’s ultimate motivation for the correction. The student’s comment, “the whole time,” seems to respond to a contextual cue (similar to “only once,” “always,” “last year” to mention some of the typical ones), rather than to the aspect of the event at a recalled point.

The rationale for the choice of aspect in the following example, which was very similar, seems to confirm this suspicion:

(94) Darcy, C3

T: Deseaba. Ajá. [Wished-imperfect. A-ha] [Reads] “Él deseaba que yo fuera a mi muerte. Quería que todos me rieran. Estaba seguro que Él hizo que mi
nombre se volviera de otro color” ajá … ahora … ahora, dice aquí “un color
diferente que brilló como un letrero que decía ‘deseo ir primero.’” ¿Aquí crees
que es posible decir “brilló” y “brillaba” … [He wished-imperfect that I went to my
death. He wanted everybody to laugh at me. I was sure that He made my name
turn a different color” a-ha … now… now, here it says “a different color that
shone-preterit like a board that said-imperfect ‘I want to go first.’” Here do you
think it’s possible to say “shone-preterit” and “shone-imperfect”…]
DARCY: Uh-huh.
T: … o solamente “brilló” y cuál sería la diferencia? […] or only “shone-preterit,”
and what would be the difference?]  
DARCY: Puede ser los dos…. Creo que ahora “brillaba” es mejor… [Both of
them can… Now I think that “shone-imperfect” is better …]
T: Sí. [Yes]
DARCY: … porque estoy describiendo lo que Él deseaba. […] because I’m
describing what He wished-imperfect]
T: Porque …. [Reads] “Estoy seguro de que hizo que mi nombre se volviera de
un color diferente” y ahora lo que estás describiendo is ongoing at that moment,
“que brillaba como un letrero de oro.” [Because … “I am sure that He made my
name turn a different color” and now what you are describing is ongoing at that
moment, “that shone-imperfect like a board of gold”]. So that’s ongoing at the
moment that you’re visualizing.
DARCY: Uh-huh.

Darcy nods at T’s explanations. However, despite T’s insistence on reframing the
questions as a matter of aspect, the student continues to resort to rules of thumb and to
contextual cues:
(95) Darcy, C3

T: “Un letrero de oro que decía” y aquí tienes otro imperfecto. [“A board of gold that said-imperfect” and here you have another imperfect].

DARCY: Otra regla [Another rule].

T: Huh?

DARCY: Es un otro regla [both chuckle] porque … ¡lo recuerdo como si fue ayer! Porque mi profesor con un cabeza muy grande dice si una persona está diciendo algo es pretérito, pero si otra cosa, no un animal, pero si es otra cosa es imperfecto, como un letrero o … [It's another rule [both chuckle] because … I remember it as if it were yesterday! Because my big-headed professor says that if a person is saying something it’s preterit, but if another thing, not an animal, but if it’s something else, it’s imperfect, like a board or …]

T: ¿Eso dijo? [Did he say that?]

DARCY: Uh-huh.

T proceeded to explain the versions of the sentence with different aspectual choices, and how this would equally apply to people, billboards, animals, or anything else. The student finally chooses “decía,” but, although each time he seems to acquiesce with T’s explanations, his real motivation for correcting the aspect of the event is not clear, since he did not provide any explanation based on aspect in C3.

Moreover, the student resorts to the rules of thumb in LOG3, which, like all the composition logs, was written after the corresponding composition interview. T had placed arrows on the verbs so that the student commented on aspect. The following is just one example of his rule-based reflections:

(96) Darcy, LOG3
“Era como un sentimiento de miedo que me rodeaba como una serpiente venenoso, y no quería que algo así me pasara esta vez”… [“It was-imperfect like a feeling of fear that enwrapped-imperfect me like a poisonous snake, and I did not want-imperfect something like that to happen to me this time”]

I used era [was-imperfect] here because the imperfect is used from those darn rules to describe a scene that is going all through the story line. The scene is my feeling of nervousness [,] which dwelled during the whole scene and therefore I used imperfect for the entire sentence here. The scene is filled with descriptions and the imperfect does a better job getting this point of the scene across.

The fact that the student refers to his previous knowledge as “those darn rules” reveals a modicum of disbelief in their dependability, and a potential shift of orientation away from empirical knowledge. However, the student chooses to continue to rely on empirical rules, probably because at this point he understands them better than the concept of aspect.

In search for congruence between conflicting objects of pedagogy, the student frames T’s counterexamples in LOG1 and LOG2 as “exceptions” to these rules:

(97) Darcy, LOG3

Last time I tried to explain all the rules for using the imperfect and the preterit.

We really can’t do that because there are so many exceptions that negate and supersede the rules. Therefore, we just have to think about the situation and think which ones work better than others.

In this comment, Darcy continues to validate the traditional rules of thumb in spite of acknowledging their undependability. Furthermore, the participant’s resigned reflection exposes the kind of a posteriori rationalizations which students need to incur in order to justify and accommodate unreliable, unsystematic rules (“we just have to think
about the situation and think which ones work better than others"). This is another example of how rule-based instruction does not facilitate the transition to conceptual understanding at the advanced stages of the foreign language curriculum. Instead, it becomes an obstacle that is difficult to overcome even when previous empirical thinking has been disproved, and a systematic alternative has been repeatedly provided.

In view of Darcy’s attitude to the view of aspect, T decided to query the student about his resistance. Following C3 and LOG3, Darcy was asked what he thought about the notion of aspect in the LTL course:

(98) Darcy, LT3

DARCY: Eso me saca de *qúicio [That drives me *nuts] …

T: ¿Te saca de quicio? ¿Sí? [laughs] ¿Qué piensas que …? ¿Qué vas a hacer en el futuro: seguir las reglas o seguir lo que has aprendido en español 300? [Does it? Really? [laughs] What do you think that …? What are you going to do in the future: follow the rules or follow what you have learned in Spanish 300 [LTL course]?

DARCY: … porque si yo sigo las reglas estoy equivocado y si … y si no estoy siguiendo las reglas estoy equivocado also. Pues … yo no puedo ganar. [Because if I follow the rules I am wrong and if … and if I do not follow the rules I am wrong also. Well … I cannot win]

T: Oh, pero ¿por qué crees que estás equivocado si no sigues las reglas? [Oh, but, why do you think that you are wrong if you do not follow the rules?]

DARCY: Porque yo creo que puedo usar los dos [pretérito e imperfecto] en todos los ejemplos. [Because I think that I can use both [preterit and imperfect] in all the examples].

T: Sí, pero con significados diferentes. [Yes, but with different meanings]
DARCY: **But do they really?**

T: They do.

DARCY: **I don't know.**

Despite discussions on aspect throughout the whole course, the conventional belief that “questions about grammar should have one right answer” (Larsen-Freeman, 2002, p. 117) was highly ingrained in Darcy's case, especially because he had excelled in a right-versus-wrong view of language. In addition, he did not seem to believe that the choice between preterit and imperfect was a question of aspect, not of contexts. The student's reaction is coherent with his history and understandable, given the incongruence between the LTL course and previous language courses in the same program.

In previous courses, empirical knowledge on ‘the uses of the preterit and imperfect’ had secured Darcy the highest grades and had validated him as a proficient language learner. Once meaning and choice—with their instability—were introduced into the picture, the means of academic success into which he had been previously habituated crumbled. It seems that the student’s resistance is a genuine question of *survival* in the traditional rule-driven foreign language curriculum and of *congruence* with his learning personality, history, and future in such a context. The student’s resistance is an attempt to preserve the formula that allows him “to win” academically, that seems more liable to yield ‘right answers,’ and that permits him to be the type of learner (and the type of person) that he has chosen to become.

The student’s high-achieving personality and view of academic success manifest more convincingly in his comments about grades. He wrote about this topic in ten out of sixteen Weekly Journal entries included in his semester Portfolio. Following is a comment apropos of his concern with grades:

*(99) Darcy, Portfolio, Weekly Journal, Week 15, April 13-15*
[Talks about Easter and plans for summer] *Pues, necesito hacer tantas cosas antes de volver, como salir en los finales y sacar A en español. ¿Vas a enseñar mas clases el año que viene T? Me gustará tomar clases con profesores a los cuales conozco ya, es importante, antes de escoger la clase, saber la manera en que el profesor enseña para averiguar si puedo sacar buenas notas. Creo que este “modus operandi” suena bien ¿no?* [Well, I need to do so many things before going back, like going out in finals and getting an A in Spanish. Are you going to teach more classes next year T? I will like to take classes with professors I already know, it’s important, before taking the class, to know the way the professor teaches to find out if I can get good grades. I think this “modus operandi” sounds good, doesn’t it?]

Although Darcy was ‘successful’ (and to a fairly remarkable degree) in other areas of the course (such as vocabulary and literary figures), the student’s history, view of language, and language learning were, for the most part, incongruent with the object of pedagogy and pedagogical procedures implemented in the LTL course. The student tackled other contents of the course with a right-versus-wrong view of language. For example, he expressed a great deal of frustration with the reconstruction activities (see Chapter 10), especially with an issue as susceptible of choice as word order: “Today’s class went well, however I still do not understand how we configured this story sooooo fast, how can we just assume that certain phrases go where they go?” (Darcy, P, Daily Log, February 12).

As word order was not significant for the student’s goals and motives, he turned to issues that were more meaningful to him, such as vocabulary and literary figures, while the class was (at least, apparently) focusing on coalescing Cortázar’s jumbled text. Thus, the student wrote about these topics in the portfolio daily learning logs and
constructed lists of vocabulary and figures. In addition, when he was asked why he liked Spanish, he responded: “porque llevo tanto tiempo estudiándolo. Quiero aprender todas las palabras en todas las áreas, pero… es imposible, pero … lo quiero hacer” [because I’ve been learning it for such a long time. I want to learn all the words in all the areas, but … it’s impossible, but … I want to do it” (Darcy, LT3). This statement reflects the learner’s view of language learning and language proficiency and his conventional conceptualization of the perfect speaker (which, I would presume from Darcy’s conventional language-learning history, corresponds with the traditional notion of the native speaker: a person who has perfect linguistic competence).

Learning the Spanish lexicon to the letter provided Darcy with a feeling of mastery over the language and a door to learning about the culture. Although many of the lessons to which he refers were on figurative language, he still frames them as lessons on vocabulary: “The topic of today’s class was again figurative language, but with a different twist, we explored vocabulary with metaphorical back-grounds [sic backgrounds], which is the part that I love!!” (Darcy, Daily Learning Log, April 1st). The learner placed especial emphasis on idioms and fixed expressions: “Spanish right now is one word –Awesome! I love the idiom section that we’re doing now. Learning them is the absolute key to learning a language completely” (Darcy, P, Weekly Journal, Week 13, April 6-8). He also valued the cultural aspect of lexical metaphors: “Spanish is going well as usual. We are still doing the vocabulary exercises and idioms with culture and so forth.” (Darcy, P, Weekly Journal, Week 15, April 20-22).

Mastering the language in such a way was congruent with certain political and professional aspects of Darcy’s personality. He was also studying Arabic and had concerns about the state of affairs in the Middle East. Darcy considered linguistic and cultural proficiency major issues in international politics:
(100) Darcy, P, Weekly Journal, Week 14, April 13-15

Spanish and Arabic are great. I am so glad that I have taken them. I’m on the road to becoming a linguist, that’s what I want to do with my life to help better people. This is one of the problems we have in the Middle East also, since there are not enough linguists we can’t communicate and bring these people to the table to answer their questions because we cannot understand them. Also we have a problem that we fail to understand their culture and their ways, therefore they find us as rude and disrespectful.

It seems that the student conceived language proficiency (which, in his view, was the mastery of lexicon and cultural conventions) as an instrument of political control. This was congruent with his view of the United States’ role in international politics. References to vocabulary learning, politics, and his professional goals were copious.

This is an example:

(101) Darcy, P, Weekly Journal, Week 12, March 30-April 2

Part 1 [Personal section]

[Writes about Kerry’s and Bush’s electoral campaigns] Creo que voy a votar por Presidente Bush porque él es un líder con experiencia contra el terrorismo, el cual es nuestro enemigo más grande en este siglo [I think I am going to vote for President Bush because he is a leader with experience against terrorism, which is our worst enemy in this century] [Writes about his plans for the rest of that week]

Part 2 [Spanish learning section]

As for me Spanish as usual is fine, I really like all the new vocabulary that has been coming out in the class in the past couple of weeks. It’s very interesting to learn idioms and useful and not useful vocabulary ja ja ja [sic ha ha ha]. I have to
figure out what I want to do with foreign language though, do I want to be a teacher or go further then [sic than] that? I honestly don’t know, I do want to work in the government though, in a top secret place, maybe in counter-terrorism! Government work does not pay a lot but the work is very fulfilling!

Darcy’s language-learning motives, goals, utilitarian view of language learning, and his perspective of the world provide an illustration of how human psychological phenomena are founded on sociocultural, practical activity, which, in turn, is organized in concrete social systems.

Darcy’s reaction to aspect and word order is quite coherent with his personality and his acculturalization into an educational system that has constructed language learning in particular ways. In this specific educational system, rule-based explanations are usually followed by textbook practice exercises based on right-or-wrong-answer formats (circle the right answer, fill in the gap, translate using the right verbal form, etc).

Miettinen (1999, pp. 326-327) in a review of studies on classroom practices across the United States captures a typical preoccupation on the instructors’ part with covering textbooks and other materials, and a predominance of lecturing and question-answer procedures. According to Miettinen, this situation responds to frame factors, i.e. “institutional and physical factors such as curriculum, time, number of pupils, and the classroom physical space,” which determine teachers’ behavior geared towards “controlling the turbulent life of the classroom” (Miettinen, 1999, p. 328).

Therefore, practical activity in the educational system (with its increasing stress on foreign languages, its emphasis on the logicomathematical mind, its multiple language sections, its accent on homogenization, its standardized commercial manuals) bears the stamp of institutional, economic, political, and scientific activities. The problem lies in the fact that in “controlling” the relative chaos of a classroom, we may also
suppress creativity, critical insight, language potential, and personal meaning, in which case, education becomes merely reproductive (see discussion on prospective education in Chapter 4).

In sum, as Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) highlight, an individual’s history plays a fundamental role in the shaping of his or her second-language learning motives, goals, and strategies (see discussion in Chapter 6 this dissertation). Darcy’s attitude to aspect exemplifies how learners’ personalities, histories, and agencies are more than ‘external’ factors (to use the term from mainstream SLA) that merely exert a tenuous ‘influence’ on the students’ linguistic development. As sociocultural, historical, agentive, meaningful beings, learners decide their own learning conditions according to their own experiences and the personal sense derived from those experiences. Therefore, learners are capable of resisting or, on the contrary, embracing certain objects of pedagogy and the pedagogies themselves in light of the personal sense that they attach to them.

We have mentioned the existence of materials with standardized explanations in mainstream foreign language instruction. The next section briefly discusses some of the students’ comments on the explanations of the ‘uses’ of the preterit and imperfect in conventional textbooks and their contribution to students’ confusion with the explanation of aspect. These comments capture the role of textbooks in reinforcing certain views of language through their standardized explanations and their centrality in traditional foreign language education.

9.2.2 The linguistic authority of conventional textbooks

“What good is a book that does not even transport us beyond all books?”

(Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science, Third Book, aphorism 248)
In addition to personal and learning histories to traditional language instruction and assessment, the meaning-based view of aspect was difficult to validate because most textbooks provided the conventional rule-based explanation of the preterit and the imperfect (recall Dulcinea’s comment about how textbooks insist that imperfect is for descriptions in excerpt (88) above). Previous textbook explanations of the imperfect and the preterit were a relevant element in the students’ histories because of the special status of language manuals in the traditional educational setting. Most mainstream commercial handbooks are significant sources of linguistic validity, and reliability to the typical foreign language learner due to standardized explanations, widespread circulation, and the authority of the printed word. In some cases, textbook packages determine the sequence of contents in language courses, and even in entire language programs.

Therefore, the contradiction between the conceptual explanation of aspect and the rules provided in textbooks caused even more confusion and resistance to alternative explanations. Dulcinea referred again to textbook explanations to account for her choice of aspect in composition 3 in spite of the refutation of rules in the LTL course:

(102) Dulcinea, C3
T: [Reading] “Entré en el edificio, caminé y llegué a mi cuarto.” Why preterit instead of imperfect?

DULCINEA: I think, like, this kind of goes back to the textbook definition of using preterit and imperfect, but … I think I used it because, like, “sentía” is, like, an emotion and a feeling, but then, like, walking, entering a room, they are all actions, and also because it’s, like, when I got there, like, I walked in the building that was, like, it started and then it ended and then I walked, it started
and then it ended and then ... Actually I think that I'd use imperfect because it was kind of, like, the hall was really long cause I was walking for a long time, and then I arrived at my room and I was, like, I'm there but it's over, I'm there.

When asked to explain her choice of the preterit in contrast with the imperfect, Dulcinea resorts to rules of thumb. Then she contemplates the idea of switching "walked-preterit" to the imperfect because of the duration, not the aspect, of this event. It is possible that in this instance the participant was influenced by the traditional rule of thumb that preterit is used for short quick actions.

Darcy also commented on the contradiction with textbook information:

(103) Darcy, P, Daily Log, March 2

Normally, in textbook language, the imperfect is used for descriptions and things one used to do, while the preterit is used [sic for] actions with time frames!

However one can say:

Ayer pasaba por el bosque [Yesterday I went-imperfect by the forest]

Ayer pasé por el bosque [Yesterday I went-preterit by the forest]

Even though this has the term “ayer” to indicate a time for a start-stop finish the imperfect can be used here.

In the discussion between Gulliver and T that follows, the student had commented on the quality of an explanation of ‘the uses of the preterit and the imperfect' in a conventional textbook of Spanish. T, who was familiar with the manual, cautions against accepting the rules of thumb that were provided in this conventional foreign language textbook:

(104) Gulliver, C1

T: Be careful because the explanations in these books are not very good.
GULLIVER: About the imperfect? **Sometimes they are.**

T: Well, they say things like “when you’re talking about emotions use the imperfect” and that’s not true.

GULLIVER: No, all of that no.

T: And there are as many exceptions as rules.

GULLIVER: Yeah, actually I remember learning that and saying it doesn’t make any sense. It’s like you said, you can write something and it’ll be correct one way. You can write it the other way and then it’ll also be correct, it all depends on what you mean.

T: Exactly.

GULLIVER: There’s a difference.

Although Gulliver was willing to adhere to the explanation of aspect provided in class, he was also willing to give some credit to textbook explanations of ‘the uses of the preterit and the imperfect’ simply because rules of thumb “sometimes” seemed accurate –even if only on the surface.

In sum, because of learning history, a ‘transition’ from rule-based instruction to theoretical learning seems nearly impossible, for new knowledge can emerge only when empirical rules (which have been institutionally sanctioned and reinforced by traditional instruction, assessment, and conventional language manuals) are unlearned. For example, Dulcinea (below) starts to move beyond traditional empirical knowledge once the explanation of aspect is no longer taken as a compatible addendum to the rules of the preterit and the imperfect, as she seemed to hint in excerpt (88). The student’s reflections in LOG3 capture her difficulty in changing orientation to meaning, and it encapsulates the lingering conflict between her previous learning history and the meaning-based explanation of aspect:
(105) Dulcinea, LOG3

Por todo el verano estaba muy entusiasmada de mover y los meses parecieron durar por años [For the whole summer I was-imperfect very excited about moving and months seemed to last for years]

Por todo el verano estuve muy entusiasmada de mover y los meses parecieron durar por años [For the whole summer I was-preterit very excited about moving and months seemed to last for years]

The imperfect was used at first because I was talking about an emotion, but we learned that the rule that states that imperfect is used with emotion is wrong. Preterit can be used to express emotion also.

Sentía como una huérfana. [I felt-imperfect like an orphan]

Here the imperfect was used to express a feeling [] the preterit could have also been used as in the other cases. However I wanted to use the imperfect to express a segment of this feeling. This expresses the action while it was occurring.

Entré en el edificio, caminé por el pasillo muy largo y oscuro [I went-preterit into the building, I walked-preterit down the very long and dark hall]

The preterit was used here and was not changed in my last draft. I used the preterit here to show these actions as snapshots.

Echaba de menos mucho mi familia y mi vida a mi casa. [I missed-imperfect my family and life at home a lot]

Eché de menos mucho mi familia y mi vida a mi casa. [I missed-preterit my family and life at home a lot]
Again, the imperfect was used at first because it was an emotion being expressed. I changed it to preterit because I wanted to focus on the action as a whole not as a segment.

As seen above, in LOG3 the student started to discuss choices and their possible effects (showing actions as snapshots, focusing on the action as a whole, etc) in terms of aspect, instead of right-versus-wrong answers according to contextual cues, although her history was still present in her LOG3 comments. On this occasion, Dulcinea contemplates the possibility of choice where empirical rules of thumb used to place limits before; for example, she uses preterit with verbs of emotion (“por todo el verano estuve muy entusiasmada,” and “eché mucho de menos a mi familia”), thus contradicting her previous learning history, at least in this assignment.

In addition to hampering the understanding of alternative explanations of aspect, rule-based knowledge of the ‘uses’ of imperfect and preterit also thwarts the comprehension of (literary) texts. This issue will be discussed in the following section.

9.2.3 Empirical rules: instructions to kill a rose

"Perhaps the mission of those who love mankind is to make people laugh at the truth, to make truth laugh, because the only truth lies in learning to free ourselves from insane passion for the truth."

(Umberto Eco, The Name of the Rose, Seventh Day, Night)

Despite the faultiness of empirical knowledge, students seemed to have integrated it into a well-established functional system by which they interpreted their own and others’ texts --just as with empirical knowledge about genre (see discussion in Chapters 7 and 8). For example, with reference to Cortázar’s Continuidad de los parques, Dorothea commented: “Uso el imperfecto a describir sueños en general,
porque cuando [I use imperfect to describe dreams in general, because when] you have a dream, you’re seeing each part and look at the story as it happens” (Dorothea, P, Daily Log, March 23). This is an empirical generalization based on the superficial observation of the use of imperfect in Cortázar’s story while the protagonist is apparently dreaming about (or actually participating in) the narrative that he is reading.

Such an empirical understanding of the ‘use of the imperfect’ destroys evocativeness in Cortázar’s story at one blow. To start with, Dorothea’s construal of the ‘use of imperfect’ in Continuidad de los parques precludes the issue of perspective (which is key in the confusion of the diegetic world/s or fictive levels of the short story), as well as all the possible effects created by a different choice of aspect, and the connection between aspect, the manipulation of narratorial voice, narrator’s perspective, and the representation of speech and thought.

To put it differently, this empirical rule annihilates the meaning potential of lexicogrammatical choices in Cortázar’s narrative to generate multiple interpretations. The student’s empirical deduction obliterates the distribution of meaning between author, text, and reader, and adds to the mere propositional content of the story (there is a man in a green-velvet armchair dreaming about the argument of the novel that he is reading, which is why the author --helplessly and without choice-- uses imperfect). As it happened with empirical knowledge about texts (see Chapter 7), empirical knowledge of the imperfect and the preterit simplifies and flattens the life, vividness, and suggestive dimension of language, and merely leads to non-transcendental anecdotal comments on texts.

Similarly, Ophelia’s reflection on the use of aspect in other texts (below) offers one more example of the problematic ‘transition’ from rule-based knowledge to conceptual knowledge. The participant mixes the traditional rules with dashes of the
perspective-based explanation. In addition, she indulges in the same overgeneralization as Dorothea about the use of imperfect form for dreams. The former extends this empirical generalization to a literary text studied in another literature class and to everyday genres:

(106) Ophelia, LOG1

The imperfect is the past descriptive tense. It allows us to view an event as if it were unfolding before our eyes; without a beginning or end in sight. It is often used for the description of events such as the summary of a movie’s plot, or a dream. It is used in this way to describe a dream in Pérez Galdós “Doña Perfecta.” When two simultaneous actions occur the imperfect can be seen as the backdrop or ongoing action, the preterit is used for the action that occurs quickly in the mean time. Creer, pensar, querer, odiar are some verbs often linked to the imperfect as they are used to express mental or emotional states. The preterit narrates actions in the past that are being viewed as completed, regardless of when, how many times and for how long they occurred. It also refers to the beginning or end of an action completed in the past.

This explanation was followed by a fill-in-gap activity taken from the internet, in which “correct” answers instead of choices were offered by the student.

Again, this seems to point to the fact that rules of thumb, rather than serving as ‘transitional knowledge’ on the students’ way to advanced levels, deeply entrench forms of thinking that, in the long run, end up generating even more confusion and misunderstanding, and diminished appreciation of literary (e.g. Doña Perfecta, Continuidad de los parques), and non literary (e.g. summaries, movie reviews) texts. This, in turn, hinders the introduction of alternative pedagogies at the advanced stages of the curriculum.
On the other hand, despite the entrenchment of the rules of ‘the uses of the preterit and the imperfect,’ some students were able to play with aspect and to overcome their learning histories. The next section discusses students’ conscious awareness and meaningful control of aspect in their compositions. Section 9.3.1 will present examples of students’ recontextualization of Cortázar’s play with middle aspect, as well as other forms of play that differ from those of the Belgian-born Argentine writer’s narrative.

9.3 The emergence of aspect in the LTL course

Chapter 8 hinted at the students’ heightened awareness of lexicogrammatical choices as a result of reconstruction activities and mediation through meaning-based explanations (see Table 8.1). With regard to aspect, no student mentioned the manipulation of aspect (or the ‘use’ of preterit and imperfect) when asked about strategies to construct meaning or to improve their composition in the first writing assignment. In contrast, four students (Ulysses, Ernest, Emma, and Lara) manipulated aspect in composition 2, and nine (Alice, Scheherazade, Ulysses, Gulliver, Ernest, Emma, Ophelia, Lara, and Dulcinea) in composition 3, something that they explained in the corresponding composition interviews and LOGs. Additionally, Lara and Alice started to externalize their thinking about aspect (among other issues) in the form of handwritten comments on their third composition. Juliet circled preterit and imperfect forms in her composition to check with T during C3. Darcy, Dorothea, and Jane did not make references to aspect in composition interviews and LOGs unless asked by T. When queried, the latter students mostly resorted to rules of thumb or to ill-formed notions of aspect (recall Darcy’s excerpts above).
Along with their reflections on aspect on hard copies and in composition interviews and logs, students also commented on their heightened awareness of this lexicogrammatical resource. To give an example, Scheherazade admitted monitoring and checking the aspect of verbs in written and oral texts outside the LTL class after working on this concept in the course. In the following excerpt, Scheherazade had been asked about her experience with the notion aspect introduced in the LTL course:

(107) Scheherazade, LT2

SCHEHERAZADE: Creo que es un proceso en …¿desarrollo? [I think that it is a process underway]
T: Uh-huh.
SCHEHERAZADE: … porque todavía no entiendo todo … [Because I still do not understand everything]
T: Es normal. [It is normal]
SCHEHERAZADE: … y … pero yo pensé…*penso en eso todo el tiempo ahora cuando yo leo. Yo presto mi atención a estas cosas. […]And… but I *thought … I think of this all the time now when I read. I pay my attention to these things.]
T: Ah, ¿sí? [Oh, really?]
SCHEHERAZADE: Sí. Y cuando yo oí a la televisión o … *oigo… ¿oigo? [ Yes. And when I heard TV or … I hear … [is it] I hear?]
T: Uh-huh.
SCHEHERAZADE: *Oigo la televisión y mis profesores, yo pienso en eso. [I hear TV and my professors, I think of that]
T: ¿Sí? ¿Cuando oyes la televisión en español? [Really? When you hear TV in Spanish?]
SCHEHERAZADE: Sí. [Yes]

T: Ah, piensas en el pretérito y el imperfecto. [Ah, you think of the preterit and the imperfect]

SCHEHERAZADE: … Sí, … y por qué … […Yes, … and why …]

T: … Y por qué… [And why…]

SCHEHERAZADE: Sí, pero es al reverso… [Yes, but it is the other way around…]

T: Uh-huh

SCHEHERAZADE: … porque yo estoy oyendo y no tengo que escribir y decidir cuál, es más fácil entender después de oír. […] because I am listening and I do not have to write and decide which, it is easier to understand after I heard

The student is now consciously aware of aspect when she reads and listens to other professors, and when she watches television shows in Spanish. She appears to have learned to pay attention to (in the form of monitoring and checking) others’ choices of aspect, probably as a result of the appropriation of the processes involved in actively monitoring and checking her own linguistic choices in reconstruction and transformation activities. In light of the creative-critical continuum, this seems to be an indicator of emerging discourse proficiency, as the student does not only use aspect to construct meaning in her own discourse (in composition 3), but also pays attention to how others use lexicogrammatical choices in their oral and written performance.

Just as Scheherazade, other students played with aspect in their compositions. For reasons of space, the next section will examine the most creative examples and the cases that present a clearer departure from empirical limitations.
9.3.1 In Cortázar’s image: creative imitation with aspect

Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her and to wonder what was going to happen next.

(Lewis Carroll, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland)

Although students played with beginning, end, and bound aspect of events, most of the cases of creative play that clearly departed from previous rules of thumb revolved around focusing on the middle part of short, quick, completed actions with the imperfect, in opposition to the rule of thumb that dictates that this type of event must be in the preterit. Students probably played with this possibility in creative imitation of the use of aspect in the two lovers’ scene in Cortázar’s Continuidad de los parques, in which actions without a significant middle development, and that one would normally present as completed or with a focus on the end (such as “llegar” and “entrar,” that is, “to arrive,” and “to come in”) are depicted with the imperfect: “Primero entraba la mujer, recelosa; ahora llegaba el amante, lastimada la cara por el chicotazo de una rama” [“First, the woman entered-imperfect fearfully; now, the lover arrived-imperfect with his face slashed from an encounter with a branch”].

One of the students that started to develop a concept of aspect was Alice. In excerpt (77), she vaguely recognized “fui” [was-preterit] in composition 1 as some form of past, and, as was discussed in section 9.2.1., she initially interpreted the meaning-based explanation of aspect as an addendum to rules of thumb. She was also one of the students that shrugged off the non-conventional cases of manipulation of aspect in Cortázar’s story as ‘exceptions’ to ‘rules.’ Later in the course, the student started to develop a concept of aspect in the reconstruction activities, and to reapply the theoretical knowledge in her own compositions.
Following is an excerpt from Alice’s LOG3, reflecting on the narrative about her momentous graduation ceremony in high school. The student provides an account of her perspective on certain emotionally intense events:

(108) Alice, LOG 3

Saltaban los flashes de las cámaras como si lucharan contra los rayos. Entonces los aplausos llegaban. [Camera flashes popped-imperfect as if they were fighting with lightning. Then the applause arrived-imperfect]. Here the arrows were above saltaban and llegaban indicating that I should comment on why I chose to use the imperfect here. In both instances an action was beginning which would usually suggest the use of the preterit tense. However, what that actually indicates is that the action started and was completed. It does not describe what is taking place in between and in this moment. I wanted to convey that the cameras started flashing and the applause arrived; however, it did not end.

In line with this reflection, the student also commented in another place of LOG3 with regard to “saltaban” and “llegaban”: “I am describing the moment in that instance and it is during the action, not at the beginning or end of the action.” Alice is contradicting her traditional language-learning history by using imperfect with a short, quick action; however, the student never mentions the conventional rule of thumb or any of the corresponding contextual cues. Instead, she presents her choice in terms of the perspective that she wants to project on the events in question. She chooses to focus on the middle part of events regardless of their length.

Alice is aware that preterit would imprint a more conventional perspective on the events that she describes as we would more normally mark the beginning and end aspects of flashes popping and applause arriving. However, she does not want to
present the beginning, the end, or the completed action, but the middle aspect. Therefore, not only is she using aspect subjectively and meaningfully, but she is also aware of one overlooked issue in traditional pedagogy: that preterit does not only indicate the end of an event or its completion, but also its inception.

Alice focuses on the middle aspect in other examples: *El cielo enojado amenazaba* por encima de las cabezas … *Pero ahora me enfrentaba a mi desafío más grande de todo: la Universidad… Trataba de tranquilizarme a fuerza de pensar del significado de la Universidad* [The angry sky threatened-imperfect above the heads … But now I faced-imperfect my greatest challenge of all: University… I tried-imperfect to calm myself down by thinking of the meaning of University]. Alice’s rationale for the choice is her wish to show that an event is “occurring at that exact moment,” and to depict “not the beginning or the end of the action,” which is “something that [she] really learned to use throughout this course” (Alice, LOG3).

In addition, Alice was able to connect aspect to verbless events. The student played with punctuation when describing how graduates/ soldiers marched in pairs to receive a diploma and to shake the principle’s hand at the graduation ceremony. This is the specific passage in the first draft:

(109) Alice, composition 3, draft 1

La música comenzó ocupando los pensamientos de la multitud, y el primer soldado dio un paso hacia adelante. **Hombre a hombre, mujer a mujer, los soldados entraban en fila.** Saltaban los flashes de las cámaras como si lucharan contra rayos. **Entonces los aplausos llegaban.**

[The music started-preterit occupying the crowd’s thoughts, and the first soldier stepped-preterit forward. **Man to man, woman to woman, the soldiers came-**
**imperfect in line.** The camera flashes popped-imperfect as if they fought lightning back. Then the applause arrived-imperfect.]

For the second draft, the student changed punctuation and aspect from “*Hombre a hombre, mujer a mujer, los soldados entraban en fila*” [Man to man, woman to woman, the soldiers came-imperfect in line] (draft 1) to “*Hombre a hombre. Mujer a mujer. Los soldados entraron en fila*” [Man to man. Woman to woman. The soldiers came-preterit in line] (draft 2). By altering punctuation, the student produced nominal phrases, which in traditional instruction would be considered ‘incomplete’ sentences.

When she was asked about this change in C3, Alice responded that she wanted to present “a stop in the action,” and make the whole scene appear in slow motion. T questioned Alice more specifically to check whether she was hinting at aspect or speaking about something entirely different:

**(110) Alice, C3**

T: We talked about how one can see the action in the beginning, in the middle, in the end, or encapsulated. These are not verbs, but do you think they have any effect on the action?

ALICE: Oh, I think that by saying “men by men,” “woman by woman” that … it’s continuing it and it’s making it seem as ongoing.

T: You’re creating aspect with nouns too.

ALICE: *Sí* [Yeah]. It’s good… creative.

Alice is aware of the iterative effect of noun phrase patterns on the aspect of the states of affairs that she is narrating, although she needs T’s assistance (in the form of a question) to clearly and fully establish the connection.

Alice’s emerging view of linguistic resources as choice and meaning goes hand in hand with an emergent view of language as a tool for personal meaning and,
consequently, an agentive or authoring identity as a second language learner, as her reflections and her orientation to language reveal. At the end of the course, Alice, just like her classmates, was asked what she thought of this different way of looking at aspect as opposed to the traditional way of looking at preterit and imperfect:

(111) Alice, LT3

ALICE: Uh! Es muy confundido pero es muy interesante porque no sabía en el pasado y... it's almost comforting porque puedo usar para expresar algo y el lector o una persona puede interpretar mis piensamientos y mis palabras con un palabra, oh, una palabra que uso y no es cut and dry anymore y ofrece muchas posibilidades. [Uh! It is very confusing but very interesting because I did not know it in the past and ... it's almost comforting because I can use it to express something and the reader or a person can interpret my thoughts and words with a word, oh, a word that I use, and it is not cut and dry anymore and it offers many possibilities].

What Alice seems to be aiming at in the above comment is that she can construct her own personal meaning through linguistic choices (specifically the simple manipulation of aspect), rather than write explicitly, extensively and blatantly about her view of the world in accordance with rules of thumb (recall discussion on Alice’s first composition and excerpt (25) in Chapter 7). This entails understanding that language is full of meaning potential (not of limitations) and that an interlocutor or reader can listen or read between the lines.

However, despite this realization, the weight of learning history still hung over Alice’s head, as she needed explicit confirmation at the end of C3 that she could play with aspect outside the classroom:

(112) Alice, C3
ALICE: So if I sp … not spoke like this, but if I used the imperfect in this way in everyday language, people would understand what I would say?

T: Yeah!

The student laughed at T’s forceful response—it was neither the first time nor the first participant that had asked for this type of reassurance. Alice’s doubts about the generalizability of concepts to all contexts were reasonable because in the participants’ language-learning histories, everyday speech had ‘transmitted’ ‘information,’ had not been creative, literary, and evocative, and classroom Spanish, L2 ‘authentic’ or everyday production and literary texts had been constructed as literally different languages.

In a similar way to Alice, Ulysses welcomed the possibilities that aspect offered for constructing his personal sense in writing assignments. Ulysses played with placing the focus on the ongoing part of short, quick actions in imitation of Cortázar’s short story. He even commented on the same verb as in Cortázar’s *Continuidad de los parques* (arrived-imperfect) in LOG2. He wrote about his time-machine traveling adventure in the moments before a drunk driver put an end to his grandmother’s life: *Veía cuando el semáforo cambiaba a rojo y veía el coche… El momento estaba llegando…* [I saw-imperfec when the traffic light changed-imperfect to red and I saw-imperfect the car … The moment was-imperfect arriving]. Arrows had been placed over the verbs so the participant commented on his choices in LOG2:

(113) Ulysses, LOG2

On most of my past tense verbs I had arrows mainly because I used the imperfect on all of them. The reason I did this was to show the story as it unfolded. **Even short events like arriving I used imperfect to keep the suspense of the story alive.** It is something we learned in class and I was excited to experiment with.
Ulysses exploits the ongoingness of the imperfect to create an effect of suspense, which is very suitable for a composition in which the protagonist tries to change a consequential event in his family’s past.

As to his third draft, Ulysses uses his own metaphor to describe the effect of middle aspect of some of the events in his second composition:

(114) Ulysses, LOG2

In my third draft I use the present in the bar and I use the imperfect to unfold the story as it happens in the past. I wanted to keep the suspense so I used the imperfect. Each event unfolded like walking around the corner …….. you don’t know what to expect next.

In his third composition, Ulysses writes about his pole-vaulting experiences in the past, but he decides to change his second draft to the present to make his pole-vaulting experience generic of every time that he practices this activity. During C3, the particular passage of his pole-vault flight and falling down was discussed. Ulysses used imperfect to focus on the ongoing part of every event.

(115) Ulysses, composition 3, draft 1

En el aire, estaba libre. El tiempo suspendía. Yo estaba uno con el sol, los nubes, y el cielo. Mis problemas y miedos estaban en el suelo. El fracaso no era una opción. El aire y yo éramos una entidad. Mi mente y cuerpo sentían paz. Caía y la realidad devolvía con todos sus sonidos, voces y experiencias.

[In the air, I was-imperfect free. Time was-imperfect suspended. I was-imperfect one with the sun, the clouds, and the sky. My problems and my fears were-imperfect on the ground. Failure was-imperfect not an option. The air and I were-imperfect one entity. My mind and body felt-imperfect peace. I fell-imperfect down and reality returned-imperfect with all its sounds, voices, and experiences.]
Ulysses commented that imperfect allowed one to see “the art of the moment,” which connects with his poetic, magical view of language discussed in Chapter 8. T invited Ulysses to keep focusing on the ongoing part of the events involved in his ecstatic, liberating flight (the first three lines), and to consider the impact of presenting the surrounding state of affairs during his fall as completed. That meant to change “Caía y la realidad volvía con todos sus sonidos, voces y experiencias” to “Caí y la realidad volvió con todos sus sonidos, voces y experiencias” [I fell-preterit down and reality returned-preterit with all its sounds, voices, and experiences.]. Ulysses commented:

(116) Ulysses, LOG3

I found two specific places in my draft where arrows pointed to imperfect verbs and during our meeting, I came to realize that I could play with the verbs and turn them into preterit to make it more literary. I say as I’m falling, all the sounds come back. If I used the preterite, it could have meant that on the instant of falling, everything came back. I was excited when I found this out and wished I kept the story in the past.

The imperfect focused on the middle instant of each event of his pole-vaulting flight by literally leaving the action in the air, suspended, unbounded, and thus, shutting down, and silencing the rest of the world. On the other hand, Ulysses realized with assistance that the use of preterit, focusing on the inception of the events following the vault, could mark his return to the ordinary world, as if external reality had just turned on and regained its festive tone.

Another student that manipulated aspect in creative imitation of Cortázar’s text was Lara. For the second composition, Lara wrote about the shootings in Columbine High School and how things would have been different if the adolescents responsible for the shooting had received psychological support at school. Lara chose to focus on the
ongoing part of some consumed events and described her choice in terms of perspective. For example, she was talking about the director of Columbine High School in “necesitaba encontrar a los niños inmediatamente, pero llegaba demasiado tarde ...” [he needed-imperfect to find the children immediately, but he arrived too late]. T had drawn an arrow on “llegaba” so that the student would comment on her choice. The participant explained:

(117) Lara, LOG2

I chose to use “llegaba” in the imperfect form instead of another form of “llegar” such as “llegué” because I wanted the perspective to be at the moment in time during this sequence of past events. The woman is telling the story to the man and recreating the scene. By using the imperfect form, it also creates suspense for the man (the listener) and the reader because it indicates that they don’t know what will happen next.

The participant knows that she could have used “llegué,” which is probably the most conventional choice of temporal perspective (highlighting the end of the event). However, Lara chooses to place the perspective on the ongoing part of these events as the woman tells the story and recreates the scene. In addition, this perspective allows her to create suspense since, as actions are ongoing, nobody knows what would happen next.

Similar to Lara, Ernest decides to focus on the ongoing part of an event with a limited duration. The student’s second narration (second writing assignment) focuses on a pregnant Indian woman who seems to be Mahatma Gandhi’s mother lying down in the dust. The woman seems to be very ill and one cannot but wonder what would become of the world if Gandhi had not been born. As one reflects on the impact of a single life on the world, one wonders how the people who have died in wars could have impacted the
world. Ernest makes us believe for a moment that the woman breathes her last with the sentence “esta pérdida y el silencio apagaba [sic apagaban] la luz en más ojos” [this loss and the silence extinguished-imperfect the light in many more eyes]. However, the Indian woman wakes up from a nightmare; dream and change are still blossoming in her womb.

Ernest was asked about his choice of aspect in “esta pérdida y el silencio apagaba [sic apagaban] la luz en más ojos” in order to determine whether he chose imperfect (“apagaba,” that is, died-imperfect down) because this fictional event was never ‘completed’ (from the point of view of the rules of thumb), or because that was the aspectual perspective that he wanted to project on the event:

(118) Ernest, C2

T: Aquí dices “apagaba.” ¿Por qué “apagaba” y no “apagó”? ¿Es posible decir “apagó”? [Here you say “died-imperfect down.” Why “died-imperfect down” and not “died-preterit down”? Is it possible to say “died-imperfect down”?]

ERNEST: Sí, cualquiera es una posibilidad, pero creo que es como el otro ejemplo de “apagaba” porque es la acción de viendo… [Yes, either one is a possibility, but I think that this is like the example of “died-imperfect down” above, because it is the action of seeing …]

T: … dying down?

ERNEST: Sí, sí. [Yeah, yeah]

T: …apagarse. […]dying down]

ERNEST: Sí. [Yeah]

T: ¿Y cuál crees que es más convencional: apagaba o apagó? [And which one do you think it is more conventional: “died-imperfect down” or “died-preterit down”?]
ERNEST: Apagó. [“Died-preterit down”]

T: Apagó, ¿no? [“Died-preterit down,” isn’t it?]

ERNEST: Sí. [Yeah]

T: We normally say that something died down meaning it already died down.

ERNEST: Sí. [Yeah]

T: Presentamos la acción como completa. [We present the action as complete]

ERNEST: Sí, como “apagó las luces.” [Yeah, like “s/he put-preterit off the lights”]

Thus, Ernest is using imperfect for a complete action in this fictional turn of history (Gandhi’s death before birth). The participant, who contemplates aspect as a choice (“either one is a possibility”), realizes that preterit would capture the most standard perspective on the event and provides a conventional example with the same verb (“s/he put-preterit the lights off”). However, for his story Ernest chooses imperfect because he wants to “see” the process of “dying down,” that is, the middle development of the event, and to make us think for a moment of the possibility of a world without Mahatma Gandhi.

Similarly, Emma manipulated aspect meaningfully. She wanted to recreate the evening in which her father announced that Emma’s mother had breast cancer. Emma wanted to emphasize how that evening was different from all other evenings, and how the piece of news forever altered the family routine. Emma discussed during C3 how difficult it was for her to create that impression of impact and radical change:

(119) Emma, C3

La cosa más difícil fue [The most difficult thing was] … I have to say this in English. I tried to set up, like, in the beginning how our dinner is, like, war and then I tried, like, to contrast it and it was, like, kind of hard to like … I know I went way overboard on that as it was and I was trying, like, really condense
things down and so it was kind of hard, like, to think about how I should … how I should make … make it seem like there’s such a big change. So that was the hardest thing to do, I think.

The participant acknowledges that one of the most difficult points when reconstructing that specific evening was to “condense things down,” which can be interpreted as an attempt to construct meaning potential through lexicogrammatical choices, rather than explicitly in the propositional content. The participant seems to confirm this idea when she explains her attempts to make her story creative:

(120) Emma, C3

EMMA: I, like, went back and looked at the stories that we read and I tried to like mix up the tenses and, like, put in imperfect where I could, where I was, like, trying to like talk about the middle of the moment and, like, … like, let the reader see up-close. And, like,… hum… I tried to put in, like, a lot of metaphors so I wasn’t just, like, blatantly just saying it out. And, like, I think the metaphors were a better way like to express how I thought and in the one part I use repetition a lot, like in that one story I forgot what it was, in the soap opera dialogue or whatever.

Emma’s comment partly resonates with a view of linguistic forms as ends in themselves (“I tried to…put in imperfect where I could”). On the other hand, her recontextualization in her composition of linguistic devices employed in the reconstruction of Cortázar’ Continuidad de los parques and other texts is an attempt to create certain effects and meanings through lexicogrammatical choices rather than by explicitly telling the story merely through the propositional content (“I wasn’t just, like, blatantly just saying it out”). This differs from the participant’s first composition, in which,
in order to make each successive draft more literary, she could only think of mildly
original metaphors, similes, and dramatic lexicon (Emma, LOG1; see Table 8.1).

In her third composition, the participant turns to lexicogrammatical resources
other than literary figures and specific kinds of vocabulary to construct her personal
meaning. However, Emma, like some of her classmates, still uses the term “tense” as a
synonym of verb form, thus inadvertently mixing up the two concepts (although she uses
the term “aspect” in other parts of her LOG3):

(121) Emma, LOG3

Manipulation of tenses:

Although a lot of my paper could have been written in either imperfect or
preterit, I tried to use each tense strategically to convey different meanings.
For example, when I was talking about the moments when we were in the dining
room in silence, I used imperfect to depict everything as if the reader was
there in the middle of the action, seeing everything as it was happening:

Pero esa noche, mi papá no nos molestaba con sus preguntas y mi mama ni
siquiera levantaba la vista de su plato. Esa noche, el silencio no era cómodo; era
pesado y fuerte. Llenaba el cuarto, hundiendo a mi familia, y mis hermanas y yo
cruzábamos miradas preocupadas. Algo no estaba bien.

[But that night, my dad did-imperfect not bother us with his questions and my
mom did-imperfect not even raise her eyes from her plate. That night silence
was-imperfect not comfortable; it was-imperfect heavy and strong. It filled-
imperfect the room, sinking my family, and my sisters and I crossed-imperfect
worried glances. Something was-imperfect not right.]
When I went to my mom’s room to see her after I found out that she was sick, I used preterit for all the verbs. This time I wanted to show each action as a complete act:

Descendí la escalera lentamente, sin sentir los escalones bajo los pies. Con cada paso hacia su cuarto mi corazón latió más alto. Cuando llegué a su cuarto, era oscuro y callado y mi mamá estaba en la cama, los ojos cerrados.

[I went-preterit down the stairs slowly, without feeling the treads under my feet. With each footstep towards her room my heart beat-preterit louder. When I arrived-preterit at her room, it was-imperfect dark and quiet and my mom was-imperfect in bed, with her eyes closed.]

In the above extract from Emma’s LOG3, the participant’s choices are not meaningless reactions triggered by sentence-based contextual cues (finished action, one-time occurrence, description, habitual action, non-habitual action). Emma frames her manipulation of aspect in terms of the perspective (e.g. “this time I wanted to show…,” “in the middle of the action,” “as a complete act”) that she chooses to project on the states of affairs occurring at two different times of her narrative. The participant looks at aspect as a question of perspective within the whole text, taking into account the whole communicative purpose of her story, as opposed to individual sentences.

In addition, the participant does not seem to further endorse the right-or-wrong view of language based on rules of thumb; instead she acknowledges choices of form that she selects according to her personal meaning (“Although a lot of my paper could have been written in either imperfect or preterit, I tried to use each tense strategically to convey different meanings.”) As the participant comments, the fragment could also be in the preterit: “Pero esa noche, mi papá no nos molestó con sus preguntas y mi mama ni siquiera levantó la vista de su plato.” However, the price for using preterit would be the
loss of the disquieting feeling of middle aspect --the vague, but overpowering impression that “Algo no estaba bien,” that “something wasn’t right.”

Emma makes choices with respect to aspect that contradict traditional rules of thumb; for example, she depicts non-habitual, completed actions that happened one time, on one unusual evening with imperfect; for example, “Pero esa noche, mi papá no nos molestaba con sus preguntas y mi mama ni siquiera levantaba la vista de su plato,” that is, “But that night, my dad did-imperfect not bother us with his questions, and my mom did-imperfect not even lift her eyes from her plate.” However, just like in the previous examples, the participant does not mention rules of thumb or contextual cues.

At this emergence of aspect toward the end of the LTL course, the question seems to be whether the students who started to play with aspect would continue to apply this emerging meaning-based notion after the LTL course. The internalization of the concept and its application to contexts other than the LTL course would present a different case from the traditional complaint about students’ inability to apply grammar studied in previous courses to essays and compositions in the advanced levels. Though the present study is intended to examine linguistic development within the scope of the LTL course, the next two sections will examine this other question to the extent that it is possible.

9.3.2 Aspect beyond the LTL course

At the end of the course (LT3), students were asked what system of aspect they would employ in future courses. That is, would they use the meaning-based explanation provided in the LTL course or would they resort to the traditional rules of thumb?

Ophelia, Juliet, Dorothea, Gulliver, and Alice expressed a preference for the meaning-
based explanation. In addition, Juliet and Dorothea commented that they had not been successful with rules in the past. (However, we should remember that these two students did not have enough time to develop a sound concept of aspect in the LTL course either. Therefore, at the conclusion of the LTL course, they were not able to carry out with their preference yet. Whether they were able to use aspect meaningfully on their own later in other courses is something that cannot be determined due to the limited scope of the LTL study and the scarcity of data from follow-up interviews).

Gulliver commented that rules about the preterit and imperfect “Son útiles pero también son limitados por … cuando… cuando quiero decir algo y las reglas no permiten no está bien” [“They are useful but they are also limited because … when… when I want to say something and rules do not allow it that’s not good”] [laughs] (Gulliver, LT3).

Ophelia and Juliet wished they had learned the concept of aspect earlier in the foreign language curriculum instead of the rules of thumb. Ophelia commented that she had always suspected the rules were not totally accurate and was disappointed that she had learned about the whole story in her third year at university. She also added:

(122) Ophelia, LT3

OPHELIA: Ésta es un idea que quería tener en mi clase de conversación porque la mayor parte de estudiantes que estábamos estudiando el español, la español, queríamos ser españolhablantes, queremos entender cómo podemos hablar y si hay reglas estrictas no entendemos el flow de la lengua y … [This is an idea that I wanted to have in my conversation class because the most part of students that were studying Spanish wanted to be Spanish speakers, we want to understand how we can speak and if there are strict rules we do not understand the flow of the language and …]
T: *El fluir de la lengua.* [The flow of the language]

OPHELIA: Sí, y *solamente podemos hablar como un libro de texto.* “Ahora *usar el imperfecto* [she mimics a robotic voice] y *es incorrecta.*” [Yes, and we can only speak like a textbook. “Now use imperfect and it is incorrect.”]

Ophelia considers that learning the concept of aspect not only would help her write, but also speak better. In addition, she associates the conceptual knowledge of aspect with the authentic speech of a proficient Spanish speaker and writer, whereas rules of thumb are connected in her view to a way of speaking that is rigid, mechanical and only existent in textbooks.

On the other hand, Lara, Ernest, Emma, and Dulcinea thought that, since the concept of aspect was very complicated, it was better to start with the rules earlier in the curriculum and then switch to the concept of aspect at the more advanced stages, even if rules did not work or had too many ‘exceptions.’ Lara paradoxically considered that the rules were a good “foundation” for learners, though it would be a problem if students continued working only with rules in the advanced courses.

Scheherazade and Jane commented that they would follow both the rules and the concept of aspect in the future. Scheherazade thought that not all the rules were invalid so when something was not clear she would resort to the rules.

Ernest’s conclusions were mixed: “*Y creo que es algo para … es difícil porque en un lado muchas personas necesitan reglas para entender la lengua y el otro lado dice que estas personas no está entendiendo el lengua,* so… *la lengua*” [“And I think that it is something for … it is difficult because on the one hand people need rules to understand the language and the other side says that these people are not understanding the language, so … the language”] (Ernest, LT3). The student knew that concepts help learners to understand language and to use it as competent speakers or
writers do. However, the ingrained traditional idea that languages are made up of rules seemed to preclude the student’s complete adherence to a meaning-based view of aspect outside the LTL course.

Students’ pasts were not the only impediment to more advanced knowledge, but also their futures in a rule-driven curriculum. Just as Darcy, Ulysses viewed this question as a matter of survival in future courses (with the difference that Ulysses was willing to experiment with aspect in the LTL course). He was asked about his opinion on the concept of aspect in contrast with the rules of the preterit and the imperfect in previous courses (such as Spanish 100):

(123) Ulysses, LT3

ULLYSES: *Es diferente. Esta clase [LTL course] es más abstracto y el… la otra clase* [Spanish 100, first course of the intermediate language program in which preterit-imperfect traditional rules of thumb were studied] *fue concreto. *Cuando no se sabe más español necesito saber los reglas concretos… *concretas.*

[It is different. This class [LTL course] is more abstract and the other class [Spanish 100, the first course of the intermediate language program in which preterit-imperfect traditional rules of thumb were studied] was concrete. When you do not know much Spanish, I need to know the concrete rules].

T: *Pero ¿y si esas reglas no funcionan?* [But what if those rules do not work?]

ULLYSES: Hum.

T: *Porque por ejemplo una regla es que cuando se habla del tiempo –the weather-- se utiliza el imperfecto. Sin embargo, se puede decir “el sábado hizo muy buen tiempo.”* [Because for example, a rule is that when you speak about the weather you use imperfect. However, you can say “it was-preterit nice on Saturday”].
ULYSSES: *No tendría la respuesta correcto en la o el examen* [laughs] *en otra clase.* [I would not have the right answer in the exam [laughs] in another class].

Despite participants’ creativity with language, their reactions seem to point to the idea that a ‘fix’ or ‘transition’ course would not actually solve the problems created by rules of thumb, or bridge the lower and the more advanced levels. The next section examines a limited amount of data regarding aspect in the follow-up interviews that took place a semester later.

### 9.3.3 Aspect a semester later

One semester after the LTL course, Juliet, Lara, and Emma volunteered for a follow-up interview. Juliet and Lara mainly focused on the usefulness of lessons on figurative language, although Lara also commented that the information about aspect presented in the course made her think of the rules of preterit and imperfect in a relative light, which appears to represent a reversion to the traditional rules of thumb.

Emma, who was taking an oral expression class and an introductory literature course, emphatically insisted on the helpfulness of the LTL course (see also Chapter 8):

**(124) Emma, F**

*T:* ¿*Te ha servido la forma en que estudiamos el pretérito y el imperfecto en 300?* ¿*Ha sido útil para verlo en literatura?* ¿*Has visto más ejemplos de aspecto?* [Did it help to study preterit and imperfect in that way in 300 [study course]? Did it help you see it in literature? Have you seen more examples of aspect?]

**EMMA:** *Sí, muchos más* [Yes, many more].
T: ¿Sí? [Really?]

EMMA: Yes, sí.

T: ¿Recuerdas alguna obra? [Do you remember any work?]

EMMA: Vimos … Fue Unamuno … no recuerdo… Ah, sobre un santo …

murió… [We saw … It was Unamuno … I do not remember … Ah, about a saint … he died]

T: Ah, “San Manuel.”

EMMA: … “San Manuel,” sí. Y había muchos ejemplos en eso. Fue una narrativa muy larga [laughs], pero no fue muy mal … [“San Manuel,” yes. And there were many examples in it. It was a very long narrative [laughs], but it was not too bad].

Emma was asked to further explain about “these examples” of manipulation of aspect in the literary works that she had read, especially in Unamuno’s *San Manuel Bueno Mártir*. She mentioned the beginning of Unamuno’s short novel and added:

(125) Emma, F

EMMA: El imperfecto fue usado mucho más que yo pensaba en el pasado. Y pienso que el pretérito sólo fue usado como estudiamos en el pasado como por el principio, fin, una cosa que pasó una vez. El imperfecto es mucho más. [The imperfect was used more than I thought in the past. I think that the preterit was only used as we studied in the past like for the beginning, the end, something that happened once. The imperfect is used much more].

T: Do you mean you found imperfect in places where you would have expected preterit instead?

EMMA: Um, not really, cause in the last semester we learned that you can put it pretty much wherever you need, but I just found that a lot of times like the authors that we read would use the *imperfecto* more often than the preterit.
T: ¿Y crees que lo utilizan con alguna intención o para producir algún efecto? ¿Por qué crees que …? [And do you think that it is used with some intention or to produce some effect? Why do you think…?]
EMMA: Para [In order to] … like, we were talking about last semester, like… you focus on a moment and it makes you see it more closely and it’s not just a flash in time … I think that was a lot of it, because in that moment of the story [Unamuno’s San Manuel Bueno Mártir] she [Ángela] goes back and talks about the past, and I think that allows you to see it.
It seems that Emma sees aspect as a matter of choice and intentionality (“you can put it pretty much wherever you need”). On the other hand, although she still conceives of the preterit as a way of focusing on the beginning or end of an action, she reverts to the old rule of thumb that preterit is used to talk about actions that happened once. In addition, she vaguely describes the effect of imperfect aspect as a way of seeing action up-close.

It was not possible to have access to a copy of Unamuno’s San Manuel Bueno Mártir during the interview so that Emma could find the particular passage to which she was referring. However, there is actually a passage at the beginning of Unamuno’s short novel in which Ángela, one of the three protagonists, talks about the past of the village, before the death of Don Manuel, the town’s priest, who had secretly and bitterly carried the burden of the loss of his own religious faith. Ángela does in fact narrate most of the states of affairs relative to Don Manuel in the imperfect aspect:

_De nuestro Don Manuel me acuerdo como si fuese de cosa de ayer, siendo yo niña, a mis diez años, antes de que me llevaran al Colegio de Religiosas de la ciudad catedralicia de Renada. Tendría él, nuestro santo, entonces unos treinta y siete años. Era alto, delgado, erguido, llevaba la cabeza como nuestra Peña del Buitre lleva su cresta y había en sus ojos toda la hondura azul de nuestro_
I remember Don Manuel as if it was something from yesterday, when I was a ten-year-old girl, before they took me to the Colegio de Religiosas of the cathedral city of Renada. He, our saint, would be about thirty-seven years old by then. He was imperfect tall, thin, steady, he carried imperfect his head like our Peña del Buitre carries its crest, and there was imperfect all the blue depth of our lake in his eyes. He attracted imperfect all looks, and with them, all hearts, and, upon looking at us, he seemed imperfect to be looking at our hearts as if he could look through flesh the same way one looks through crystal. We all, especially children, loved imperfect him. What things he said imperfect to us! These were imperfect things, not words. The village started imperfect to smell his sanctity; we all felt imperfect filled-up and intoxicated by this scent].

If the student was referring to this passage, it is interesting that she noticed the use of imperfect forms and did not relate them to the ideas of description and habitual action according to traditional rules.

Emma clarified that she was not expecting preterit instead, as she knew from the previous semester that both preterit and imperfect could be used depending on what one needed to say. In fact, the majority of the same passage could be reformulated in the preterit: fue un hombre alto, delgado … llevó la cabeza … y siempre hubo en sus ojos … Todos le quisimos …. Empezó el pueblo a olerle la santidad, etc.
She had noticed that the writers that they were studying in her literature course used the imperfect to see a moment up-close, rather than in “a flash.” This is possible because the imperfect form allows the reader or listener to see the ongoing, middle aspect of an event. It seems that Emma did not completely revert to the old rules of thumb in the following semester, and that she also continued being aware of how aspect was manipulated to create specific effects (“[Ángela] talks about the past, and I think it [imperfect] allows you to see it,” “it makes you see it more closely”).

9.4 Conclusion

Students in the LTL course had traditional learning histories, which were reflected in their conceptualizations of language and language learning. The notion examined in the present chapter did not escape the typical empirical treatment of grammar in the conventional foreign language curriculum. Students had no previous exposure to the concept of aspect; instead, they were cognizant of empirical rules, which had been reinforced through instruction, standardized explanations in commercial textbooks, and assessment. As a result, empirical knowledge about the ‘uses’ of the preterit and the imperfect had become deeply entrenched, despite students’ recognition of rules’ unsystematicity, lack of generalizability, and, thus, undependability.

Learners in the LTL mostly struggled with the idea that aspect was a question of perspective, personal meaning, and, therefore, choice. Empirical rules continued resurfacing in composition interviews and proved to be unhelpful for both the edition of the students’ own compositions and for the construction of meaning in (literary) texts. For example, students were not initially aware of the manipulation of aspect in Continuidad de los parques (even when this manipulation was unconventional even from
the point of view of the traditional rules of thumb). Before the concept of aspect was introduced in the course, learners categorized preterit and imperfect forms in Cortázar’s narrative and occasionally in their own narratives (e.g. Alice, C1) as some vague forms of past. In addition, despite the introduction of aspect, Ophelia and Dorothea made empirical generalizations based on the superficial observation of the use of imperfect in *Continuidad de los parques*, *Doña Perfecta*, summaries and movie reviews, which lead to simplistic interpretations centered on the propositional content of texts. This disclosed the inefficiency of rules of thumb as ‘preparatory’ knowledge for the advanced levels. Moreover, because of the entrenched forms of thinking that they generated, empirical rules proved to be a hindrance, rather than a bridge, to advanced proficiency. Therefore, ‘switching’ from rules to theoretical, advanced knowledge seemed to require more than a ‘transition’, it involved a ‘fresh’ start.

Students could not manipulate aspect in meaningful ways until they chose to discard previous empirical knowledge based on rules and contextual cues, which in some cases was not possible given their learning histories and personalities (e.g. in Darcy’s case). Students that were willing to explore aspect showed a heightened awareness of this notion. They manipulated aspect in similar ways as in Cortázar’s story in order to focus on middle aspect of the state of affairs eventuating in their compositions and to cause suspense --even when such choices went against their traditional learning histories. In addition, learners were able to recognize when some choices of aspect were more or less conventional and creative. They were also able to account for the meaning of both choices. Students’ selection of aspect was based on the perspective best suited to the discourse they wanted to construct in their composition.

However, while some students expressed their preference for the meaning-based explanation of aspect in the LTL course (Ophelia, Juliet, Dorothea, Gulliver, and
Alice), most students commented that they would resort to the rules of thumb in future language courses. The latter attitude may be motivated by the students’ need to survive in a rule-driven curriculum, in which their creative manipulation of language may be perceived as ignorance of the rules of thumb, and even as an error. On the other hand, in a follow-up interview, Emma showed awareness of aspectual choices in the beginning of Unamuno’s San Manuel Bueno Mártir, which she had read for an introductory literature class, although there was a partial reversion to traditional rules.

In sum, the reconstruction of Cortázar’s narrative and other texts was mediated by linguistic artifacts, such as the concept of aspect. Theoretical knowledge of aspect was meaningfully and creatively recontextualized in some students’ compositions. This knowledge, unlike rules of thumb, contributed to learners’ ability to construct evocative, multidimensional texts in which meaning was distributed between the text, the writer, and the reader. However, empirical knowledge posed an obstacle (in some cases, an insurmountable impediment) to the development of aspect.

Previous traditional language instruction did not become an obstacle only for the object of LTL pedagogy, but also for the pedagogy itself. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 examined students’ development of the notions of text and aspect, together with the learners’ attitudes to language and to language learning with respect to the concepts at hand. Chapter 10 will examine the students’ attitudes to the LTL pedagogy in general and to literary discourse.
Chapter 10

Data analysis: students’ attitudes towards LTL pedagogy and to literature

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 discussed attitude in relation to the development of textual notions and aspect. The analysis also hinted at a change in the notion of language in general, as students started to consider language as a tool for personal meaning, closer to the notion of language as a system of choice, rather than a neutral, aseptic code constricted by rules and limitations.

In the present chapter, I will examine students’ attitude towards LTL pedagogy, literature, and other courses in the curriculum. As the attitude towards literature and LTL pedagogy cannot be separated from attitude towards and development of concepts, the analysis of the present chapter continues the foregoing discussion on the impact of LTL pedagogy on students’ discourse proficiency and attitudes towards language, literature, and language learning.

10.1 Attitude towards the LTL pedagogy

This section discusses how the students’ language learning histories and personalities shaped the personal sense that they constructed out of LTL pedagogy. In particular, I will center on aspects such as reactions to text-based, meaning-oriented, tool-and-result pedagogy in light of their previous habituation into sentence-based, rule-oriented, tool-for-result pedagogy. In addition, the present section analyzes students’ attitudes towards activity-oriented work within the ZPD, the emergent syllabus, and the literary-to-the-non-literary cline.
10.1.1 Students’ reactions to text-based pedagogy

Students’ reactions to reconstructing activities expose students’ learning histories and the significance that they had attached to those experiences in the traditional curriculum. Participants struggled with text-based activities, especially the jumbled-text activity based on Cortázar’s short story, mainly because of contradictions with their previous habituation into sentence-based exercises within their zone of actual development in traditional tool-for-result pedagogy (see Chapter 2). For example, Alice commented on this contrast with her previous learning history:

(126) Alice, P, Weekly Journal, Week 4, February 3-5
As of now we are still working on the story. At times I am confused simply because I have never learned in this way. It’s definitely not bad, it just takes some getting used to. Sometimes I can easily tell how the fragments should [be] put in order, but other times I have absolutely no idea. However, I really do enjoy learning about the literary aspects of the Spanish language. There are many similarities and differences and it is very interesting to learn at least some of them in class. I wish there was more time, but I guess that is what learning autonomy is all about.

The main problem for Alice (and for other students) seemed to be working within the ZPD in a tool-and-result approach. Conventionally, instructors present students with activities assumed to be at their level of ability, that is, activities for which they already have the knowledge (usually of the declarative type) that they need to apply in order to complete the activity. Therefore, grammar is studied in isolation, learned in advance before there is a communicative motive for its use, and then it is applied to controlled contexts, usually at the level of the sentence.
Whereas the traditional approach emphasizes a low Affective Filter by posing problems that are already at the students’ level, that is, within their zone of actual development, text-based activities within the learners’ ZPD require a certain type of knowledge (that is both declarative and procedural) to solve the problem. The knowledge does not exist beforehand, as in tool-for-result pedagogy; instead, knowledge becomes the result of the process of applying the tool to solve the problem, that is, knowledge results from the appropriation of the mediating tool, the mediation itself, and the meaning-making processes involved in the learning activity. In this particular case, the learning activity was the reconstruction of Cortázar’s story, which was mediated by linguistic tools (i.e. theoretical concepts, which entail both declarative and procedural knowledge). Therefore, unlike the typical activities and contents of mainstream foreign language education, working within the ZPD in tool-and-result pedagogy may generate certain performative tension.

Dorothea also commented on the amount and type of knowledge that was required in order to coalesce *Continuidad de los parques*:

(127) Dorothea, P, Weekly Journal, Week 4, February 3-5

This week we talked about the mysterious text that we have been reconstructing into the correct order. We put the first two paragraphs into the correct order with correct punctuation. It’s exciting to see the story unfold. I like mysteries a lot so I am excited to see where the story goes from here. So far we don’t have much of plot, but it’s building up. The climax will probably be in the next two paragraphs. I think it’s very hard to reconstruct the story into one piece. I never am quite sure what order the sentences belong in. This is probably one of the hardest things that I have done in a Spanish class before. I think so
because it involves totally [sic total] comprehension of the language as well as punctuation, which I am not a pro at either. It’s a good challenge though.

It is significant that Dorothea stresses the idea of accuracy (correct order, correct punctuation, etc) even when the goal of this activity was to create different versions of the same text. This is due to the fact that she interpreted the activity in light of the view of language generated in her previous language-learning history. It also noteworthy that Dorothea separates language from punctuation and that she does not consider herself “a pro at” either of these despite the fact that she is at the advanced level. This indicates that she does not seem to be able to generalize her previous declarative knowledge of grammar and punctuation to this text-based activity.

On the other hand, it seems from the above comment that the problem-solving format of the activity compels the student to pay attention to the linguistic details in the narrative and brings her everyday knowledge of narratives to the surface (“so far we don’t have much of plot, but it’s building up. The climax will probably be in the next two paragraphs”). It also appears that the reconstructing format contributes to activating the student’s everyday knowledge of narratives, heightening her awareness of language, and stirring her curiosity about the story (recall other students’ comments and the discussion on fantasy and imagination as literacy mediators in Chapter 8). The student’s interest in the text, just as her interpretation of the activity (“We put the first two paragraphs into the correct order with correct punctuation”) largely depended on her personality and history (“I like mysteries a lot so I am excited to see where the story goes from here”).

Students attributed value and relevance to the LTL activities depending on their own personalities and the personal sense that they had constructed out of their previous learning experiences. Usually, the comments that were favorable to the LTL text-based
interventions entailed at the same time a critique of conventional foreign-language pedagogy, which indicates that the students that were the most open to experiment in the LTL course also were (or at least became) critical of their previous language learning histories. In the following paragraphs we consider some examples of students’ reactions.

For example, Emma’s favorable comments on text-based pedagogy reflect a certain degree of frustration with her learning experiences in conventional foreign language education. In the first week of the course the student commented that the LTL course seemed to cover more interesting aspects than previous courses, though she worried about the apparent amount of work. She also added, “Me gusta la idea de aprender la gramática leyendo la literatura en vez de solamente memorizar cien puntos gramaticales porque es más realístico” [I like the idea of learning grammar by reading literature instead of only memorizing one hundred grammatical points, because it is more realistic” (Emma, P, Weekly Journal, Week 1, January 13-15). Emma’s criticism of her past experiences in a conventional foreign language curriculum congers up tool-for-result pedagogies mainly concerned with itemized language, decontextualized mechanics and piecemeal declarative knowledge that was not used for any communicative purpose.

Just as Emma, Alice also wrote favorably about the “literary aspect” in the LTL course and about how she liked the fact that in class they “would use a literary work and pull grammar ideas from it” (Alice, P, Weekly Journal, Week 3, January 27-29). The student’s comment seemed to vaguely hint at the notion of language-in-use. Other comments by Alice seem to substantiate this assumption:

(128) Alice, P, Weekly Journal, Week 5, February 10-12

Right now we are continuing to work with the mysterious story. I like that we are learning new vocabulary as we go, and instead of simply being taught a
theory in advance, we learn that as we go as well. For example, by reconstructing the story we have come across different uses of commas and uses of the preterit and the imperfect. We are applying what we learn in the moment, and I think this is extremely helpful.

In addition, the student commented later on in the course, “We observed lessons as they came. We didn’t simply learn Spanish grammar” (Alice, P, Weekly Journal, Week 16, April 27-29, my italics). These reflections clearly point at tool-and-result pedagogy.

Dulcinea’s first reaction to the Cortázar activity is similar to Emma’s and Alice’s:

(129) Dulcinea, P, Weekly Journal, Week 1, January 13-15

I feel that this assignment [Cortázar’s jumbled text] was a good start to training our brains to think about the Spanish language in a different light rather than simply forming the different conjugations of verbs or working on writing sentences. Putting together a “puzzle” of words forces our brain to recall information that you already know and put it to use.

Just as with Dorothea, Alice, and Emma, Dulcinea’s comment seems to indicate heightened attention to language as a result of the problem-solving format of the Cortázar reconstructing activity. The student appears to consider that learning a language is about more than memorizing knowledge of its mechanical aspects, or than writing correct sentences. It is likely that this exclusive focus on linguistic form in her previous language learning history has failed to connect with her learning goals and motives. From the student’s comment, it also appears that, in her opinion, linguistic knowledge needs to serve some kind of purpose, a reason for which the student would seem to be comfortable with the tool-and-result pedagogy that is embodied in the Cortázar puzzle activity.
A few months later, Dulcinea reflects on the same issues albeit with different activities:

(130) Dulcinea, P, Weekly Journal, Week 12, March 30- April 1

This week we finished up working with figurative language terms. We looked at the use of figurative language in horoscopes and in the news. I realize now that everyday language used metaphors and other figurative language. Before I never really thought that everyday language could be compared to literature and poems. I never stopped to think in detail what kind of figurative language is used when someone would say “I have a frog in my throat” or some other colloquial phrase. I just thought about the meaning and went on.

My knowledge of the Spanish language, so far this semester, has increased a great deal. I have moved beyond learning simple grammatical rules and how to form verbs, now I have a better understanding of how to use the language in writing and speaking.

In this comment, the student seems to again interpret her previous language learning history in light of her experiences with the LTL pedagogy. As Dulcinea learns about the literary continuum in discourse, she realizes how simple her previous understanding of language was, because it was mainly based on “simple,” meaningless, right-versus-wrong mechanical aspects of the language (such as verb conjugations and grammatical rules). In addition, she sees her improvement not only relative to the use of the language in writing, but also in speaking. This is particularly significant if we take into account that in LT1 all participants, except for Lara, saw no connections between writing and speaking, which translated into the prospect of taking conversation (and not writing) courses to improve their speaking ‘skill.’
10.1.2 Learning on the literary cline

Dulcinea’s comment above also points to the relevance of literary discourse in the teaching of (foreign) languages, because while everyday discourse highlights meaning (“I never stopped to think in detail what kind of figurative language is used when someone would say ‘I have a frog in my throat’ or some other colloquial phrase. I just thought about the meaning and went on”), a comparison with literature, which is a type of discourse that generates multiple meanings through the conspicuousness of its form, can bring conscious awareness of how language is used to construct meaning both in the L1 and the L2 (“I realize now that everyday language used metaphors and other figurative language”).

With regard to the idea of contrasting texts on the literary-to-the-non-literary cline in the language classroom, participants also commented on how working with a diversity of texts made some complex texts easier. That is, the comparison and contrast of texts served as a mediator of, or constructed a ZPD with more challenging texts. For example, as we saw in Chapter 5, T provided participants with a soap opera dialogue (free direct speech) between two lovers. This and other instantiations of speech representation were intended to facilitate the distinction between narratorial voice and the free indirect dialogue between the lovers in Cortázar’s story. The soap opera text seemed to help Lara to detect the lovers’ emotional register:

(131) Lara, P, Weekly Journal, Week 6, February 17-19

Después de discutir los elementos de la lengua emocional en la telenovela, noté que era más fácil para construir el grupo 4 del fragmentos. Pienso que ver la conexión de la lengua literaria hace que ser más fácil para comprender un cuento.
[After discussing the elements of emotional language in the soap opera, I noticed that it was easier to construct the group 4 of fragments. I think that seeing the connections with literary language makes it easier to understand a story.]

Literature with small ‘l’ (using McRae’s, 1991, term), such as a soap opera is a useful tool when dealing with complex literary texts, because its creative halfway status can bridge the gap between the literary and the ordinary.

This bridge along the literary cline can connect students with both ends of the continuum, that is, literary texts may also assist students with non-literary texts. Below, Ernest comments on the reconstruction of a jumbled newspaper article on the gore of a famous contemporaneous bullfighter that was used before the fill-in-the-gap activity on Lorca’s “Cogida y muerte.” The newspaper exercise was similar to the reconstruction activity with Cortázar’s story.

(132) Ernest, P, Weekly Journal, Week 15, April 20-22

This week we looked at a text on bullfighting, ordered segments of a text, and examined ways to make new metaphors. We ordered the text based on the pattern of information and clues in the references to other parts of the text. It’s funny because it seemed relatively easy whereas doing things like this in the beginning of the semester would have been much more challenging.

In this comment, Ernest mentions “the pattern of information” and “the references to other parts of the text,” which is far more sophisticated than the introduction-body-conclusion scheme that he and many other learners used in the first composition. Ernest finds it easier to reconstruct a text this time, apparently because he has learned generalizable knowledge about making a text coherent, a type of knowledge that, unlike strict rules of thumb about texts in the traditional foreign-language curriculum, also connects with his empirical knowledge of newspaper texts.
In addition, the comparison of literature to other texts highlighted the uniqueness of literature. For example, the study of everyday creativity made Ernest, who was already interested in literature, especially Borges, further appreciate literary texts:

(133) Ernest, P, Weekly Journal, Week 12, March 30- April 1

From what we saw in class, it appears that some of the most creative language comes from advertisements. In seeing the contrast between more casual figurative language and the formal type in literature, I think I prefer literature because it is more unique, rich, and tends to provide something deeper than a desire to buy a certain product.

Additionally, students profusely commented on their interest in the variety of texts used in the LTL course. For example, Ulysses enjoyed the comparison between jokes in English and in Spanish, and oral narratives (Ulysses, P, Weekly Journal, Week 7, February 24-26; C2). Juliet enjoyed “real texts” such as horoscopes from “an actual Spanish periodical” because it gave her the “chance to see figurative language in a real-life situation,” in a “real magazine” (Juliet, P, Weekly Journal, Week 12, March 30- April 1). After the discussion on the cline between the literary and everyday language in Nicolás Guillén’s and David González’ poems, Dorothea commented on how interesting and creative it was to mix non-literary genres and registers in a poem (Dorothea, P, Weekly Journal, Week 14, April 13-15).

More than anything else, in their co-authoring work on texts, the students were mediated by meaning-based explanations in the form of diagrams and other graphic representations. The following section presents some of the students’ comments on these schemes.
10.1.3 Linguistic explanations

Below Gulliver reflects on the knowledge imparted in intermediate-program courses when he is asked about the most difficult aspects of the LTL course:

(134) Gulliver, LT2

T: ¿Qué es lo que te parece más difícil en este curso [LTL course]? [What is the most difficult part of this course [LTL course]?]  
GULLIVER: En 100 y 200 [composition courses of the intermediate language program] solamente trabajamos con cosas rígidas y las cosas no requieren el mismo nivel de pensar. En tu… tu … en su clase… [In Spanish 100 and 200 [composition courses of the intermediate language program] we only worked with rigid things and things that do not require the same thinking level. In your your-informal … in your-polite class …]  
T: … tu clase [your-informal class]  
GULLIVER: … tu clase los conceptos requieren más uso del mente [… in your class concepts require more use of the mind] [points to head, laughs]  
T: [laugh] ¿Más uso de la cabeza? ¿Y eso está bien o mal? [More use of the head? And is that okay or not?]  
GULLIVER: No, es bueno. Los conceptos son un poco abstracto. [No, it’s fine. Concepts are a little abstract].

Gulliver’s comment captures the rigidity and the limitations of explanations in the tool-for-result traditional curriculum, as opposed to the complexity of meaning-based explanations of language.

Students also seemed to be reacting to the cyclical instruction of language contents in the traditional curriculum. Most students had been exposed to the differences
between the preterit and the imperfect in their second course of the basic language program and again in their first course in the intermediate language program; similarly they had been exposed to the subjunctive-indicative contrast in their third course of the basic language program and again in the second course of the intermediate language program, and so on and so forth. However, this cyclical exposure was not really helpful, as it did not allow students to overcome the same problems with these forms in the advanced levels. In this respect, Ernest commented that the LTL course was very challenging because it was the first language course that did not teach him something that he already knew (Ernest, LT2).

Gulliver was asked what he thought about the fact that the linguistic knowledge in the LTL course challenged his previous knowledge of rules:

(135) **Gulliver, LT3**

GULLIVER: *Está bien. Es lógico… la… lógica y nos permite que escribamos? [laughs]* con más especificidad … más … [It is okay. It is logic … logic … and it allows us to write? [laughs] with more specificity…more … ] **more sense in each line.**

T: More sense?

GULLIVER: More …

T: … meaning?


Theoretical knowledge allows for personal meaning and connects with the students’ “logic,” which presumably refers to their everyday knowledge of, and experiences with, language, texts, movies, and other media both in their native and in their second language.
As explanations in the LTL course depended on the students’ ZPD, instruction was dictated by participants’ needs, independent of any pre-planned instructional sequence. Scheherazade’s comment below hints at the emerging nature of the LTL syllabus, according to the learners’ needs and previous learning histories:

(136) Scheherazade, LT3

T: *De este curso, de Español 300…* [Of this course, the study course…]

SCHEHERAZADE: Sí [Yes]

T: … ¿qué ha sido lo que más te ha gustado y lo que menos te ha gustado?
[What did you like the most and the least?]

SCHEHERAZADE: *Me gusta más … lo que me gusta más es los lados [sic asides]? Los … no apuntes … que …* Well, parece a mí que cuando nos … tú nos enseñas piensas en otras cosas que son importantes para saber creo que éstos son más importantes para mí porque son cosas minúsculas que nunca nadie más va a enseñar. [I like the most … what I like the most is the asides. The … not notes … that … Well, it seems to me that when you teach us you think of other things that are important to know I think that those are the most important to me because these are minuscule things that nobody else is going to teach us]

The idea of “things that nobody else is going to teach” reflects how rarely students’ needs, learning histories, and ZPDs are taken into account in the conventional, prefabricated curricula, and how seldom are syllabi emergent or negotiated with students. Scheherazade explained that with “minuscule things” she referred to all those lessons that emerged in text-based activities and did not last long, perhaps one day. These lessons or “asides” were on “little topics” (LT3), such as metonymy and deverbal
nouns, how to describe movement in Spanish, why a word is not appropriate in a certain stretch of language, etc.

In addition to Scheherazade, other students commented on how useful it was to finally have guidance about certain topics. For example, Ernest commented that the diagram on determiner use [see Appendix A] was “really helpful”: “That sheet made things much more clear as far as when to use the different articles or none at all. This is usually a problem for me so I enjoyed having direction on it” (P, Weekly Journal, Week 15, April 20-22). With regard to the topics of aspect and tense, after summarizing how tenses and aspect were “all about the relationship between the perspective and the focus of the action,” the same student concluded, “This week was definitely complicated but really helpful because it gives me a theoretical framework for analyzing which tense to use rather than just rules (Ernest, P, Weekly Journal, Week 7, February 24-26).

In sum, as it seems, the students that attached the most value to the LTL pedagogy (Alice, Dulcinea, Lara, Ulysses, Gulliver, Ernest, Emma, and Scheherazade) were also the most frustrated with diverse aspects of traditional tool-for-result pedagogy with its reliance on decontextualized, mechanical textbook activities; simplistic, cyclical, rule-based explanations; lack of assistance on some topics; focus on form; sentence-based instruction; rigid syllabi; etc. Not surprisingly, these students happened to recontextualize the most lexicogrammatical resources from co-authoring activities to their own compositions (see Table 8.1).

On the other hand, there were students who were comfortable with the traditional tool-for-result pedagogical orientation, and, consequently, were not so favorably inclined to LTL pedagogy. Their reactions are analyzed in the following section.
10.1.4 Resisting the LTL pedagogy

The students whose personalities, learning goals and motives were more in tune with traditional foreign language pedagogy, and conventional literature courses contemplated the LTL pedagogy with less auspicious eyes. Limited, rigid, right/wrong, black-and-white, agencyless sentence-based activities, and lists of rules provided learners with a sense of security, which the indeterminacy of activity-oriented, discourse-based, tool-and-result, meaning-oriented pedagogy, aiming at students’ self-regulation, could not provide.

This applied to students, such as Dorothea and Jane, who still had problems with controlled textbook practice because they were still struggling with the study of the traditional empirical rules (recall excerpt (84) in Chapter 9, in which Jane justified her choice of aspect with a mixture of contextual cues pertaining personal ‘a’, subjunctive mood and definite articles that would be incorrect even in the rule-based curriculum). Unlike Alice, Dulcinea, Lara, Ulysses, Gulliver, Ernest, Emma, and Scheherazade, other students did not master the rules of thumb to the extent of being able to fully understand its contradictions and limitations, and how they essentially differed from the concept of aspect.

It is possible that Dorothea attributed any perceived inconsistency of the empirical rules to their imperfect knowledge of them. It is also likely that these students understood the concept-based explanation of aspect as another way of presenting the traditional rule-based preterit-imperfect distinction. For example, as discussed in Chapter 9, Dorothea listed the rules of thumb of the preterit and the imperfect in the first two LOGs and insisted that she needed “to improve upon the distinction between the preterit and the imperfect” (LOG2), but then expressed a preference for the meaning-
based explanation in LT3 despite the fact that she had not manipulated aspect meaningfully in the LTL course.

Additionally, Dorothea seemed to interpret the LTL methodology as an alternative teaching/learning style or an advanced addendum to the rules, rather than as a total reconceptualization of the notion of language with fundamental, corollary implications for the organization of learning activity. Thus, after expressing her preference for the meaning-based explanation of aspect (over the traditional list of rules of thumb of the preterit and the imperfect) in LT3, Dorothea contradictorily commented on her need of textbook practice for a better understanding of literary texts:

(137) Dorothea, LT3

T: ¿Qué crees que te puede ayudar a entender mejor la literatura? [What do you think that may help you understand literature better?]

DOROTHEA: A mí, *necesito tener más tiempo y más diferente ejercicios sobre las diferentes narrativas porque* no, like … *para mí no*, like, specifically *sabe que todas las partes de la estructura contain y necesito*, like, *posible más información con un*, like, *a handout or ejercicios en un libro*. *Para mí es más fácil.* [For me, I need to have more time and more different exercises on the different narratives because I don’t, like … for me, I don’t, like, specifically know all the parts that the structure contains and I need, like, possibly more information like a, like a handout or exercises in a textbook. For me it’s easier.]

Textbook practice offered Dorothea a false sense of control, simplicity and achievement, which a creative, discursive understanding of language and learning activity could not offer. This apparent simplicity was more appealing to Dorothea, who was still struggling with rules of thumb, than to, for example, Emma, who had a thorough knowledge of these empirical rules, could successfully and easily resolve textbook
activities and similar controlled practice and had reached a point of saturation in the thematically cyclical curriculum (recall Emma’s comments in section 10.1.1.).

Just as Dorothea, Juliet offers mixed comments on the LTL pedagogy:

(138) Juliet, P, Weekly Journal, Week 4, February 3-5

We are working on this long texto in 300 and to be honest I find it very tedious. I am learning a lot of new vocabulary and I think it will be rewarding when we finally put it all together. Right now, though, none of it really makes sense and it is all a big mystery. We did some exercises with word order today also. I find that very interesting. While this new teaching method of T’s is very good, I sometimes miss the old way of learning rules and practicing with them. I think with practice and time this method she is testing will be very good. I think it needs to be taught from the very beginning (Span 100) [first course of the intermediate language program] in order to work how it could be best [sic in order for it to work at its best].

Juliet’s criticisms seem to be due to her habituation into a right-versus-wrong, rule-based view of language that tolerates little ambiguity with language. For that reason, the jumbled text as well as the different versions and interpretations that the class generated in the reconstruction of the story further disconcerted and confused Juliet:

(139) Juliet, P, Weekly Journal, Week 10, March 16-18

We are nearly done with the short story of fragmented text and I can’t say that I’m sorry. It was interesting for awhile [sic a while] but became very difficult at the end where we were struggling to find the significance of the uses of different tenses. It was especially difficult because since we all worked on putting the piece together, everyone in the room had a slightly different personal image of what was going on in the story.
In consonance with her dislike with work on “this long texto,” Juliet was one of the students that paid the least attention to genre and textual issues. Recall that, in her second composition, Juliet was concerned with practicing informal expressions, but, when it came to defining the genre of her composition, she replied that it could be “a diary entry, a letter to a friend, or even a verbal conversation” (Juliet, LOG2), as if these text types were all similar in form, meaning or function. For her third composition, Juliet simply wrote an “account” of her Spring Break. Therefore, I conclude that issues related to text and genre were not significant for Juliet’s learning goals (unless texts provided samples of conversational or informal language use, such as the horoscope activity), which translated into lack of awareness about textual and generic issues in her compositions and certain resistance to text-based activities.

This was in part the result of her extensive acculturation into a traditional view of language, with an entrenched division between grammar and speaking (beginning levels), and written texts and literature (intermediate and advanced levels). Given her traditional learning history, it seems reasonable that the student placed such an accent on oral communication, and that she considered text-based activities, such as the one with Cortázar’s narrative, gratuitous add-ons that were pointless when it came to learning ‘authentic’ everyday language use.

In addition, it may be possible that the segregation of the oral from the written in Juliet’s traditional language learning history could have been heightened by the student’s social and linguistic needs outside the classroom. Juliet’s references to personal and oral language use (e.g. comments on her Phonology class, on the language of a “diary entry,” a “letter to a friend,” “verbal communication”) were as frequent as her comments on her new Spanish-speaking friends and acquaintances, especially a close friend (which will henceforth be referenced as Calisto) with whom Juliet often spoke Spanish.
Additionally, Juliet expected to complete a study-abroad program in Spain, which may have been one more reason for which she enrolled in a phonology class and turned her attention to pronunciation, colloquial registers, and vocabulary ("I think what I like best about [LTL course] is learning new vocabulary. Looking over my notes, the most things that I have written down are words and phrases that I’ve learned. Hopefully I will be able to retain most of them" (P, Weekly Journal, Week 7, February 24-26). Below is just one of the many comments that the student wrote with regard to Calisto and her plans to study abroad in the nearby future:

(140) Juliet, P, Weekly Journal, Week 7, February 24-26

Calisto is making me speak Spanish with him so my skills are improving a lot, especially, orally, which is where I have the most trouble. [Writes about that week of classes in the LTL course and in phonology] I am pleased with my progress so far this semester. I think I am learning a lot of valuable points about Spanish that I will hopefully be able to put to use when I finally go abroad.

Juliet’s new social environment was shaping her learning motivations. The student’s goals at the time of the LTL study were to understand and to be understood by her Spanish-speaking friends, especially Calisto, and to be able to function in a study-abroad context. The recent change of her social environment and plans for the future had led her to view language in ‘practical’ ways and to place more emphasis on lexicon that could be used in colloquial and personal contexts, and on pronunciation. Juliet’s portfolio reflections reveal this emphasis on ‘usefulness’:


This week in Spanish 300 [LTL course] we learned words for stuff like “maneater,” and “canopener.” Words that are built with other words. I thought it was really really interesting and fun. It was mostly fun because I could figure
out what most of them meant based on words I already knew, and for those I couldn't figure out, it was cool to see what they meant. The class participated more than usual and I think that was a good indication of everyone enjoying the activity.

While I am very happy learning about texts and different writing styles, once in awhile I enjoy learning new vocabulary, especially if it seems useful. I have been growing more and more concerned lately about how well I will be able to communicate in Spain and activities like this help to boost my confidence.

Juliet did not connect text-based activities and the development of one’s (writing) style with her main learning goal, which was to be able to communicate orally with her Spanish-speaking friends and when she traveled abroad. Juliet did not connect textual and generic notions with effective communication despite work on oral-to-written, literary-to-non-literary continua. It is possible that, as a result of her experiences in her new social network and her study-abroad plans, Juliet was more favorably disposed towards an empirical, more spontaneous way of dealing with language, consistent with learning vocabulary and structures in a piecemeal fashion and focusing on others’ and one’s own pronunciation, as in an immersion context. That would explain Juliet’s impatience with and low tolerance of lengthy, in-depth, text-based, theoretically mediated activities that required preliminary meaning orientation.

Just as Juliet, Jane and Dorothea above, Darcy missed the traditional instructional scheme and had a negative attitude towards text-based, concept-based reconstructing activities:

(142) Darcy, P, Weekly Journal, Week 5, February 10-12
I think we are doing a little too much with this story, I can’t wait to just read it now, instead of trying to unravel it. I had good teachers all the way through my career, who have taught me the principles of writing and speaking, but we all need more and more work. It’s great for me especially because I love world language.

The student hints at the conventional treatment of texts in mainstream language/literature education, which usually revolves around textual analysis—rather than activity-oriented intervention, co-authoring, transformation, and reconstruction of (literary) texts. Presumably, “the principles of writing and speaking” that were transmitted to him were traditional rules of thumb, and the work that is needed is either further reinforcement (or recycling of those principles) or textbook practice. In such instructional organization, the student becomes a passive object of educational events, and of the teacher’s actions, with the conventional role of reproducing and drilling knowledge, and reading only the author’s context and alleged meanings into literary texts (probably through the typical question-answer protocols). For Darcy, this was a conventional, predictable environment in which it was easy to function and to obtain high grades (recall discussion on Darcy’s high-achieving personality, the student’s comments about grades, and about enrolling in classes with instructors with whom he could easily get A’s in Chapter 9). This explains his negative attitude towards activities that did not fit such a predictable scheme.

Another element that contradicted participants’ previous learning histories was the in-depth reading and analysis of a limited number of texts (compared to more traditional literature courses) used in the LTL course in comparison to conventional literature courses. As will be remembered, two literary texts (Cortázar’s Continuidad de los parques and Lorca’s “Cogida y muerte”) were reconstructed in depth in the LTL course, and a wide variety of other literary and non-literary texts were used as well in
support of those texts. Some students, such as Ophelia reacted negatively to the number of texts and the length of the reconstructing activities:

(143) Ophelia, P, Daily Log, February 26

I may have a heart attack if we read and discuss **one story for the entire semester**. At first I liked learning about the story, discussing it, drawing the picture of it.

But now every time we have another group of **fragments I feel less and less motivated to actually find out what happens**.

I’m starting to have doubts about “grammar in context” because we’re only learning it in one context. If we were reading/discussing poems, plays, stories, news and analyzing the grammar within all of them we could easily take the lessons out of context and apply them to everyday life.

Discussing only this one story is having the opposite affect [sic effect]. **Everytime we discuss grammar in [the] context of the story it’s hard to tell if it translates to other uses, or only within this old story.**

Ophelia’s observation about having just one context for grammar in the course was not accurate. As other students commented, and as it was explained in Chapter 5, by February 26th students had worked with shopping lists, ‘small talk’ fragments, news, one page from a soap opera script, several poems and short stories, an email, jokes, a chocolate candy bar commercial, chronologies and several examples of everyday parables regarding temporal perspective from Turner’s *The Literary Mind*. Most texts were in Spanish, but there were also texts in the participants’ L1.

It seems that Ophelia’s reaction to the number of texts in the LTL course had to do with her experience with traditional literature courses, which focus on larger numbers of literary texts and authors, and in which literary texts hold a special status not
comparable to everyday texts. The student’s parents’ traditional training in writing could also have reinforced this traditional view of language and literature—recall that Ophelia’s parents were professional writers, and had advised her to include an introduction, a body, and a conclusion in her compositions (see Chapter 7). T decided to interview Ophelia about her beliefs about literature and about literature classes:

(144) Ophelia, LT3

T: ¿Cuáles son los aspectos más importantes de aprender literatura? [What are the most important aspects of learning literature?]

OPHELIA: Para ser una persona más cultural y … y … lista [laughs] yo creo que contextos literarios son muy importantes cuando estás una escritor o … o… ah!, no sé… Yo quiero ser escritora es muchísimo importante que tengo un interés y también la capaz de entender otras cosas de literatura porque son como maestros de cómo puedo escribir. [To be a more cultural person and …. and … smart [laughs] I think that literary contexts are important when you are a writer or … or … ah! I don’t know…[If] I want to be a writer, it’s extremely important that I have an interest and also the capacity to understand other literary things because they are like masters of how I can write.]

T: Entonces, ¿cómo crees tú que debe ser la clase de literatura ideal? [Then, how do you think that the ideal literature class must be?]

OPHELIA: Es como mi clase de [Survey Literature Course] … no sé. Pero leimos un texto y después en clase hablamos sobre el autor y su contexto y también hablamos sobre el texto y cómo el … la … y la edad entre el texto con el comparación del autor y su contexto afuera del texto escrito. Y después hablamos sobre las temas, las personajes y la cuenta y después de muchísimos cuentos y autores diferentes [,] tenemos un examen de
todos con comparaciones y... Es la mejor manera yo creo porque el comparación es muy importante, es una skill? [It would be like my [Survey Literature Course] ... I don't know. But we read a text, and then in class we talked about the author and his/ her context and also we talked about the text and how the ... the ... and the time between the text and in comparison of the author and his/ her context out of the written text. And after we speak about themes, the characters and the story and then of a great deal of different stories and authors, we have an exam of all of them with comparisons and ... It's the best way I think, because comparison is very important, it's a [how do you say] skill?]

T: Una habilidad.

OPHELIA: Una habilidad muy importante en cada persona lista [A very important skill in every smart person] [Laughs].

Although Ophelia’s description of the perfect literature class has some aspects in common with LTL pedagogy (for example, the relevance of literature in the development of writing ability, the importance of comparison of different texts and authors, and the necessity of taking the author’s cultural context into account), it also exhibits dramatic differences. The learner’s description largely portrays a traditional literature class, in which canonical texts are the supreme linguistic expressions of an intellectual elite in a specific culture. Consequently, creative texts such as commercials, adds, news, chronologies, posters, and everyday conversations play an inconsequential (if any) role in the traditional literature class. This especial status of literature underpins “conceptions of creativity and artistry that would see these as associated with talented speakers and writers, such as literary authors or great orators” (Maybin, and Swann, 2007a, p. 495;

Secondly, the instructional scheme that is depicted by Ophelia does not seem to allow for intervention in texts, or other ways of creating a ZPD between the text and the student. In traditional literature pedagogy, reading is not a form of (re)writing; neither is writing a form of reading. The accent on close reading, textual analyses, autobiographical and historical information hints at the possibility that in the student’s class the construction of meaning, or the enactment of discourse, is merely concerned with the authors’ context, in complete disregard of the reader’s world, and of the significance of texts for multiple future readers in diverse contexts. In the student’s class, like in the traditional literature course, texts seem to be wrought in the everlasting marble of a specific socio-historical context. Thus, only authors’ and privileged readers’ alleged meanings come back to life within the contemporary walls of the conventional literature class, like ghostly, immutable echoes from a distant age. In addition, traditional assessment in the form of exams and analytical essays probably centers on the interpretation/s in which the students have been instructed through lectures, and in the memorization and reproduction of content. In such a circumstance, there is little room for the students’ own discourse and language-in-use instruction; however, there is usually room for the reproduction of vast amounts of content about large numbers of texts, authors, and historical contexts.

It seems that Ophelia was extremely successful in this type of literature course. This fact together with her personality (including professional perspectives, learning motivations and goals, learning history, family activities, etc) may explain Ophelia’s criticism about the number of texts in the LTL course.
In addition, in her initial criticism in (143) the student seems to view linguistic concepts as only applicable to Cortázar’s “old story” (to use her own words), because of her previous learning history (“Everytime we discuss grammar in [the] context of the story it’s hard to tell if it translates to other uses, or only within this old story”). This reflects the type of empirical instruction based on contextual cues that she received earlier on in the language curriculum. In other words, the student is tying the concept of aspect to the particular context of Cortázar’s story, just as certain ‘uses’ of language in her past were tied to particular contexts with the exclusion of others, such as passive for formal, not informal, contexts; creative language only for literary, not everyday texts; imperfect when one talks about emotions, or the weather; subjunctive when one expresses uncertainty or doubt, etc. Instead, conceptual teaching encourages the learning of essential, abstract features of objects that can be generalized to all contexts according to one’s purpose. This was difficult to assimilate not only for Ophelia, but for all students, because of their previous language learning histories.

Additionally, Ophelia’s reflection (143) seems to hint at a tool-for-result, language-through-literature pedagogy (“If we were reading/discussing poems, plays, stories, news and analyzing the grammar within all of them we could easily take the lessons out of context and apply them to everyday life”). In conventional literature classes, language in texts is approached in a grammar-fix, close-reading basis. That is, students are helped to understand texts thanks to occasional grammatical fixes (usually limited to difficult vocabulary and grammatical structures) and guided reading. Then, learners are supposed to be able to apply this knowledge to future contexts (that is, to other literary texts), and to be capable of interpreting other texts independently, which is rarely the case due to the empirical nature of students’ knowledge and learning preference.
On the other hand, admittedly, Ophelia’s comment was a timely indication that students might need more instantiations of aspect, and that a comparison/contrast activity could be useful at this point. Because of this, T prepared an activity with a segment of TV news in which aspect was used in similar ways to Cortázar’s story, and challenged the traditional rules of thumb that had been taught in previous courses (see exercise 11 and Figure 7 in Chapter 5).

Additionally, Ophelia’s comment (143) exposes one of the dangers which instructors may incur when teaching literature-through-language: to focus on every single aspect of a text, which, to a certain extent, may have been the case with the Cortázar activity.

Other students offered similar comments to Ophelia’s:

(145) Alice, P, Weekly Journal, Week 6, March 17-19

Finally, we finished the mysterious story. It was so well-written and interesting. I have to say, however, that I am somewhat glad that we are finished with it. T used this story to demonstrate a lot to the class while incorporating other activities that reinforced the ideas we were learning in the story. I really enjoyed the way in which we learned through this story.

Just as Alice, Ulysses’ comment in (146) exhibits a mixture of appreciation of the creative quality of Cortázar’s story as a result of the process of reconstruction and of relief that the activity was completed:

(146) Ulysses, P, Weekly Journal, Week 9, March 9-11

Finally after half a semester we finished reconstructing the story. It actually ended good. The process of getting to the end was tough. There were some days where I didn’t really understand the story. However, now that it’s all completed I get it. It’s got quite an ending to it. I really liked our group
discussions on trying to interpret the story. I hope we have more of them.

They’re fun and it made the class go by quicker.

Even if other texts and activities were used along with the short story, the activity may have lasted too long (ten weeks) and focused on too many topics (utterance, text, coherence, punctuation, word order, tense, aspect, representation of speech and thought). One of the reasons why so many topics were addressed was participants’ traditional language-learning histories, which lead them to limited views of the use of language in Cortázar’s text, which in turn lead to further instruction to undo previous rule-based knowledge. Another reason was the linguistic richness and complexity of Cortázar’s story itself.

In sum, whereas instructors need to avoid the extreme of teaching every single aspect of a text, more time and some degree of struggle are required when working within the ZPD in text-based activities than the conventional student may be used to. As syllabi are emergent and dictated by the learners’ needs in LTL instruction, in-depth work on a few core texts is emphasized.

At the same time, activities need to be designed in such a way that multiple literary and non-literary texts can be compared and contrasted (e.g. Cortázar’s story and the piece of TV news). As discussed in Chapter 4, this comparison establishes the dialectic, synergetic relationship between non-literary and literary texts. Work on a cline of literariness should allow LTL instruction to move from the abstract to the concrete and from the concrete to the abstract. Because of its conspicuous manipulation of form, literary texts highlight the means of communication and bring the formal features of language to the fore, while everyday/spontaneous communication, which utilizes the same means, typically underlines meaning. For example, the formal aspects and the presence itself of literary figures, such as metaphor and metonymy, becomes very
apparent in literary texts, while these features usually go unnoticed in everyday language use.

The full development of linguistic concepts requires learning activity that anchors theoretical and procedural knowledge to both the theoretical system of meanings provided in school and the students’ spontaneous knowledge of language. That is, on the one hand, work on the cline of literariness should anchor the system of theoretical concepts used in reconstruction activities with literary texts to everyday/spontaneous language use and knowledge. In this sense, non-literary texts bridge literature to the students because non-literary texts may offer more common, accessible concretizations of the abstract concepts used in literary texts. This establishes a ZPD between students and literature (for example, the soap opera helped students to understand issues of speech and thought representation in the passage of the log cabin lovers in Cortázar’s story). On the other hand, moving from the concrete to the abstract, comparison and contrast between non-literary texts and literature may bring spontaneous/everyday language use to the students’ conscious awareness and control. In this sense, comparative/contrastive work on a cline of literariness may elevate the ordinary use of language to a theoretical/scientific status, which would allow its conscious, intentional, goal-oriented, meaningful, systematic, functional control.

The next section will examine whether LTL pedagogy impacted learners’ views of literature and its perceived relevance for language learning.

**10.2 Attitudes towards literature and content courses**

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 demonstrated how learning histories, personalities, and attitudes far from being ‘external’ factors that merely ‘influence’ students’ linguistic
proficiency, are constitutive aspects of linguistic development. In the next two subsections, I will illustrate how participants’ identities and learning histories interact with the relevance and significance that they attribute to literature.

In the following subsection, I will discuss how assistance that is more complex than grammatical and vocabulary ‘fixes,’ and information about the author’s world is necessary for the teaching of literary texts. In particular, I will illustrate how learners’ histories and personalities resulting from their sociocultural practical activity interact with the construction of meaning in literary texts, specifically in Benedetti’s “A imagen y semejanza” [“In His likeness”]. This may shed light onto why students may feel alienated in traditional literature courses. The analysis will demonstrate the pedagogical importance of taking the reader’s (not only the author’s) world into the literature class, and of distributing meaning between the text, the author and the reader.

10.2.1 Losing their religion: identity, language, and literary exegesis

That's me in the corner
That's me in the spotlight
Losing my religion
Trying to keep up with you
And I don't know if I can do it
("Losing my religion" by R.E.M.)

Just as with attitudes towards LTL pedagogy, students’ attitudes towards literature depended on the significance that they assigned to texts in light of their own experiences and personalities. When students are asked to analyze texts in traditional undergraduate literature courses, the discursive dimension of texts is not usually taken
into account. That is, instructors usually focus on the author’s world (as discussed above) and occasionally on the language of the literary text, but rarely on the context that is brought by the student. The reader/learner’s context is the most fundamental factor in the process of the attribution of meaning, as well as personal and learning significance, to literature. It may determine what lexicogrammatical resources are paid attention to in a text, and, consequently, it essentially contributes to the interpretation and analysis of literary texts. To illustrate this, I will discuss how learners’ personalities, sociocultural contexts, histories, and attitudes towards literature were more than ‘external factors’ in the meaning-making processes involved in the interpretation of Benedetti’s *A imagen y semejanza* (LT2).

During LT2, participants were asked to interpret Benedetti’s story—occasionally in more than one way—, and to justify their interpretation/s with linguistic evidence from the text. I also suggested alternative interpretations and asked participants to prove or refute such interpretations with linguistic clues. It appears from students’ analyses that the task of commenting this particular text was out of the students’ ZPD. However, the task of reading and analyzing Benedetti’s story followed the traditional parameters, as the other readings for the LTs (see Chapter 6), that is, the text was not made incomplete or otherwise malleable for intervention or transformation.

Most participants (except for Ophelia, Ernest and Lara) paradoxically interpreted the story of the laborious ant squashed “in God’s likeness” by a human finger with morals about God’s goodness, about the cultural notions of “free will,” and of work as a source of success. Most participants (except for those mentioned above) ignored and even overtly rejected linguistic evidence that could point to interpretations related to religious skepticism and disenchantment, existentialism, pessimism, and predetermination. This rejection could be related to the fact that some of these concepts
could be literally foreign to some students; consequently, they interpreted the story in light of the cultural meanings that had been available to them in their own sociocultural milieus.

For example, the story went against religious believes in Jane’s and Darcy’s views. Dorothea and Darcy even interpreted the ant as a symbol of Jesus, who was sacrificed by the Romans (the human finger), but the participants could not justify or make any sense of the title and the word *NADA* (nothing), which was encrypted in the story. Darcy also interpreted the story as a discourse against the idea of “free will,” which he summarized in: “don’t expect to be rewarded when you work hard, because in the US it’s very common to think that if you work very hard, you’re going to be rewarded.” This comment reveals how Darcy interpreted the story in light of his unique experience in his cultural milieu, while a person from another culture could have read an existentialist tone in the story.

In turn, Darcy refused to validate an existentialist interpretation, despite linguistic evidence, due to his religious beliefs. Darcy’s beliefs about wealth and social classes also interacted with his reading of Benedetti’s text, as it appears in the dialogue below:

(147) Darcy, LT 2

T: ¿Podríamos también pensar que la persona que aplasta a la hormiga es Dios? [Could we also think of the possibility that the person that squashes the ant is God?]

DARCY: Quizás, pero yo no diría eso [Maybe, but I would not say so].

T: Vamos a pensar en esta posibilidad. Si el hombre representa a Dios, ¿qué representa la hormiga? [Silence] Si el hombre que aplasta a la hormiga representa a Dios … la hormiga trabaja, se esfuerza, lucha y no sirve para nada. ¿Qué puede representar la hormiga? [Let’s think of that possibility. If the man
represents God, what does the ant represent? [Silence] If the man that squashes the ant represents God…the ant works, tries hard, fights and everything to no avail. What may the ant represent?]

DARCY: [After a 20-second pause] No sé. Yo no sé. [I don’t know. I do not know].

T: ¿Quién en el mundo se esfuerza, trabaja, pero al final muere? [Who in this world tries hard, works, but finally dies?]

DARCY: Los pobrecitos… [The little poor ones]

T: Todos excepto algunos que nacen ricos, pero aunque nazcan ricos también tienen problemas… [Everybody except some people who are born already rich, but even if they are born rich, they also have problems …]

DARCY: … o la clase baja […]or the lower class]

T: … los ricos también pueden tener problemas emocionales, sentimentales … Entonces, ¿puede ser que la hormiga represente al ser humano y el hombre que la aplasta representa a Dios? ¿Crees que es una interpretación válida? [… rich people may also have emotional, sentimental problems … Then is it possible that the ant represents the human being and the man that squashes the ant represents God?]

DARCY: No [laughs].

T: ¿No? Vamos a pensar un poco más en esa posibilidad. Si piensas en el título, “A imagen y semejanza,” ¿podría tener sentido este título con esta interpretación de Dios representado en el hombre que aplasta a la hormiga? [No? Let’s think a little bit more about this possibility. If you think about the title “In his likeness,” could this title make sense in this interpretation that the man that squashes the ant is the representation of God?]
DARCY: No, yo dije esa otra explicación que yo di. Me confundo que Dios mataría un pobrecito [No, I said that other explanation that I gave. It confuses me that God would kill a little poor one].

T: Bueno, no necesariamente que Dios mataría a un pobrecito, sino que Dios está en control de nuestra vida, como si nosotros fuéramos hormigas, puede decidir dejarnos caminar y dejarnos vivir o puede decidir que está cansado de ver la hormiga y aplastarla. ¿Ésa sería una visión que es negativa o positiva de la vida? [Well, I'm not necessarily saying that God would kill a little poor one, but that God is in control of our lives, as if we were ants, that he can choose to let us walk away and stay alive or he can decide that he is tired of seeing the ant and then squash it. Would that be a positive or negative view of life?]

DARCY: Negativa [Negative]

T: Negativa de la vida y de Dios, ¿no? Entonces, con esa interpretación en mente qué sentido tiene el título “A imagen y semejanza”? [A negative view of life and God, isn’t it? Then with that interpretation in mind what meaning does the title “In His likeness” have?]

DARCY: Está pintando Dios como una … cómo se dice “despot”? [It is depicting God like a … how do you say “despot”?]

T: ¿Cómo? [What?]

DARCY: A despot?

T: Déspota. “A imagen y semejanza,” in his likeness, refleja que el hombre está actuando como un Dios ante la hormiga porque Dios actúa de la misma manera con los hombres. El hombre es más poderoso que la hormiga y la aplasta cuando quiere … [Despot. “In his likeness” reflects the idea that the man is acting
like God to the ant because God acts the same way with men. The man is more powerful than the ant and he squashes when he fancies …]

DARCY: Sí [Yes]

T: ... y Dios ... [...] and God ...]

DARCY: ... como que a ... a Dios no le importa [...] like ... like God does not care].

T: Entonces nosotros somos como hormigas y el hombre es como Dios y ... [Then we are like ants and the man is like God and ...]

DARCY: ... y Dios está como riendo de nosotros [...] and God is like laughing about us].

T: ¿Ésa tú crees que podría ser una posible interpretación? [Do you think that could be a possible interpretation?]

DARCY: Es posible, pero ... [It is possible, but...]

T: ¿Pero por qué no estás de acuerdo con la interpretación? [But why do you disagree with this interpretation?]

DARCY: ¡Porque Dios es bueno! [Because God is good!]

T: ¿Pero no crees que a lo mejor hay personas que no piensan que es bueno y que es posible que alguien escriba ... [But don’t you think that maybe there are people who do not think that he is good and that it is possible that somebody writes ...]

DARCY: Sí, quizás los que no crean [Yeah, maybe those who do not believe]

T: Por ejemplo, una persona escéptica, una persona que ha perdido un ser querido y se siente enfadado con Dios [For example, a skeptical person, a person who has lost a loved one and feels angry at God].
Darcy showed an impassioned and manifest dislike for literature throughout the course. The ways in which his personality and learning history connect with this dislike have been hinted throughout this chapter and will be expanded in the next subsection. For the time being, Darcy’s negative response to particular readings of Benedetti’s story has a great deal to do with his identity, classroom conventions, and cultural taboos.

Despite linguistic clues, such as the title, long complicating events for describing the ineffective, minuscule ant’s hardships, and the minimal, whimsical resolution offered by the almighty human thumb, Darcy resists the possibility of an interpretation that, from his reaction, seems to compromise his religious beliefs. By resisting T’s alternative interpretation of linguistic clues, Darcy positions himself, and expresses his own religious identity. However, far from asserting his own voice, Darcy’s inability to read other positions and meanings, as well as to enact his own meaning by proving his own interpretation/s with suitable linguistic evidence, does not allow him to engage in certain types of activity, such as considering, criticizing, and contesting antagonistic narratives on an equal footing. Darcy’s lack of discourse proficiency also limits his possibilities of understanding and deepening his own views by contemplating them from and in comparison with other perspectives, relative to his own particular circumstances. Being unable to participate in Benedetti’s literary game with all the necessary linguistic ability, Darcy cannot create a counter-narrative or a piece of literary criticism that would refute Benedetti’s view at the same discursive level. While literature – especially foreign-language literature – offers a great disestablishing potential for the classroom (Schultz, 2002, pp. 11-12), it is difficult to make use of such a tool in class when there is a general tendency to avoid topics such as religion and politics at the educational setting. In light of the characterization of linguistic development in this dissertation, Darcy’s reluctance to
just read others’ (not that he should change his own) views seems to point to the need of a discourse-based pedagogy for the foreign language classroom.

Benedetti’s short story itself reveals the importance of being able to read, rewrite, intervene in and transform others’ narratives in order to construct one’s discourse, voice, position, and meaning. Benedetti’s counter-narrative does not only point to the *Genesis* with an existentialist forefinger; the ant story seems to be the contestation or antithesis of not only culture-specific discourses, but also of a certain genre: the fable. Benedetti’s “*A imagen y semejanza*” appears as an anti-fable, a text written against the grain of La Fontaine’s “The ant and the cricket,” which is a sociohistorical artifact in Western folklore embodying certain cultural values. Emma, Lara, Dorothea perceived the distinct echo of La Fontaine’s fable in Benedetti’s text, but Dorothea and Dulcinea interpreted Benedetti’s story in light of their own personal believes and, paradoxically, along the same lines as La Fontaine’s fable (even when the short story blatantly contradicted those beliefs). For example, when asked about her interpretation of Benedetti’s short story, Dulcinea commented: “it’s important to try over and over again,” “people have to work but that’s good because in that way we have money to buy the things we have,” the ant did not get anything in return for its work “in the story. Maybe it did it for its family.”

Other cultural artifacts were also manifested in Dulcinea’s interpretation of Benedetti’s short story. For example, while Alice, Scheherazade, Ernest, Emma, Ophelia, Lara and Darcy found the story to be “pessimistic,” Dulcinea viewed Benedetti’s text comical (save for the end), because the ant’s attempts to collect food on her way to the hole reminded her of scenes from *Looney Tunes* cartoons. This again reveals the relevance of the context (in this case, internalized sociohistorical artifacts in the form of the narratives and schemata of a specific culture) that interlocutors bring to the communicative event for the co-construction of meaning in discourse.
On the other hand, Lara’s, Dulcinea’s, and Jane’s interpretations were curtailed by their expectation that the killing of the ant would refer to a particular historical event in Latin America. Therefore, participants refrained from enacting their own meanings because they decided that content knowledge would be needed to make the “right” interpretation. In addition to the participants’ views of literature, literary exegesis, the literature classroom, and of foreign and domestic politics, this expectation reveals one more way in which students’ personalities interact with language learning. Not only are learners’ histories, personalities, personal senses, goals, etc. an essential component in the students’ construction of meaning in texts, but also in the attribution of significance to certain types of learning activity, which both enables or constrains learners’ agencies. In other words, as Lara, Dulcinea, and Jane had been acculturated into the traditional literature teaching class that stresses information about the author and the historical context, the students could not interpret Benedetti’s text, and, thus, their agencies as legitimate discourse makers were curtailed by their experiences with previous pedagogies.

Students’ analyses of Benedetti’s text show, on the one hand, how meaning is distributed between the author, the reader, and the text and, on the other, the type of considerations that need to be taken into account when teaching literature as language-in-use. For example, it suggests how students can benefit from rewriting activities that recontextualize texts, establish connections between language and diverse views of the world (not only that of the original author), and bring awareness to how language is used to create particular views of the world. In other words, rewriting activities may allow students to become aware of the contexts that they bring into the reading act, and how others (e.g. authors, and future readers, or readers from diverse cultures) enact specific discourses in light of their own circumstances. This is comparable to interlocutors’
scaffolding of intention-attribution processes in any communicative situation, that is, how different subjectivities co-weave meaning in everyday, common language use. LTL pedagogy may lay the groundwork for the contestation, personalization and democratization of literature, that is, overcoming the alienation that some students may feel when they open a book within the walls of a conventional literature class.

10.2.2 Changing attitude towards literature

Chapter 8 discussed that even students that were apprehensive of literature courses seemed to enjoy literary texts to a lesser or a greater degree in their free time to the extent of forming book clubs or trying to read short stories and novels in Spanish during vacation. Participants seemed to enjoy literary texts in the LTL course when the texts were significant to them and when they could make sense of them. For example, in addition to the learners’ comments on the creativity of Cortázar’s Continuidad de los parques that have been discussed throughout the data analysis, Juliet, Alice, Jane, Dorothea, Scheherazade, Ulysses, Gulliver, Emma, Ophelia, Lara, and Dulcinea commented that they liked Cernuda’s poem, Donde habite el olvido (used in LT3), after understanding how language had been manipulated in the poem. This was by far the most challenging text dealt with in the course because of its intricate manipulation of grammar and its literary figures bordering on Surrealism. After asking students about their own interpretations of Cernuda’s poem, T offered a possible interpretation and showed how this interpretation was connected with lexicogrammatical choices in the text. After this explanation, Emma exclaimed,

(148) Emma, LT3

EMMA: I like it now that I understand it!
T: What do you like about it?
EMMA: No es muy feliz, pero es … it’s like… I don’t know. It’s kind of like, pretty.

Similarly, Scheherazade commented:

(149) Scheherazade, LT3

SCHEHERAZADE: ¡Me gusta ahora! [I like it now!]

T: ¿Sí? [Do you?]

SCHEHERAZADE: Ahora que entiendo. [Now that I understand it]

Gulliver and Ulysses, who were really creative writers and had recontextualized many lexicogrammatical resources in their own compositions, underscored the originality of Cernuda’s poem. Ulysses commented, “I like it. It’s creative. It’s out-there.”

Gulliver’s comments revealed his sudden realization of the connections between linguistic choices and the construction of (literary) worlds, thus capturing the central purpose of the LTL course:

(150) Gulliver, LT3

It’s kind of funny how you can have a grammar st … the gram …

grammatical structure actually tell a story. I’d not really noticed that or seen that before. I mean, the words are telling the story and the grammar is telling the story, which is kind of weird. Yeah, I’d never seen that before. Interesting.

It is probable that the student had seen lexicogrammatical choices “telling the story” without being aware of it before. After this comment in LT3, Gulliver commented on his attempt to mimic Cernuda’s strategy of telling the story through the grammatical structure in his third composition (“I used grammar [in Composition 3] to alter the meaning, which we saw in the poem we just did for the oral interview (about oblivion),” LOG3; see the rest of Gulliver’s comment in excerpt (67) in Chapter 8). This comment is quite significant, as it connects awareness of Cernuda’s manipulation of language with
Gulliver's awareness of how meaning could be constructed in his Composition 3. In this respect, the student explained how he attempted to narrate his biking story through the manipulation of grammar—specifically of tense—rather than merely through the propositional content (see Chapter 8).

Additionally, Ernest found Cernuda's poem personally significant to him because he could identify with the poet's struggle with his homosexuality in a discriminatory society:

(151) Ernest, LT3

ERNEST: *Este poema especialmente para mí tiene mucho significada porque yo entiendo este lucha … struggle?* [This poem especially to me has a lot of significance because I do understand this struggle …[is that] struggle?]

T: *Lucha* [Struggle].

ERNEST: *Esta lucha y este idea de … de vivir sin esperanza, como muerto.*

[This struggle and this idea of … of living without hope, like dead.]

T: *Sabía que te iba a gustar el poema.* [I knew you would like the poem]


On the other hand, Darcy did not find Cernuda's poem significant or meaningful:

(152) Darcy, LT3

T: ¿*Qué piensas del poema?* [What do you think about the poem?]

DARCY: *No me gusta.* [I don’t like it]

T: ¿*Por qué no te gusta?* [Why don’t you like it?]

DARCY: *No me … no me gusta la poesía *más porque tengo que pensar en …* [I do not … I don’t like poetry *more because I have to think of …* [sic possibly ‘because I have to think more’] [laughs].
Darcy was asked if at least the discussion about the language of poem and its
effects had made sense to him, to which he replied, “No. No. Lo siento” [No. No. Sorry].
In addition, with respect to the literature course for which he had just registered, he
added: “Me voy a mi muerte [Laughs] Ugh!” [“I am going to my death.” [Laughs.
Nauseous sound]].
The student had expressed his fervent lack of interest in literature in all literary
interviews. In fact, he commented that he only enjoyed reading newspapers, such as
The Wall Street Journal, and wished he could read its Spanish counterpart, an interest
that was in tune with his utilitarian view of language.
In addition to his lack of interest in Cernuda’s poem, Darcy had, in his own
words, “hated” the reconstruction work with Cortázar’s Continuidad de los parques
(LT3), and disliked Benedetti’s short story, except for its vocabulary: “éste es el tipo de
cuento que a mí me gusta leer porque tiene mucho vocabulario, tiene muchos
verbos nuevos y tiene muchos adjetivos y me gustan adjetivos como … yo no sé, …
y también como terrón, nube … “ [this is the type of short story I like to read because it
has a lot of vocabulary, it has lots of new verbs, and lots of adjectives and I like
adjectives such as … I don’t know … and also “grain,” “cloud”] (Darcy, LT2). Therefore,
the story was initially significant for Darcy because it was congruent with his language-
learning motives and goals, and with his personality. On the other hand, other aspects of
literary texts and some of the LTL concepts were not significant for Darcy because they
did not connect with his learning goals, life history, and personality.
Given the fact that LTL pedagogy is based on language-in-use in the-literary-to-
the-non-literary cline, it could be expected that at some point Darcy might start to find
literature more significant as connections with everyday discourse were established and
the construction of personal sense was emphasized. This happened to some extent with
some linguistic concepts and with the student’s perception of the relevance of literature for language learning.

For example, at the beginning of the LTL course, Darcy could not find significance on word order within the Cortázar reconstructing activity: “I still need to understand the purpose of this story reconstruction and why it is so important that one word comes before another” (Darcy, P, Daily Log, February 10). Because of this, he had turned his attention to the lexicon in the story in his portfolio daily and weekly learning logs.

It was not until the third composition that word order became significant for Darcy. He realized the meaningfulness of word order while writing about a personal experience in which word order became significant for making sense: his agonizing five-minute speech in front of a whole class during his stammering school days. Following C3, in which T brought to his notice the difference in meaning that could be created with word order, Darcy changed “cuatro minutos me quedaban” [four minutes to go] to “me quedaban cuatro minutos.” These are his composition learning log comments:

(153) Darcy, LOG3

Through this course I have learned so many things that it’s very hard to count them. However **one concept came to me more clearly in this essay. That concept is word order.** I used it for a psychological symbol for the duration of time, in which one minute can seem like a century when one is doing something that they do not want to do. I really wanted to emphasize the minutes but I put them first instead of later. To emphasize something more with words and speech, it has to be in the latter part of the phrase. Therefore I put “me quedaron cuatro minutos” instead of “cuatro minutos me quedaron”
There are still problems with the explanation of word order that Darcy provides. Apart from a problem with aspect, the unmarked word order choice would be “me quedaban cuatro minutos,” because the information-point (rather than the emphasis that Darcy discusses) is the amount of time that is left. By placing the information-point before the known information (“cuatro minutos me quedaban”) and with a descending intonation, the utterance, instead, signals emphasis (¡cuatro minutos me quedaban!) or contrast (cuatro, no tres, minutos me quedaban, that is, it was four not three minutes that were left).

Although “cuatro minutos me quedaban” (Darcy’s original word order) was the most emphatic and, thus, the most appropriate choice for his sense, it was unintentional, probably intuitively guided by subject-verb word order in his native language. In fact, Darcy had not realized how word order could contribute to his personal meaning until the composition interview with T, and he had constructed emphasis on time by putting the utterance in bold. On the other hand, his second choice, the unmarked, non-emphatic word order, though not constructing his personal sense yet, was guided by the awareness that word order is meaningful. Therefore, although his correction is “wrong” (for not being the most emphatic choice), this operation is more ‘correct’ than his previous ‘right answer,’ and shows a better understanding of the significance of word order. In addition, the student’s explanation above sounds drastically different from other explanations of his, because most of them had been based on rules, contextual cues and a right-versus-wrong view of language, not oriented to personal meaning, communicative intention, and choice.

As far as the student’s attitude towards literary texts, despite Darcy’s vehement dislike for literature and his conventional language-learning history, some of Darcy’s comments reveal that LTL pedagogy based on the literary-to-the-non-literary continuum
had started to become significant for his language learning goals over the LTL semester, especially with the topics that showed connections between literature and everyday discourse:

(154) Darcy, P, Weekly Journal, Week 13, April 6-8

Spanish right now is one word –Awesome! I love the idiom section that we are doing now. Learning them is absolute key to learning a language completely. I used to really think the class was dragging my [sic me] way down, but now I look forward to going every Tuesday and Thursday. I’m just not that big of a literature fan, just not my thing. I love language though, it is my passion.

Darcy enjoyed learning about literary figures despite his deep-rooted dislike of literature, because those figures were studied in the contexts of literature and everyday language, which in turn connected with Darcy’s learning goals and motives about being able to use language abroad appropriately (recall discussion in Chapter 9).

In the following excerpt, the student had just expressed his confusion with the notion of aspect in the LTL course (see discussion in Chapter 9). He continued,

(155) Darcy, LT3

DARCY: ...Pero cuando estábamos haciendo las figuras de la literatura como metonimia y sinalefa, me gusta eso...[But when we were doing literary figures like metonymy and syneresis, I like that...]

T: Uh-huh.

DARCY: ...también [...]also]

T: *Pero no te gusta la literatura* [But you don’t like literature]

DARCY: *No* [laughs].

T: *Pero sí te gusta esa parte* [But you do like that part]

DARCY: *Sí* [Yes] [laughs].
Darcy saw relevance in learning literary figures because they were also studied in the context of everyday speech, which connected with the student’s passion with vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, collocations, and everyday lexical metaphors. In addition, Darcy commented that he understood better some of his Spanish-speaking co-workers’ expressions (such as “pa’ca,” “ya’está”), and why they appeared to speak so fast, after a class in which connections had been established between everyday oral speech and syneresis, syllabic linking and ellipses in a Spanish poem (personal communication, February 19th, 2004).

In all probability, the student considered enrolling in a literature course the next semester in view of the increasing relevance of some aspects of literature for his language learning goals, as the comment below seems to suggest:

(156) Darcy, P, Weekly Journal, Week 15, April 20-22

Spanish is going well as usual. We are still doing the vocabulary exercises and idioms with culture and so forth. I feel that I have been learning a lot from this course because of the work we do with literature and I would like to take more literature courses in the future, maybe [Spanish Literature Course] or something for next semester. I hope we have a fun last two weeks though in Spanish. I will miss this course. I wish you the best T! Thanks for taking the time to help me with some of my problems. I have a much closer command over the language after taking this course.

Darcy connects his linguistic improvement to the work on literature in the LTL course (“because of the work we do with literature”), and even hopes to take “more literature courses in the future.” On the other hand, although at the time that he wrote the reflection in (156) he showed interest in taking a literature course in the following semester, we also have to remember that Darcy reflected a negative attitude about his
enrollment in this literature course later in LT3 (recall Darcy's comment: "voy a mi 
muerte" ["I’m going to my death"]).

Darcy’s allusions to the relevance of literature for learning a foreign language illustrate how “m motives, categories of judgment and taste, and conceptual approaches to problem solving develop as a consequence of participation in material and symbolic activity” (Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, p. 240). The student’s resistance to linguistic concepts, such as aspect, and to literary texts is the product of his learning history in a rule-based curriculum that promotes the alienation of literature from the quotidian life of language and culture. Had Darcy been exposed to literature in ways that could relate to his personal interests and language-learning goals earlier on in the curriculum, he might have eventually developed a taste for the literary. The development of this taste may be something desirable not for the simple perpetuation of literature in the (foreign) language curriculum, but because, as has been argued throughout this dissertation, literature may be a powerful tool for the development of discourse literacy, especially in a second language.

Comments connecting the LTL course with linguistic development, learning goals and with personal meaning were copious in the last entries of Darcy’s portfolio. Following is another example:

(157) Darcy, P, Weekly Journal, Week 16, April 27-29

Parte 1 [Part 1]

Me divertí mucho en esta clase y me chifló aunque la literatura no me guste. Aprendí mucho desde vocabulario hasta sinéfela [sic sinalefa]. Me gustaba organizar el portafolio para saber todo en [LTL course]. [Talks about summer plans]. Pues Ojalá que todo pase bien pare tì, T. Te echare de menos! Quizás yo pueda tenerte por otra clase en el futuro. [I had a lot of fun in this class
and I really enjoyed it even if I do not like literature. I learned a lot from vocabulary to syneresis. I liked to organize the portfolio to know everything in [LTL course]. [Talks about summer plans]. Well I wish that everything goes well for you, T. I will miss you! Maybe I can have you in another course in the future.]

Parte 2 [Part 2]

Hey T! I had a great time this year and I learned a lot in the class. I learned a lot of new vocabulary, which is the part that I love the most. I learned to speak more fluidly and I enjoyed talking in those interviews about the stories and about my life. I feel that now after taking this course I have an even better command over [the] Spanish Language, this course was a great investment and I thank you for teaching it. Have a great summer and good luck to you in the future!

LTL pedagogy allowed Darcy to pursue his own language-learning goals –mainly learning vocabulary and everyday metaphors—, and to construct his personal sense (“I enjoyed talking in those interviews about the stories and about my life”). Discourse-based pedagogy also revealed to Darcy how processes involved in making literary texts mean to assist us in constructing meaning in oral speech and written texts (“I learned to speak more fluidly”), although more time would have been necessary to disprove Darcy’s segregation of literature from everyday discourse.

In sum, text-based rewriting activities mediated by linguistic concepts may help learners connect literature with everyday discourse. LTL pedagogy can help overcome the current estrangement of literary texts from language learning, as well as provide learners with tools to develop critical-creative abilities, their own literary criteria, and personal meaning. Along these lines, Ulysses’ realization in the comment below captures the ultimate goal of LTL pedagogy:
(158) Ulysses, P, Weekly Journal, Week 12, March 30- April 1

This week we identified the differences in metaphors that are written and that are spoken. Often times the figurative language that we use everyday is dead. Sometimes we can’t even identify them or it’s very difficult. I feel like this class is finally coming together. We were asked the question ‘what is literature’? in the beginning of the year and I don’t know if we’ll ever get an exact answer. However, we’re getting closer to discovering it on our own!

On a different note, Ulysses was interested in LTL pedagogy itself, and wanted to learn more about it. T was teaching a Methods course for the Teaching Certificate the following semester, and Ulysses enrolled in the course, despite the fact that he was a psychology major and did not want to teach Spanish in the future (LT3).

Literature was not the only class that students began to view differently. Some students’ comments hint at the idea that they started to perceive other courses, specially the content courses in the advanced levels, in a different light. I address this topic in the next section.

10.3 Looking at content courses differently

In the previous section, we discussed how Darcy began to understand why he had difficulty in comprehending some of his Spanish-speaking co-workers. The students that were not taking a phonology course at the time of the LTL course were being introduced for the first time to concepts such as syneresis, syllabic linking and ellipsis, and to the differences of apparently similar phonemes in English and Spanish (for example, the different points of articulation of /t/ and /d/ in the L1 and the L2). Students are typically taught how to pronounce Spanish sounds in isolated words in the beginning
courses; however, rarely are they taught how to pronounce sounds in chunks longer than single words until they enroll in a phonology class at the advanced level.

Alice’s comment below shows how the dynamics of Spanish pronunciation were still a mystery for students at the advanced level:

(159) Alice, P, Weekly Journal, Week 6, February 17-19
I really liked the activities we did with pronunciation this week. [Talks of how scary it is to speak, but how it feels safe in the LTL class]. It kind of scares me how words are combined in the Spanish language. Native speakers already speak so quickly, and now they are combining words … I’m glad that T is teaching us this aspect of the language.

Some students could not understand why such information was withheld until the advanced stages of the curriculum. For example, Juliet commented:

(160) Juliet, P, Weekly Journal, Week 6, February 17-19
[Talks about her composition] We talked about phonology today in [LTL course], which is exactly what I’m learning in [Phonology class], and I think it is very beneficial. I also think that [Phonology class] should be taught way earlier in the curriculum because it could catch pronunciation errors before they fully develop.

As Juliet points out, one drawback of postponing some topics to the advanced phases of the curriculum is that by the time students learn about pronunciation in the Phonology class, some mistakes are by then already difficult to correct.

As can be recalled from the previous section, Darcy only realized that ellipsis and syneresis were behind many of the phrases (ya’sta, pa’cá, pa’llá) that he could not understand from his Spanish-speaking coworkers in a restaurant after he saw some examples in a poem and the soap opera transcript in the LTL class. Darcy had spent the
previous year in Spain, and, once back in the US, frequently conversed with Spanish speakers all semester outside the LTL course. But again, empirical observation, more often than not, is not sufficient, nor is it the most efficient way of learning. Unlike current pedagogical tendencies that capitalize on implicit language instruction, it seems that students would benefit from the explicit teaching of concepts so as to avoid the fossilization of mistakes and in order not to hinder advanced proficiency.

This delay leads to errors, whereas attention to pronunciation could be developed earlier if students were taught explicitly in the beginning courses. The data analysis in the present dissertation has shown how attention to language can be learned from the explicit instruction in declarative and procedural (that is, conceptual) knowledge. For example, with respect to pronunciation, Ulysses commented, “Pronunciation takes practice. **When I read now I try to find some sentences and work on my pronunciation**” (P, Weekly Journal, Week 6, February 17-19 after discussing pronunciation in the study course).

If students are not taught how to link words in conversation, and that Spanish is a syllable-timed language until they take a Phonology class, how then are they supposed to comprehend and appreciate rhythm and metrical schemes of Spanish poetry in literature courses? Paradoxically, the delay of this knowledge to the advanced levels only leads to a lack of appreciation for literature, while the opposite attitude could awaken interest in the students. For example, after examining how the strategic manipulation of stress patterns made a poem by Bécquer extremely musical, Ulysses reflected, “**It is interesting** to see how rhythmic [sic rhythmic] the language is” (P, Weekly Journal, Week 6, February 17-19).

The same principle applies to other areas of the language, such as morphology. In line with the non-literary-to-the-literary cline, participants were taught how metonymy,
synecdoche and parable were present in everyday processes of reference and word formation. To illustrate this, T provided students with examples of deverbal nouns (such as lavaplatos and abrelatas, i.e. “dishwasher” and “can opener,” respectively) and other compounds (correvidile, i.e. “tattletale”). Students commented on the necessity of receiving explicit instruction on this topic. For example, Scheherazade’s comment above, “son cosas minúsculas que nunca nadie más va a enseñar” [“these are minuscule things that nobody else is going to teach us”], precisely referred to this lesson.

In addition, Alice commented:


This week we learned about how a verb + a noun can form a new noun that comes along with a new meaning. I like that T takes the time to teach us these things because they are useful in everyday life. Plus, it makes so much sense that a lavaplatos, for example, is a dishwasher.

Again, we cannot assume that students may infer how language works from empirical observance alone. Morphological (among other) concepts need to be integrated into the study of discourse earlier on in the curriculum.

Ophelia’s comment below, just as Scheherazade’s, and Alice’s, shows again that we often assume that students know or can infer from empirical observance more than they actually are able to:


We just learned “los compuestos” [compounds] and I think it was my favorite topic all year. It’s so funny learning words I could chain all along –for example “abrelatas” [can opener]- I’ve known how to say “abrir” [to open] for years and that “lata” means “can” –for some reason I really got a kick at trying to figure out what the different combinations meant. Asaltacunas was my
favorite because it’s the same in English “cradle robber” and because my friends have been calling me that all year (my boyfriend is a sophomore). I also enjoy “correveidile” [tattle-tale] but I don’t think I’ll ever be able to pronounce it or know how to properly use it in a sentence. **But the fact that a nickname exists that’s simply a combination of 3 verbs. Why doesn’t English have fun stuff like that?**

Ophelia is not aware that it is possible to create compounds derived from one or several clauses also in English, for example: “he started the it’s-not-you-it’s-me talk and I knew that a break-up was coming.” The literal translation of these types of structures, as well as of conceptual metaphors is an enormous source of errors in students’ compositions.

Explicitly teaching students about morphological compounds and figures in Spanish and contrasting them with learners’ L1 earlier in the curriculum may help overcome the tendency to consider other languages in terms of one-to-one correspondences with their own:


The more we talk about language and how each language differs in not only words, but in the way phrases don’t always translate from English to Spanish and vice versa, the better I understand how to translate. I am starting to think more in depth about metaphors and other sayings that usually don’t translate from each language when I write.

Not only certain matters need to be taught explicitly and earlier in the curriculum, but also they can be suitably taught as students work with (literary) texts in a meaning-oriented, discourse-based pedagogy. Literature epitomizes meaning, draws attention to
the formal aspects of language and, thus, enhances the effect that the use of different linguistic resources has on meaning.

In addition, LTL pedagogy epitomizes not only systematic declarative, but also procedural knowledge in tool-and-result learning activity, whereas many traditional content courses place emphasis on declarative knowledge (lectures, presentations, traditional exams based on memorization, or papers based on compilations of facts). In traditional content courses, students are supposed to apply memorized declarative knowledge to diverse contexts by learners (tool-for-result pedagogy). Successful application of declarative knowledge is rarely the case, or, at least, so it seems from professors' typical complaints.

Juliet seems to hint at the difficulty in applying such knowledge. The student, who took both the LTL course and a Phonology class at the same time, commented, "I think I got more out of my [LTL] class than [Phonology Course]. While I learned new things in [Phonology Course], it is hard to imagine applying them" (Juliet, P, Weekly Journal, Week 15, April 20-22).

Comprehensive works such as Carter’s *Working with Texts* (1997), McCarthy and Carter’s *Language as Discourse* (1994), *Pope’s The English Studies Book* (2002) and *Textual Intervention* (1995), Maybin and Swann’s *The art of English: everyday creativity* (2006) (inter alia) provide models of activity-oriented, text-based activities focused on multiple aspects of language and (literary) texts, from phonemes and morphemes, to genres. Additionally, publications by Byrnes and her collaborators (Byrnes, 2008, 2006, 2004, 2001; Byrnes, Crane, Maxim, and Sprang, 2006; Byrnes and Kord, 2002) at the German program at Georgetown University provide invaluable guidance on how to construct a discourse-based curriculum for advanced literacy founded on textual tasks mediated by linguistic concepts. The innovative case of the
discourse-based curriculum in the Georgetown Department of German prove that, regardless of the entrenchment of practices and beliefs about language, literature, and education, alternatives are possible. I will discuss this pioneering program in greater detail in the concluding chapter.

10.4 Conclusions

The students that recontextualized the most lexicogrammatical resources in their compositions also had a positive attitude towards LTL pedagogy and were critical of their previous traditional language education. Their attitudes were connected to their histories, personalities, language learning goals, and motives. For example, even students that had succeeded in previous rule-based language education (such as Emma, Dulcinea, Ulysses, Gulliver, and Alice) felt that knowledge transmitted in traditional language education was simplistic, mechanical, and inert. It seems from students’ comments that previous language education somehow interfered with their learning goals and motives. For example, Emma and Lara had not been sufficiently challenged by sentence-based learning; Dulcinea, Gulliver, and Lara had previously noticed contradictions in rules of thumb; and Gulliver and Ulysses had not been able to be original and creative in previous language courses. These students, who were frustrated with the cyclical nature of the conventional foreign language curriculum, welcomed tool-and-result, text-based, meaning-oriented pedagogy, although working within the ZPD caused a modicum of performative tension.

Other students had not succeeded to the same extent in traditional foreign language education and welcomed some aspects of LTL pedagogy. However, they had not developed conceptually to the point of being able to completely abandon rule-based
orientation, and felt safer with the predominant form of instruction in their learning histories. This seemed to be the case of Juliet, Jane and Dorothea.

On the other hand, there were students who had also excelled in traditional foreign language education, and were more deeply acculturated into conventional instruction, seemingly because their personalities, learning goals and motives were more in tune with their previous *habitus*. This is the case of Ophelia, whose parents were professional writers and had habituated her into canonical texts and forms of writing. Ophelia was a journalism major and expected to become a professional writer in the future. She had succeeded in traditional literature courses, and therefore was resistant to LTL pedagogy.

Darcy was also critical of LTL pedagogy because of his history, personality, and learning motives and goals. He had excelled in a rule-based curriculum, and was extremely grade-oriented. As high grades in a rule-driven curriculum are usually only attainable through the provision of right answers, Darcy was critical of LTL pedagogy because meaning orientation and concepts did not offer him the relative ‘safety’ of a black-and-white, reactive view of language. In tune with this, most of his critical comments were addressed to the ideas of choice and meaning.

Darcy also had a negative attitude towards literary texts, because he perceived literature as an intricate, flourished type of discourse that was separated from authentic, practical language use. However, as connections were established between literary discourse and everyday language, Darcy became increasingly interested in literature. For example, he enjoyed learning about literary figures and word order, and attributed his linguistic improvement to the work in the LTL course with literature. The student also enrolled in a Spanish literature course for the next semester, although he had mixed feelings about his decision.
Finally, some students’ comments seem to hint at the pedagogical value of teaching some content earlier in the curriculum, specifically in areas such as morphology and phonology. Students commented that they needed assistance with some topics that were not taught in other courses, or that were taught once mistakes and misunderstandings had taken place. This evokes the consequences derived from the entrenchment of empirical knowledge about texts, genres, and aspect (see Chapters 7, 8, and 9).

Morphological and phonological content can be taught in discourse-based, activity-oriented, conceptual LTL pedagogy. In this way, content would stop being inert knowledge that needs to be memorized periodically. Instead, knowledge (both content, processes, and the activity itself) would become appropriated in tool-and-result, concept-mediated learning activity. The following chapter presents further implications of LTL learning/teaching for foreign language instruction and research, and the conclusions of the present study against the current landscape of theoretical and empirical research on the integration of language and literature.
Chapter 11

Implications and venues for future research

A través de los siglos,
saltando por encima de todas las catástrofes,
por encima de títulos y fechas,
las palabras retornan al mundo de los vivos,
preguntan por su casa.

[Throughout centuries,
rising above all disasters,
above titles and dates,
Words return to the world of the living,
They ask about their home]

(Luis García Montero, “Garcilaso 1991”)

The present study takes part of its significance in a landscape in which the continuities between language and literature are receiving increasing (though still not sufficient) empirical and theoretical attention. While the introductory review in Chapter 1 presented the history of the problem and outlined the main lines of research on the integration of language and literature, the present chapter will expand on these lines of research by presenting some of the most recent studies on everyday creativity and the literary cline. In addition, the current state of affairs with regard to the integration of language and literature will be examined through an account of some recent examples of integration of language and literature in foreign language education. The aim of this final review is twofold. In the first place, it serves the purpose of further explicating conclusions, implications and findings of the present study. It also complements the set
of recommendations for future research derived from the present and other recent investigations in the current landscape of language and literature instruction. In the second place, this review is expected to serve as further stimulus for future investigation by suggesting ways of expanding on and improving the present and other recent research studies that attempt to integrate language and literature into a single program. In this way, the chapter deliberately refuses to evoke a sense of conclusion to urgently call for a continuation of research in a field that is yet to robustly connect theoretical knowledge with classroom practice as is called for by Vygotsky’s notion of praxis. Therefore, the analysis of the contributions, advances, limitations, unanswered questions of this and other recent studies are a fundamental part of the present ‘conclusion,’ as these most recent investigations may suggest new directions for studies in the most immediate future of the field. Finally, with that purpose in mind, possible research venues for foreign language education, and language-based pedagogy of literature will be derived based on the findings of the present and other pieces of empirical research, as well as on their shortcomings and limitations.

11.1 Recent research on the cline of literariness

The interest in everyday creativity, and its implications for the pedagogy of language and literature seem to be experiencing a strong resurgence over the last few years with an increasing number of journal publications and monographs on the subject. This trend is discussed in Carter’s (2007a) review of literature and language teaching from 1986 to 2006. Only last year, a special issue of Applied Linguistics (2007, 28:4) centered on “language creativity in everyday contexts,” which gives title to the journal special issue, its introductory paper (Swann and Maybin, 2007), its first article (Maybin,
and Swann, 2007), and the most recent volume by two special issue contributors (Maybin and Swann, eds., 2006). In addition and Maybin and Swann’s 2006 work, Pope (2005), Hall (2005), and Carter (2004) have also contributed monograph-length studies to research on the topic of everyday creativity and language.

These recent publications examine creativity in a variety of contexts on the literariness cline. Carter (2004) specifically examines creativity in everyday spoken English through language samples from the CANCODE corpus (the Cambridge and Nottingham Corpus of Discourse in English), in contrast with most of the body of research on everyday creativity, which centers on written samples. In his work, the researcher highlights that “creativity is not the exclusive preserve of the individual genius, that, fundamentally, creativity is also a matter of dialogue with others and that the social and cultural contexts for creative language use need to be more fully emphasized” (p. 11). Because of the social, cultural, and dialogic nature of creativity, Carter stresses that “it is important to engage not simply with creativity as an individual, decontextualised phenomenon but with creativity in context and as an emergent function of dialogue” (p. 13). The analysis of everyday creativity in Carter’s work reveals how patterns of repetition and echoing, and figures of speech (metaphor, metonymy, idiom, and hyperbole) are involved in a variety of everyday communications and in a wide range of social and cultural practices (informal conversations, workplace discourse, intimate family exchanges, etc).

Along similar lines, Pope (2005) criticizes both the model of the creative individual and the idea of ‘creative industries’ (mainly advertisement and marketing), and argues that “creativity is the prerogative of all, not the preserve of the few” (p. xviii). Pope examines creativity in a variety of texts and media; for example, in writing (Chapter 7), performing arts, computer games (Chapter 8), and in both scientific and mythical
accounts of the creation of the universe and life, in which story resources and metaphor are at the core of establishing ‘the truth’ (Chapters 5 and 6).

The first section of Hall’s volume (2005) highlights the pervasiveness of creative resources (such as narratives and metaphor) in ordinary uses of language, and conversely, the ubiquity of both oral and written genres and registers in literature. Thus, against traditional formalist definitions of literary language, Hall emphasizes the notion of literature as discourse and discusses corpus-based research that reveals the “literariness of the ordinary, and the equally pervasive ordinariness of the literary” (p. 11).

In tune with Carter (2004), and Pope (2005), Maybin and Swann’s edited volume (2005) discusses the literary features of everyday language use, stresses the notion of a cline of literariness, and reconceptualizes creativity, not as an individual ‘talent,’ but as emergent from collaborative, social practice. This volume collects contributions of researchers such as Lynne Cameron, Guy Cook, Angela Goddard, Sharon Inkelas, Michael Toolan, and Ben Rampton, S. McRae, inter alia, and draws from a wide range of research: sociolinguistics, ethnography, dramaturgical approaches, poetics, stylistics, interactional linguistics, corpus linguistics, textual analysis, and critical discourse analysis. Some sections of this work exemplify the inherently interactional, social nature of creativity with particularly personal (and even private) genres of writing such as diaries or journals, letters, graffiti, and web homepages. In addition, it casts a light on how quotidian uses of creativity, such as word play, language crossing, and conversational storytelling and performance serve fundamental interactional and cultural functions, such as maintaining relations, solving problems, constructing and projecting specific identities, and exploring cultural values. The volume brings together both theory and practice by connecting extracts expounding theoretically diverse research contributions to each topic
with ubiquitous activities based on real language samples and inquiries into the reader's linguistic experiences.

In line with Carter's (2004), Pope's (2005), and Maybin and Swann's (2006) notions of creativity, and unlike prevailing humanist and structuralist views of creativity stemming from twentieth-century modernism, Pennycook (2007) emphasizes that difference, repetition, intertextuality, flow, performativity, and mimesis are the norm in everyday language use, not the license of privileged writers. Drawing on applied linguistics and linguistic anthropological studies of performance, and bringing together textual, contextualized, and critical dimensions, other contributors to the *Applied Linguistics* special issue center on creativity in the everyday dialogical co-construction of meaning by language users (Maybin and Swann, 2007, and Swann and Maybin, 2007), in workplace humor (Holmes, 2007), and in the foreign language classroom (Pomerantz and Bell, 2007). Also in line with Carter's (2004) notion of creativity, Simpson (2007) calls for the investigation of creativity in 'non-standard' common talk as well.

These recent publications also reflect the current technological surge and its impact on communication. For example, North, one of the contributors to the *Applied Linguistics* special issue, analyzes creativity in online chats. Maybin and Swann (2006) examine the impact of technologies (email, online chat, conferencing, text messaging) on social behavior and users' creativity; and Carter (2004) extends the linguistic samples beyond those drawn from the CANCODE corpus to email, chat, and other internet exchanges, and shows how these communications are mostly speech-based.

As to the future of the field, ending the *Applied Linguistics* special issue with a critical response, Carter (2007b) calls for still further empirical, participant-based, as well as theoretical, research on everyday creativity. He identifies three areas that need further investigation: specifically, the processes and contexts of everyday language use
within a broader social and contextual frame of aesthetics, the exploration of moments in which conspicuous acts of creativity are critical for social interaction, and, finally, the expansion of second/foreign language teaching research through the work on creativity and the exploration of the continuities between language and literature instruction.

In connection with the increasing focus on the investigation of everyday creativity, numerous publications have also reflected an increasing research on the pedagogical implications of such a continuum. The following section will examine these publications as well as empirical projects in literary and linguistic education.

**11.2 Exploring the pedagogical continuities between language and literature**

Hall (2005) complained that the number of publications on the literariness cline “had very limited impact on everyday practices in English literary and linguistic education around the world” (p. 58).

In the ‘Centre’ English teaching countries (UK, USA, etc.), in the dominant communicative paradigm, the teaching of literature in second language contexts is typically not systematic, not well integrated and often peripheral. The language of the text itself is considered incidental and is not a focus of attention except for some formalist-stylistic approaches.

(Hall, 2005, p. 58)

This situation seems to apply not only to ESL but also to other second/foreign languages and literatures. Only last year, the Modern Language Association Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages forthrightly commented in their annual report on the typical schismatic configuration of foreign language programs:

National defense and security agendas, which often arise during times of crisis, tend to focus the goals of language study narrowly. The standard configuration of university foreign language curricula, in which a two- or three-year language sequence feeds into a set of core courses primarily focused on canonical literature, also represents a narrow model. This
configuration defines both the curriculum and the governance structure of language departments and creates a division between the language curriculum and the literature curriculum and between tenure-track literature professors and language instructors in non-tenure-track positions. At doctorate-granting institutions, cooperation or even exchange between the two groups is usually minimal or nonexistent. Foreign language instructors often work entirely outside departmental power structures and have little or no say in the education mission of their department, even in areas where they have particular expertise.

(MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, 2007, pp. 2-3)

The present section will discuss the exceptions to this general picture of disconnection between theoretical discussions and classroom practices. It is expected that the example of researchers and instructors who creatively crossed disciplinary boundaries will serve as stimulus for further empirical research and classroom materializations of the literariness continuum.

These last years have seen the publication of Watson and Zyngier’s edited volume (2007a) on literature and stylistics for language learners, which integrates stylistics with the most recent research on cognitive studies, discourse analysis, corpus linguistics and media studies. Other publications, such as Paran’s volume in the TESOL series (2006), the special issue of the ADFL Bulletin on language and literature in the academy (Fall, 2004, vol. 36, no. 1), and Scott and Tucker’s (eds.) 2002 work, inter alia also reflect on innovative language-literature practices. In addition, over the last few years, we have witnessed the groundbreaking, pioneering renovation of the German program at Georgetown University.

To start with, Gavins and Hodson (2007) describe a BA program in English Language and Literature spanning the Department of English Language and Linguistics and the Department of English Literature at the University of Sheffield. Gavins and Hodson discuss how students in the third (and last) year of the stylistics program seemed to develop a heightened awareness of the pedagogical implications of stylistic
approaches as well as criticality of readings in the field by teaching literature and stylistics to first-year students.

Clark (2007) describes a discourse stylistics module for second-year undergraduates studying English at a British university. He shows how concepts such as genre, narrative structure, point of view, and characterization are taught in the context of detective fiction in ways that these concepts provide insight “into the social, cultural and psychological dimensions issues of public institutions” (p. 62). Learning these concepts in the context of detective fiction also enables students to draw conclusions on underlying issues of class, race and gender as they analyze and compare texts (e.g. an American detective novel in contrast with a British one; a novel featuring a female detective in comparison with a novel with a male protagonist, etc).

Zerkowitz (2007) describes a language-through-literature course for teacher learners of English at Eötvös University (Budapest) in which Grice’s maxims are explored through pedagogical stylistics. The author criticizes mainstream sentence-based, decontextualized grammar instruction based on “absolute clarity,” and calls for linguistic education that centers on practicing disambiguation and imaginative/creative reinterpretation (p. 156). In this sense, teaching pragmatics in literary texts illustrates how meanings are attributed and reassigned by interlocutors in everyday communication because literature is a type of discourse whose conspicuous form invites readers to creatively construct multiple interpretations; in turn, pragmatics does not only rely “on observing contexts” but it also underscores “personal contribution to meaning-making” (p. 164).

Zyngier, Fialho and do Prado Rios (2007) describe a quantitative pilot study with low-intermediate Brazilian students of English in which students’ reports indicate increased literary awareness as a result of participation in reading literary texts. In
addition, a number of chapters in Watson and Zyngier's volume offer valuable insights as to the complementary roles of stylistics, literature and linguistics in (foreign) language education. For example, J. McRae (2007) discusses how stylistic analysis can effectively depict narratorial perspective. Montoro (2007) demonstrates how to teach literature by contrasting literary texts with their filmic adaptations. Hardy's chapter (2007) explores the ever-burgeoning role of corpora in the field of literary stylistic analysis. Specifically, Hardy uses log-likelihood scores along with concordances and collocations to shed light on representation of speech and thought, labels of primary potency and narrative aspect in Flannery O'Connor's fiction. Similarly, Louw's (2007) chapter shows how collocational investigation can be applied to the stylistic study of literary texts. Gugin (2007), who also utilizes corpus data, illustrates how stylistics allows the integration of linguistics and literature in an ESL context (see also O'Keefe, McCarthy and McCarthy, 2007, on the development of corpus-informed pedagogy of language). Finally, in a piece of empirical research, Hanauer (2007) proffers evidence that explicit instruction of literary patterns enhances the student's ability to use the same patterns independently in novel literary texts. (For studies on literature from a language-based perspective, see articles in *Language and Literature, and L1 Educational Studies in Language and Literature*).

Scott and Tucker (2002) offer valuable scholarly discussions on the integration of language and literature, as well as instructional units that capture diverse pedagogical approaches to foreign language teaching in the United States. Schultz (2002) examines the intermediate-level language-through-literature program of French at the University of California at Berkeley, which was revised in 1986. This language-through-literature program moves students from personal to analytical domains of text analysis. The approach starts with a “low stress” introductory experiential activity (p. 26) with the goal of mobilizing students’ personal schemata (e.g. quick-write, collaboratively drawing the
description of a scene), followed by a "more intense" closing experiential activity (such as converting a fast-action scene into a screen-play). Students are trained in close reading techniques, which they practice in discussion group activities, which are followed by general discussion of larger textual issues of theme, motif, setting, characterization, symbolization, intentionality, etc. Finally, the assignment of analytical paper topics is discussed in class.

Swaffar (2002) suggests another foreign-language-based approach to the teaching of literature in a Spanish course for beginners. Her goal is the creation of a proficient reader that will be able to interpret literary works independently. With that goal in mind, Swaffar presents us with an approach for teaching literature based on top-down strategies for global processing of textual detail, which involves going from the macropatterns to the micropatterns of a text. Swaffar's pedagogy is based on an "r+1+" principle --where "r" stands for reading input-- (Swaffar, 2002, p. 133), which is a variant of Krashen's "i+1" (Krashen, 1985; Krashen, 1989). Students perform pre-reading tasks, such as prediction activities, the location of repetition (referred to as "redundancies," p. 137) in the text, the identification of shifts in narrative mode (e.g. end of narration, beginning of dialogue), etc. The key activity in Swaffar's approach is the creation of matrices that enable students to visualize graphically the pattern of the text, such as its macropropositions. The author provides a matrix that seems very useful for comparing logical elements with irrational events in works of Magical Realism. After matrix activities, Swaffar contemplates other activities, such as the expansion characters' dialogue, mock interviews, thinking of parallel fictional and non-fictional accounts of the same event/s, etc.

Similarly, Katz (2002) presents us with an instructional unit for teaching French literature to intermediate FL learners based on the structured input approach. Some of
these activities are reading a list of statements and selecting evaluations that may accompany such statements; agreeing or disagreeing on such assertions; disclosing symbolism in a text by matching lexicon presented in lists, etc. The most creative activities, which involve students’ production of some discourse (e.g. write the questions that you would like to ask to the characters; create a similar poem imitating the author’s style; rewrite the poem but from the point of view of the other character; write a letter to the person who speaks in the poem explaining how you relate to his or her experience; find examples in the text that match the following oppositions, etc.), are output activities that, in this theoretical framework, can only follow up the structured input activities.

Finally, Berg and Martin-Berg (2002) describe a stylistic approach to FLA and literary analysis based on close reading and analysis of stylistic choices in texts. This approach has been applied in a French culture and language course, and in an introduction to literature class at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Students compare different versions of the same text, for example, different versions of a folk tale at different historical periods, or diverse stylistic variants of the same proposition and its discursive consequences.

The remainder of this section will examine Paran’s (2006) edited volume within the TESOL series, which presents TESOL cases of integration of literature and language in programs in different countries, including the United States. The teaching cases collected in Paran’s work are not only geographically varied, but also diverse in their curricular scope (teacher education courses, modules of a few weeks, whole programs at secondary school, etc).

Although some of the teaching cases present pedagogical standpoints that vastly differ from the theoretical stance advocated in the LTL study, just as with Tucker and Scott’s work (2002), Paran’s volume of teaching cases presents groundbreaking
examples of language-literature integration, and it is chock-full of stimulating, thought-provoking activities serving as models for mediating the integration of everyday language use with literary texts. For example, through the analysis of language in literary texts, Minkoff (2006) shows how connections between literature and ‘practical’ linguistic knowledge can be convincingly demonstrated to skeptical graduate business students enrolled in an 18-hour ESL course at Nantes School of Management in France.

Grounded in the current mainstream version of the Communicative Method, Hess (2006) compellingly demonstrates how a short story by James Joyce can be made significant to the students’ lives through what she calls “the parallel life approach” (p. 27). The researcher, who taught an advanced ESL class at the Center for English as a Second Language at the University of Arizona, suggests activities that involve certain intervention in the text (e.g. finish the first sentence, create a missing person ad, role play, continue the story beyond its end), and connects metaphors and symbols in Joyce’s story with everyday lexical metaphors (e.g. the literary symbol of window in Joyce’s story, and lexical manifestations of conceptual metaphors in which the notion of window is involved). Content about the author and his culture is effectively used to enhance the process of interpretation, and connections between students’ personal histories, and their contexts on the one hand and the story on the other, are strongly encouraged.

Also based on the current mainstream version of the Communicative Approach, Rosenkjar (2006) brilliantly illustrates how the lexical sets of a poem, the use of polysemy, word combinations, figurative language, patterns of pronominal use, and of tense are made salient to the students through (mostly analytical) language activities. The researcher had taught an Introduction to Literature course at the undergraduate level and a Literature in Language Teaching course for Masters’ students and doctorate
candidates at Temple University, Japan Campus (TUJ), the branch campus in Japan of Temple University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Vodickrová (2006), who taught a course for teacher learners at the Pedagogical Faculty of the Palacky University in Olomouc in Czech Republic, illustrated how to teach according to the structured drama approach. The researcher presents interesting activities such as collecting paintings of a period and speculating about the people in them, choosing the customs of characters, interviewing a character, mimed activities, creating a still image of a particular scene in a drama, role-playing, writing a diary from the point of view of one of the characters, having characters discuss with their contemporaries, having contemporaries suggest solutions to characters’ problems, etc.

Of special interest are on the one hand Butler’s (2006) chapter, and on the other, Gordon, Zaleski, and Goodman’s (2006) contribution, because of the use of literature to bring cultural awareness and sensitivity, and a notable critical stance to the classroom. In Butler’s case, which takes place in the first year of the English program at the University of North West, South Africa, students are first made aware of the English surrounding them. The manipulation of language in everyday texts is compared to and contrasted with the use of language in literature and even in other media (movies, and comics). Content, culture, and critical concerns (e.g. the prestige of certain linguistic varieties and matters of linguistic colonialism) are integrated in effective activities of reflection, observation, and analysis.

Similarly, Gordon, Zaleski, and Goodman (2006), from a program for TESOL teacher learners at Hofstra University, New York, present a case study in which cultural awareness and critical issues related to testing and immigrant ‘integration’ matters are contemplated critically through the reading and discussion of poetry, children’s literature, biographies, autobiographies, historical fiction, fictionalized biographies, and activities
such as book clubs. Through the integration of language and literature in sociolinguistics, as well as assessment and introduction to literature courses, teacher learners gain sensitivity of and insight into the complexity of multicultural identities and issues that teacher learners may find in their own future classrooms. Through the use of personal narratives, this program teaches critical awareness with regards to matters related to recent immigration, such as identity, ‘integration,’ admission tests, etc.

Finally, Lin’s (2006) chapter, in my opinion, the most interesting study in the volume for its organic integration of language instruction in a pedagogy of literature. The author presents us with a study situated in the context of an English program in a secondary school in Singapore. His approach is “a stylistics/linguistics-based approach to teaching reading and interpreting literary texts” (p. 101). The lesson starts with content, although sometimes in the form of comparison with other texts and media. At times, the approach seems to heavily rely on close reading and the traditional answer-question protocols. However, as students engage in the search of patterns and symbols in the text, they are also instructed in Systemic-Functional notions (such as the six processes of experience and the phenomenon of verbal phrases), which mediate their enactment of discourse in the literary work. Multiple interpretations are encouraged as long as they can be justified with the manipulation of language in the text. The researcher also encourages personal responses to the text, and suggests activities of interventional nature, such as assembling the fragments of a text, fill-in-the-gap, and rewriting. (For a comprehensive account of how Systemic Functional notions can be applied to literary analysis, see also Nørgaard, 2003).

Lin describes his approach as one in which literature through language, and language through literature, are taught simultaneously, with both implicit and explicit learning, and language is at the core of both content and the exploration of text. Lin's
case clearly provides a compelling illustration of how new, complex, systematic, meaningful, abstract, generalizable knowledge in the form of linguistic notions can mediate the process of making sense out of literary and other texts. The researcher explains, “What is important is that any practitioner following the framework provided have an informed and informing theory as a basis for using the approach” (p. 115). In Lin’s case the informed and informing theory was Halliday’s (1994) Systemic-Functional grammar, which supplied the necessary notions for the linguistic mediation of students. This note leads us to ponder on a very relevant issue in (foreign) language instruction, and it exposes one of the greatest shortcomings in typical mainstream language education: the obsession with pedagogy in contrast with an oversight of an adequate object of pedagogy. That is, the overemphasis on finding the ‘perfect’ method in contrast with the relative laxity as to what we actually teach with such a method, which results in a de-emphasis on the relevance of pedagogical, meaningful, and systematic descriptions of language. I will expand on this point in the section devoted to future venues for research.

Because of this typical scenario in mainstream foreign language instruction and teacher learner education, the renovation of the German program at Georgetown University led by Heidi Byrnes represents an even more innovative, pioneering case of integration of language instruction, culture, and content in all types of discourses (including literature) from the beginning through the advanced stages of a genre-based curriculum. Byrnes and Kord (2002) describe the renovation in their state-of-the-art program in three main areas. To start with, the “reconceptualization of curricula, understood not as a loose aggregation of courses […] but as carefully conceptualized and planned encompassing frameworks that continually integrate content and language acquisition” (p. 42). Additionally, Byrnes (2001) explains in an article with a self-
explanatory title (“It takes a whole department”) how the design of the integrative German curriculum involved the coordination and training of all the members of the department, including graduate teaching assistants and literature and language professors.

Another aspect of the renovation of the German program at Georgetown involved the alteration of the curricular goals. In an article of the special issue of the *ADFL Bulletin*, Byrnes (2004) explained that the ultimate goal of foreign language instruction should be the development of literacy (specifically, of “multiple literacies”), which is a notion that organically integrates language and culture (Byrnes, 2006; see also Cope and Kalantzis, 2000, and other New London Group’s publications on “multiliteracies”). In contrast with the ideas of *competence* and *proficiency* in traditional curricula, which in Byrnes’ view seem to be mostly concerned with the progressive accumulation of native-like norms (2004), the underlying view of linguistic development or development of multiple literacies in this innovative curriculum is concerned with “societal practices” – not only with “cognition and language use” -- as captured in “generic textual practices” (Byrnes and Kord, 2002, p. 52; cf. Swain’s notion of “languaging,” 2005, 2007; Larsen-Freeman’s idea of “grammarizing,” 2003; and Agar’s notion of “languaculture” in Agar, 1994 and adopted by Lantolf and Thorne, 2006; Lantolf, 2006b; and Byrnes, 2008)\(^4\).

This is manifested in a renewed task-based pedagogy in which genre, as the expression of languaculture, and therefore, of societal and cultural practices, is the instructional unit of the curriculum. In addition, genre tasks are mediated through abstract, theoretical, systematic, generalizable linguistic concepts, which, as has been stressed at other points of this dissertation, are culture-specific artifacts for human meaning-making.

\(^4\) NB: Byrnes’ notion of “multiple literacies” is commensurable with the goal of “translingual and transcultural competence” and understanding that the 2007 MLA Ad Hoc Committee for Foreign Languages advocates.
practical activity. This genre-based curriculum offers, in addition, a satisfactory solution to the impasse on an adequate unit of organization for syllabi in the communicative era, a time in which, nevertheless, the integration of cultural knowledge with language development continues to be one of the most unrelenting challenges of contemporary foreign language education (Byrnes, 2008). (See also Byrnes, Weger-Guntharp and Sprang, 2006, on teaching advanced foreign language, and Byrnes, 2007, on the contributions of Halliday and Vygotsky on advanced foreign language learning).

Finally, the renovation of the German curriculum at Georgetown entailed the reconsideration of the nature and role of pedagogy as a framework of choice that incorporates a conceptualization of language, theories of language learning, and previously agreed-upon curricular goals. Thus, in this framework, genre-based forms of literacy are taught explicitly because they are “not presumed to arise naturally for all learners” (Byrnes and Kord, 2002, p. 52). That involves the analysis of a model text and the provision of charts describing concepts, the schematic structure of genre moves, vocabulary, and other tools necessary to recreate specific genres (Byrnes, Crane, Maxim, and Sprang, 2006). The descriptive charts do not only provide conceptual definitions, but also the procedural knowledge necessary to utilize the concept in discourse (that is, both declarative and procedural knowledge). Then, students are to write similar texts using the charts provided in class by the instructor. Samples of these materials and their descriptions can be found in Byrnes (2006), Byrnes, Crane, Maxim, and Sprang (2006), Byrnes and Kord (2002, pp. 42-49, 63-73), and also in the “Developing Multiple Literacies” project webpage of the German program at Georgetown University.45

45 Available at http://www1.georgetown.edu/departments/german/programs/undergraduate/curriculum/
For studies and reflections on integrative linguistic, literary and cultural practices in foreign language education, see publications in the *ADFL Bulletin*. See also Ferreira (2005) and Ferreira and Lantolf (in press), who describe a ground-breaking, genre-based project based on an innovative ESL writing course at The Pennsylvania State University. This course combined the Systemic-Functional notion of genre and activity-based pedagogy grounded in Davydov’s framework of concept-based instruction, and aimed to develop students’ theoretical thinking through a scientific/theoretical conceptualization of genre, to improve writing and to foster meaning-making processes.

In sum, attempts at the integration of language and literature in the foreign language curriculum are increasing, but still very far from being sufficient. The present section has provided a brief overview of the most recent cases. The following section discusses the potential contribution of the present study in light of the current research landscape.

### 11.3 The potential contributions of the present study

The integrating cases briefly discussed in the above section are extremely valuable, groundbreaking explorations and models in the field. Each different approach reflects an aspect that can be integrated in an effective LTL pedagogy, such as more aesthetic responses, digitally enhanced *resources* for literary texts, structured drama activities, children’s literature, a critical stance to discourses, etc. But their greatest interest lies in what they all have in common: the connections that each of them from different perspectives establish between everyday language use and literary discourse. The present study contributes to the current landscape of research with a theoretical
standpoint and conceptualization of language and language instruction that differs from the studies and approaches discussed above.

With the exception of the stylistic approaches, the German curriculum at Georgetown University and Lin’s (2006) research described above, an often overlooked aspect in the presentation of integrative approaches to teaching language and literature is the issue of how new, complex linguistic knowledge can be adequately mediated to language/literature students with diverse L2 proficiencies as they work with literary texts. To put it differently, there is usually much and extremely valuable information on how students’ analytical attention can be drawn to vocabulary and grammatical structures that they may already know or that may pose minor difficulties at most, but relatively little is said about how truly unknown, sophisticated notions of language (such as aspect, modality, mood, etc) can be introduced, described, and operationalized for our students. This may have been the case with some of the instructional units in Paran’s volume because they have been designed for linguistically proficient teacher learners (e.g. McNicholls, 2006; Martin 2006; and Vodicková, 2006) rather than for their less proficient future students. In other studies, the theoretical framework may contribute to the omission or avoidance of appropriate explicit linguistic instruction.

In Tutas’ approach (2006), who taught an English course within the English Literature Department at Selçuk University in Konya (Turkey) based on Rosenblatt’s transactional reader response of literary texts, the omission or avoidance of explicit language instruction may be largely due to the unnecessary divorce between efferent reading (responding to the structure of language, identifying characters, setting, plot, and literary devices) and aesthetic response (making associations, hypothesizing and extending, imagining and picturing, making judgments). Tutas privileges the latter type of response to literary texts, and, by so doing, he shortchanges the most crucial element in
any kind of meaningful response to literary texts: understanding how language is manipulated in a literary work, which, in this framework, appears to be part of the demonized efferent response. In my view, the author’s comment that even the students of his experimental (aesthetic) group had “a tendency to retell the plot” (p. 139) is not surprising, as it is mostly through appreciation of how language is used to construct meaning between the lines that interpretations can rise above what is explicit in the propositional content.

In addition, Tutas does not specify whether all interpretations are valid in his framework. As aesthetic responses are mainly concerned with the world of the reader, it seems unlikely that texts will be also interpreted according to others’ contexts (be they the author’s, other readers’ or interlocutors’), which is key for everyday or literary discursive practices. Because of this, it seems that this particular application of Rosenblatt’s transactional reader response approach merely based on the student’s aesthetic response as described above offers tenuous perspectives for the notion of linguistic development advocated in the present study.

Other approaches that largely object to explicit forms of linguistic instruction are those based on the mainstream version of the Communicative approach (e.g. Hess, 2006; Rosenkjar, 2006; McNicholls, 2006; Martin, 2006; Swaffar, 2002; Katz, 2002), and on Constructivism (Gordon, Zaleski, and Goodman, 2006; Schulte, 2006). To illustrate this stance, Minkoff (2006) explains how poetry and other genres are typically avoided in his course because of the students’ difficulty relating to them. Rosenkjar (2006) mentions his adherence to inductive tasks (p. 118), and, in addition, both McNicholls (2006, p. 83) and Rosenkjar (2006, p. 128) advise teachers to choose materials according to the students’ level, which would avoid the need of having to introduce new, complex material. Paradoxically, the former (who taught a diploma course for teacher
learners at the primary school level at the Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Vigo, Ourense, Spain) also suggests use of “stories even if they include difficult grammar/language” later on in the same section (p. 83).

As to Tucker and Scott’s volume, both Katz’s (2002) structured input approach to literary texts and Swaffar’s (2002) top-down processing of literature clearly draw on Krashen’s naturalistic view of language acquisition (1989; 1985), further popularized by Lee and VanPatten’s work (1995). In tune with McNicholls (2006) and Rosenkjar (2006), Katz suggests choosing texts at the students’ linguistic level: “the themes and topics should be complex, yet the language of the texts should not be too difficult” (2002, p. 157). Based on the principle that ‘acquisition’ happens through structured meaning-bearing input+1 processing (p. 158), language instruction is inductive or implicit in Katz’s approach to literary texts.

Similarly, texts need to be at the students’ level +1 in Swaffar’s (2002) model for teaching literature (r+1). Linguistic knowledge preexists the literary activity or task, as in tool-for-result pedagogy, which is manifested in the use of the literary text for drilling or practicing gender markers of adjectives (an example of Swaffar’s unit), which learners have learned prior to their work with the text. The researcher seems to even discourage the appropriation of new knowledge as students work with the text: “Importantly, the teacher reminds students to work with what they know rather than to worry about what is unfamiliar” (p. 137).

At this point it should be clarified that neither the i+1 model nor any of its variants is similar or even commensurable with the Sociocultural notion of the ZPD advocated in the present study (see Dunn and Lantolf, 1998, and Kinginger, 2001, on this topic). To make a long story short, the ZPD is learning activity, which involves meaningful, goal-oriented activity, mediated through explicit complex, sophisticated linguistic concepts...
(e.g. aspect, utterance, text, coherence, etc) and has as it goal development of the learner or in some cases groups of learners. When working within the ZPD, knowledge does not precede the activity, as in Swaffar’s (2002), Katz’s (2002), and other tool-for-result approaches of naturalistic inspiration. Instead, the learning activity itself (in the form of textual puzzles mediated by linguistic concepts in the LTL study) becomes the source of knowledge (the appropriation of concepts and meaning-making operations in both their declarative and their procedural forms in practical activity). In other words, i+1 is tool-for-result pedagogy, while the ZPD is a tool-and-result approach to (linguistic) development. Therefore, working within the ZPD with literary texts requires that instructors stop working with texts that are “within the student’s level” (i.e. texts within his/her zone of actual development) and avoiding the true object of study (i.e. new, challenging knowledge, such as linguistic concepts). To put it differently, the mediation, rather than the text or textual activities, should be tailored to the student’s needs.

In addition, the type of problem-solving, creative, transformative activities that are the starting point of the instructional units in the LTL pedagogy described in the present dissertation only take place as output exercises following input activities in Katz’s and Swaffar’s frameworks. Unlike the LTL study, students move from simple to complex tasks, from sentences to text. The following quotations are just examples of this traditional notion of preparatory, increasingly complex task progression typical of tool-for-result pedagogy: “they [students] produce short sentences or questions in the target language. Finally, they communicate at the discourse-level” (Katz, 2002, p. 160); “complex speaking and writing tasks such as those just indicated [writing a report, conducting mock interviews] succeed best when preceded by sentence-level practice linked to the propositional meanings of specific reading materials” (Swaffar, 2002, p. 144); “if language practice and a graduated sequence leading to sophisticated written
expression are considered desirable, then students can manipulate the language patterns they have found in their matrices, first at sentence, or possibly even at paragraph level" (Swaffar, p. 141). Activities involving the production of texts always come last in the sequence of activities in Swaffar’s and Katz’s approaches, and reflect a traditional conceptualization of discourse as composed of separable tiers ranging from simple clauses to text, which, as has been discussed in Chapters 7 and 8 of this dissertation, did not favor the LTL students’ interpretation of (literary) texts.

In addition, the traditional conduit metaphor of language appears to underlie Swaffar’s view of (literary) texts. There are several references to the “information” in the literary short story that serves as the base for her instructional unit: “forthcoming information” (p. 135), “puzzling information” (p. 137), “details of textual information” (p. 139), “information must be gleaned in stages” (p. 148), “directed reading asks students to express their thinking about how a text presents information” (p. 135, my italics). Additionally, repetition in the form of a series of parallelisms is referred to as “redundancies” (p. 137). In contrast, the present study underscores the view of communication as the activity in which people construct (rather than “present”) meaning (that is, certain views of the world, of reality or personal experience, rather than “information”) through linguistic choices. This is precisely what foreign language learners have in common with readers of literature: “that they must use their imagination and creativity in constantly adjusting and readjusting their interpretations of opaque and shifting meanings” (Zerkowitz, 2007, p. 155). Additionally, the data analyzed in Chapters 7 and 8 illustrated how the conduit metaphor of communication can hinder the students’ interpretations of texts, and how, in turn, a creative view of language may encourage students’ orientation to meaning and their ability to write between the lines.
On a different note, another limitation of some of the studies discussed above (such as Hanauer, 2007) is the predominant focus on investigating students’ ability to understand and interpret only novel literary texts. This focus seems to respond to literature professors’ concerns about students’ difficulties to understand literary texts in literature courses. In Hanauer’s (and others’) studies, the ability to comprehend novel literary texts is interpreted as a sign of success of the pedagogy, and therefore, as an indication of learner’s proficiency. However, in the Vygotskian view, the understanding of non-literary texts (and not only of literary texts) would be the real sign of linguistic development. This is because the better comprehension of non-literary texts would indicate the elevation of unsystematic, unintentional, empirical, spontaneous everyday language use and knowledge to a scientific/theoretical status through work with literary texts (recall discussion on the dialectical relationship between spontaneous and scientific concepts in Chapter 4, and between non-literary and literary texts in Chapter 10). Therefore, on the one hand, everyday discourse should bridge the gap between the student and literary texts, and it should anchor theoretical concepts to everyday experience. On the other hand, work on literature should bring everyday language use to conscious awareness to allow its integration into the abstract, functional system of knowledge provided in formal education (for example, LTL pedagogy can offer students an activity-oriented, theoretical framework to notice and control everyday metaphors, which go unnoticed in spontaneous language use). In sum, it is the more encompassing notion of linguistic development (rather than the ability to understand novel literary texts) that truly bridges the gap between the literary and the non-literary.

On the other hand, the perceived caveats in the above approaches do not devalue their crucial contributions. On the contrary, the above critiques are only suggestive of the types of debates, research questions, and amount of empirical
investigation from diverse ontological and epistemological stances that are still needed in the field. Paran (2006), resonating with Quirk and Widdowson’s complaints offered more than two decades ago (1985, p. 210), and with Carter’s critical (re)views of the current state of affairs in the field (2007a, 2007b, 2007c), commented on the need for more empirical (rather than further theoretical) research, just as has Hanauer (2007). This type of research should attempt to answer questions such as the factors that may be the source of difficulty in interpretation of literary texts and the ways in which language and literature instruction could be complimentary (Paran, 2006, p. 9). Hall (2005), in the midst of current psychological research and educational field studies, claims that,

> What is conspicuously lacking is an approach to literature as discourse, or literature as social practice, from an applied linguistic point of view, which would ask what learners of literature learn through the discourses in which they participate, and whether these discourses could be developed more in the favour of and interests of the learners.

(p. 97)

In this landscape, the present study (just as many of the works discussed in the present chapter) contributes to the expansion of applied linguistics research, and investigation on SL instruction through the investigation on the theoretical and instructional continuities between everyday creativity and literature. It also partly responds to Hall’s queries by delineating a pedagogy of literature that serves the students’ interests with the development of discourse proficiency for the construction of personal meaning in the L2. By describing how literature impacts students’ linguistic development, that is, how they make sense of the world in a second language in culturally appropriate ways, we are inevitably explaining how literature impacts learners’ personalities and possibilities for participation in or resistance to other cultures as well (see Chapter 3 pertaining the discussion of Vygotsky’s *Psychology of Art*, this
dissertation; see also Van Peer and Nousi’s essay in Watson and Zyngier, 2007a, on the effects of literary instruction on the reduction of cultural stereotyping in students of German as a foreign language).

With respect to the first research question of the present study with regard to a possible language-based pedagogy of literature, the study offers a theoretical and empirical classroom-based piece of research, one of many more that is still required in the path towards the integration of language and literature instruction. It does so from a relatively atypical theoretical perspective in mainstream foreign language education. Just as Byrnes’ program at Georgetown University, the LTL study is founded on a view of language that is rooted in Sociocultural Theory, Systemic-Functional linguistics, and Cognitive Linguistics. Therefore, the study offers a clear departure from the more conventional, mainstream versions of the Communicative Approach and its variants for teaching literature. Recently, Hall commented on the promising direction taken by Lantolf (2000b) and others in the Sociocultural tradition to (second) language learning (Hall, 2005, p. 77). The relevance of research grounded in Sociocultural Theory to linguistic development has hopefully become evident throughout the present dissertation. In Hall’s view, the relevance of the Sociocultural approach to the integration of language and literature instruction lies in the conceptualization of literary texts as mediating cultural artifacts, the significance of language play, and the notion of culture as a process and as semiotic activity (pp. 77-79). The theoretical stance in Byrnes’ project is akin to the above-mentioned (and other) Sociocultural notions that underlie the present study. (In addition to Lantolf, 2000b and van Lier, 2004, see also Lantolf and Thorne, 2006, Lantolf, 2007, Lantolf and Thorne, 2007, Thorne and Lantolf, 2007, and Lantolf and Poehner, in press, on the relevance of the Sociocultural Theory for SLA; see also van Lier’s action-based pedagogy, 2007).
However, there are differences between the tasks in Byrnes’ program and the activities in the LTL study. These divergences also establish a critical difference between the activities proposed in the present study and the type of tasks in approaches based on analysis and close reading (for example, Schultz, 2002). Just as with Carter’s and Pope’s approaches to teaching literature (see Pope, 1995, 2002; Carter and Long, 1987, 1991; Carter, Goddard et al., 2001; McCarthy and Carter, 1994; see also Simpson, 2004, 1997; Widdowson, 1992; Maley and Duff, 1982/1978, 1990; Collie and Slater, 1987), the starting point of language-based activities in the LTL study is a textual puzzle or a problem-solving situation in a text (e.g. a jumbled, gapped, unfinished or otherwise incomplete text; the comparison and contrast of different stylistic versions of the same text; the transformation of a text into a different type of genre, etc). (See also the work on active reading and transformative writing by Knights and Thurgar-Dawson, 2007). As Carter (2007a) points out, this is one of the most striking contributions of stylistics to the pedagogy of literature, and its emerging value lies in

its concern with guiding learners through processes of reading and engaging with what such a process reveals for understanding the meanings of texts, not in order to disclose any one single universal meaning but for what it may reveal and mean to the reader in and out of the classroom.

(p. 9, italics in original)

It is important to stress and insist on this goal of reconstruction activities because one of the criticisms that has been leveled at stylistic approaches to literature by Widdowson (2004) is the existence of what he has referred to as a ‘pretext’, that is, a particular interpretation of a text according to the analyst’s disposition and justified by a partial choice of linguistic cues. (See Carter’s Foreword (2007c), Watson and Zyngier’s preface (2007b) and Hall’s and Clark’s chapters in Watson and Zyngier’s (2007a) volume on the role of stylistics in literature and second language learning). Hall draws on the
Sociocultural approach to language, specifically, on Lantolf (2000a), van Lier (2004), Kramsch (2000) and Gee (1996) to describe such a role. Clark (2007) reflects the concern of stylistics not only with the text, but also with the social and cultural context that the reader brings to the reading activity and with how the reader’s context molds his/her meaning-attribution processes).

The LTL study has used textual interventions or reconstruction activities as a frame for problem-solving activity mediated by theoretical linguistic concepts (in the form of charts, graphics, and diagrams) in order to promote development. Recall that the discussion in Chapter 4 underscored the commensurability between these researchers’ language-based, activity-oriented approach to literature and the Sociocultural notions of concept-based instruction, tool-and-result pedagogy, and learning activity.

As to the second research question on the potential impact of LTL pedagogy on students’ linguistic proficiency, the analysis presented here suggests that students were able to recontextualize concepts used in the reconstruction of literary texts in producing their own compositions. It also showed that learners started to gravitate towards forms of writing in which meanings could be read between the lines thanks to the manipulation of lexicogrammatical and textual choices (narrative structure, literary figures such as allegory and metaphor, aspect, tense, voice, punctuation, etc) rather than through propositional content. It appears that students learned to check and monitor their use of language as the increasing number of lexicogrammatical and textual choices commented in LOGs and composition interviews, and their handwritten reflections on linguistic choices in compositions seemed to point out. In addition, some learners specifically mentioned how the linguistic play in their compositions was inspired by specific manipulations of the language in the literary works that they had read in the LTL class (e.g. Cortázar’s Continuidad de los parques, and Cernuda’s Donde habite el
olvido). As students who had changed their view of language engaged in this type of creative learning activity, they abandoned their previous restricted views of language resulting from empirical-based rules of thumb. The following excerpt (the last that I will discuss in the present study) distinctly shows the student’s meaning orientation and his avoidance of rules of thumb:

(164) Ernest, C2

T: ¿Puedes comentarme la estructura de estas oraciones y enunciados? Aquí dices: “Para un momento hay una luz en esos ojos pero la realidad apagaba esta luz. La realidad de una guerra racial. Una guerra que los ojos perdía.” ¿Puedes comentarme la estructura …[Can you comment on the structure of these sentences and utterances? Here you say, “For a moment there is a light in those eyes but the reality put that light down. The reality of a racial war. A war that the eyes lost.” Can you comment of the structure…?] ERNEST: **No todas oraciones es completa.** [Not all the sentences are complete]

T: Pero ¿está bien? [But is that OK?]

ERNEST: **Sí... sí.** [Yeah ... yeah]

T: ¿Crees que es correcto o incorrecto? [Do you think it’s correct or incorrect?]

ERNEST: ¿Cuál es correcto para la efecto que yo quiero? [What is correct for the effect that I want?]

After this rhetorical question, Ernest explains that his option is “más dramático como [sic que] ‘la realidad era una guerra racial’ o algo así” [“more dramatic than ‘the reality was a racial war’ or something like that”] (LT2). He also asks T the specific name of the type of repetition that he has produced, which is anadiplosis, and recalls a similar figure that he has studied in another literature course.
Just as it happens to Ernest in this excerpt, LTL students preserved some traditional beliefs about language because of their language learning histories (for example, Ernest still defines his paratactic utterances as ‘not complete sentences’ rather than as a nominal phrase juxtaposed to another nominal phrase modified by a relative clause). However, students’ views of language were impacted by LTL pedagogy and swayed from the mechanical, impersonal, limiting application of linguistic ‘norms’ to the development of a more creative, meaningful, personal style, as was discussed in the analysis. Ernest vehemently claims his personal voice in the excerpt above, thus adopting a new way of proceeding with language and a new notion of accuracy based on appropriateness according to one’s sense and intention, rather than grounded in constricting, meaningless, empirical rules of thumb. Therefore, learners’ development of their styles and their change of the view of language from constraining rules to orientation to meaning is evidence of true development because learning turns into development at the point that a pupil’s repertoire of knowledge undergoes a genuine qualitative change; that is, when a new form of thinking, speech or action emerges. By ‘new’ is meant the radical transformation of an old pattern.

(Carpay, 1996a, p. 155, italics in original)

In tune with this and in response to the third research question on students’ attitudes to literature, language, and language learning, the LTL study has shed light on how learners’ identities, learning goals, motives, and previous learning histories impact their enactment of discourse, and the significance that they attribute to certain instructional practices and modes of discourse (e.g. conversational registers and literary texts). In addition, the instructional practices that constitute learners’ histories emerge from particular cultural, economic, political practices and milieus that shape educational settings (e.g. the foreign language requirement, homogenization of multiple sections,
etc.), and views of language learning (e.g. for practical purposes, as an instrument of political power, etc.), and of literature (e.g. non-practical, as a cultural asset for the intellectual elite, etc). This wider view of development that encompasses dialectic linguistic, cognitive, attitudinal and sociocultural aspects seems to connect with Hall’s call for a type of research that moves on “from narrower ‘language acquisition’ concerns to developing understandings of literature readers as human agents in interaction with larger cultural, political and economic systems” (2005, p. 125).

The appropriation of the beliefs underlying the prevailing empirical, rule-based, tool-for-result approaches to language instruction, the traditional conduit metaphor of communication, and the traditional segregated view of language (sentence-based grammar versus generic knowledge, writing versus speaking, everyday communication versus literary texts, etc) have proved capable of hampering learners’ interpretations of (literary) texts. It has also been found that many of these beliefs and attitudes also contributed to hindering the students’ creative-critical processes in the construction of their own texts, even when they had outstanding writing abilities, and interest in and wide experience with literary texts. In this sense, the LTL study showed how learners’ identities, histories, and attitudes, rather than “external factors,” as they are usually labeled in mainstream SLA, actually mold views and interpretations of language, learners’ agencies, and their understanding of linguistic descriptions. As a consequence of their experience with the LTL pedagogy, some students suggested the introduction of LTL course earlier in the curriculum together with certain subject matters that are traditionally reserved for content courses at the advanced levels.
11.4 Conclusions and implications of the present study for foreign language instruction and future LTL research

In light of the ongoing discussion, the implications of the present study seem to point, in the first place, to the need of more quality, concept-based explanations of Spanish. In an era in which the role of explicit language instruction is de-emphasized, teaching assistants and even professors may lack appropriate linguistic descriptions that allow the connection between linguistics research and the classroom. This fact attests to the huge schism between linguistic investigation and pedagogical practices, and the demands that are placed on departments by multiple sections, as well as other socioeconomic and political factors. As a result, some teaching assistants and professors may only be able to count on either too theoretical accounts of language or the meaningless, rule-based descriptions of the typical commercial textbook as resources for teaching language. In this scheme, students either end up studying a “verbally formed object,” which they can hardly apply outside school, or mastering not “knowledge of an object but knowledge of something else instead” (Ilyenkov, 1974).

The availability of adequate, pedagogical conceptual descriptions of language may pave language and literature instructors’ way to establishing compelling connections between common and literary discourse in the L2 classroom. As Carter (2007c) comments “voice, texture, narrative shape, point of view, mood” (p. x) are concepts of interest to the linguist, stylistician, literary expert, and pedagogue alike. Stylistic analysis, pedagogic treatment and theorization of these concepts is in order. Research in Spanish linguistics can be converted into conceptual, meaning-based explanations that present both the theoretical concept and its proceduralization to students (see Figure 11.1 below). In addition to Bull’s and Bolinger’s work on semantic descriptions of grammar, pedagogical, meaning-based descriptions of Spanish can be
found in the work of Eduardo Negueruela (2003, on aspect and mood), Alejandro Castañeda Castro (2004, a cognitive view of Spanish tense and modality; 2006a, 2006b, on aspect), Salaberry (2000 and 2003 on tense and aspect), Estrella Montolio (2000, on academic genres), Lavid, Arús and Zamorano (in press, on a systemic-functional description of Spanish grammar in contrast with English), Whitley (2002 on contrasts between Spanish and English grammars), and Whitley and Luis González Nieto (2000, meaning-based accounts of Spanish grammar for writing academic genres and narratives), etc. In addition to the inclusion of declarative and procedural knowledge, pedagogical descriptions of language also need to include traditionally overlooked topics such as word order, emphatic and de-emphatic structures, etc. Unlike with the dominant methodology, conceptual knowledge should be first applied to students’ first language (Carpay, 1995, p. 116, 1974; Galperin 1989/1957, 1992/1978). This implies that students may be given excerpts of literary texts in their own L1 and decide, for example, how a L2 speaker/writer may view the aspect of predicates.

Secondly, it seems that students would benefit from reconstruction activities, formally conspicuous discourse (such as literature), and explicit instruction on linguistic concepts from the beginning levels throughout the entire foreign language curriculum. As has been discussed in the data chapters, rarely do students derive adequate understandings of language from empirical and inductive experiences, especially with complex notions (such as Spanish aspect). To make matters worse, empirical knowledge derived from rules of thumb and inductive approaches is difficult and, in some cases, impossible to unlearn. In addition, as has been discussed in previous chapters, traditional black-and-white, right-versus-wrong explanations of language do not contribute to meaningful interpretations of literary texts. On the contrary, such conventional explanations seem to promote interpretations based on propositional
content and on the idea that texts are containers of ‘information.’ In contrast, students in the LTL study, though generally hampered by their traditional learning histories, developed forms of learned attention to linguistic choices in their compositions as a result of appropriating explicit linguistic concepts and meaning-making processes while reconstructing work in literary texts. In addition, students specifically referred to the conspicuous use of lexicogrammatical choices in literary works in relation to their own linguistic choices in compositions, which strengthens the ongoing argument that literary texts are the ideal springboard for discourse literacy.

A third implication of the present study is the need for a meaningful unit of instruction for the foreign language curriculum that captures the sociocultural embeddedness of communication. By using text-based reconstructing activities, instructors can focus on culture-specific genres, concepts, conventions, world schemata, and other artifacts. In addition, texts on the literariness cline (more than contrived textbook texts and dialogues) are more liable to show the connections between culture, meaning, and form in foreign language instruction. In accordance with Negueruela’s (2003) claim that the unit of instruction should be the concept, the concept of genre appears as the most appropriate organizational notion for articulating literary and non-literary texts, grammar, and culture in the foreign language curriculum. Therefore, the different courses of the curriculum must be organized according to genres. The overarching, abstract concept of genre, its materializations, and the web of connections among the different literary and non-literary, oral and written, etc genres, generic blends, registers, and variations of style must be presented to the students from the beginning of curriculum. In that way, students would be able to integrate the particulars into an abstract scheme of the discourse world of the target culture as they go thorough the curriculum.
Consequently, a re-evaluation of the goals of the traditional foreign language curriculum and the ways in which language, literature, culture and content can be complementarily integrated from the beginning to the advanced courses is in order. The collaborative effort of those involved in the renovation of German program at Georgetown University sets a precedent for others trying to engage in a similar pursuit. Additionally, the 2007 MLA report calls for the collaboration of linguists, second language acquisition specialists, literary experts, as well as “faculty members trained in fields such as media, area studies, performance studies, film, religion, and art history” (p. 6) for the renovation of foreign language programs.

A transitional, bridging, ‘fix’ course, or even a program between the language-based level and the advanced content courses, would find an unnecessary and insurmountable challenge in students’ traditional empirical knowledge. Furthermore, students may be creative in a LTL course, but then they may decide to return to the traditional rules of thumb in other courses of the curriculum for fear that their creativity would be perceived as lack of knowledge of the rules of thumb, and therefore judged as errors. In sum, students would be unlearning traditional knowledge to learn conceptual knowledge in a ‘fix’ LTL course, just to unlearn the latter type of knowledge a semester later in another typical language or content course. This cognitive, and most likely emotional, inconsistency would be detrimental for language learning.

A change in the object of pedagogy and the curricular instructional unit and goals must necessarily be accompanied with a change in the ways instructional goals are assessed. As the Sociocultural perspective is against the dualism between assessment and instruction, formative and dynamic forms of assessment, rather than summative, non-dynamic tools, are advocated in the present dissertation. Forms of assessment need to provide the conditions for and capture students’ development. In other worlds,
forms of evaluation need to engage students in tool-mediated activity in problem-solving
tasks within their ZPD. The present study showed some forms of assessment congruent
with an integrative, text-based, activity-oriented pedagogy (textual problem-solving
tasks; composition assignments, draft-transformation activities, composition logs and
composition interviews; portfolio learning logs, portfolio diaries; literary interviews). Other
assessment tool could be projects and scenarios with instructor, self- and peer
assessment checklists and reflection logs (see Di Pietro, 1987; see also Salaberri and
Appel, 2003, on formative portfolios, and Poehner, 2007, Poehner, 2005, Poehner and

The last section will suggest future venues for research based on the current
state of affairs in the field and the limitations of the present study.

11.5 Suggestions and venues for future research

Hall’s volume (2005) offers an interesting review of research conducted on
language in literature, literature in language education, and on readers in the process of
reading literature. The author reviews a series of textual studies conducted on the
language in literature grounded in stylistics (such as studies on foregrounding), corpus
linguistics (e.g. Biber’s research, 1988; Partington’s work on metaphor, 1998; Louw’s
investigation on poetic deviance, 1997), and readability studies. He also examines
cognitive research centered on the reader in the process of reading literature and cites
protocol studies on reading poetry (e.g. Kintgen, 1983, based on L1 expert readers’
think-out-loud protocols; De Beaugrande, 1985, on L1 non-expert readers; and Hanauer,
2001, on L2 readers), research on reading stories (e.g. Vipond and Hunt, 1984, on point-
driven reading), and on affect in literary reading (e.g. Mattix, 2002). (For research in the
field of empirical poetics, see work published in *Poetics*. See also Picken’s recent work (2007) on the processing of metaphor in L2 literature, grounded in Foregrounding Theory and foregrounding-related work by Semino (1997) and Cook (1994), as well as seminal work in conceptual metaphor theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1999).

Additionally, Hall (2005) defines and provides examples of a series of research methods for investigating literature in language education (qualitative research, action research, experimental research, survey research, case studies, and ethnography), and for collecting data (think-out-loud protocols or free writing; diaries, journals; verbal or written recalls or summaries; cued recalls; interviews; questionnaires; etc, see p. 190). Finally, the author provides a guide to resources for researchers and instructors (Chapter 9), and lists some possible project topics for literature in language education (design of literature syllabi and assessment for language learning; observing interaction in a literature lesson; a case study on culture: different readers, reading the same text, across time; attitudes to literature; etc.; see Hall, 2005, chapter 8).

In addition to Hall’s proposed research methods, I propose the use of Vygotsky’s historical or genetic method (1978, p. 61), which requires recreating the conditions necessary for development (that is, a problem within the participant’s ZPD and the appropriate mediating tools; i.e., the creation of learning activity). Thus, students can be provided with tasks that involve solving a puzzle (e.g. coalescing a poem) or transforming a text (e.g. making a narrative more literary and creative, changing its narratorial perspective, its genre, etc.) through mediational means (e.g. linguistic concepts). As to the methods for collecting data, I suggest the design of writing assignments, portfolios, logs and interviews in such a way that they are capable of

---

46 For further research on everyday metaphor see Kövecses, 2002 and 2006; Lakoff, 1993, 2004, and the Conceptual Metaphor Homepage at http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/. For further research on figurative language and second language learning, see Littlemore and Low, 2006.
capturing (re)writing/reading processes and participants’ reflections on the activities and the pedagogy, with emphasis on the transformation, mediation, verbalization, appropriation and recontextualization of tools.

As to my own suggestions for future research, I will first list a series of proposals that emerge from the limitations of my own study. As was discussed above, it is necessary to construct quality pedagogical explanations of linguistic concepts and to establish the connections between everyday language use and literary texts. Theoretical accounts of language and a bank of literary and non-literary texts are essential resources for LTL projects (which requires the collaboration of linguistics and literature professors). The first critique of the LTL study is directed at the graphic representation of aspect. The representation allowed students to see aspect in relation to tense and as a question of perspective (see Figures 2 and 3 in Chapter 4). However, lexical aspect was most of the time left to the students’ imagination (except when the students were asked to draw an event as in a comic strip or to describe all its phases). Therefore, I suggest the creation of an artifact such as Figure 11.1 below, which compels students to consider and understand the inherent lexical aspect category of a predicate.

The diagram below is based on Vendler’s (1967) description of lexical aspect, including his distinction between accomplishments and achievements, which Salaberry (2000, 2002, 2003) later subsumed under the notion of “telic events.” I prefer to keep Vendler’s description for several reasons. In the first place, it allows a systematic classification of events according to different combinations of the properties of durability/punctuality, telicity, and dynamicity (the difference between accomplishments and achievements being the lack of durability or punctuality of the latter). Secondly, because of these three values, Vendler’s classification allows the full appreciation of the nuances of the aspectual structures of events, which may be a foreign concept to the typical L2
learner. For example, the distinction between accomplishments and achievements may help to explain why, for example, the lovers’ account in Cortázar’s story (“Primero entraba la mujer, recelosa; ahora llegaba el amante”) presents such an unusual perspective, since both predicates, i.e. “to arrive at” and “to enter” a place, are achievements, that is, dynamic, telic, non-durative/ punctual events. Although the beginning and the end points blend in achievements, the narrator’s point of view constructed by Cortázar’s choice of grammatical aspect highlights the almost immaterial middle part of such events, thus contributing to the confusion of the fictional and narratorial levels in the short story. Figure 11.1 below shows a possible materialization of the processes involved in grasping the lexical aspect of a predicate.
Does the event indicate a beginning and an end point/limit/goal? The event is atelic and durative. Is an input of energy involved in the event?

No = Non-dynamic

The event is atelic and durative. Is an input of energy involved in the event?

No = Non-dynamic

Yes = Dynamic

Does the event indicate a beginning and an end?

No = Atelic

Yes = Telic

The event is telic and dynamic. Is it punctual, i.e. do its beginning and end collapse?

No = Durative, non-punctual

Yes = Non-durative, punctual

STATIVE
Ser de Granada
Vivir en Burgos
Tener un piso en Málaga

ACTIVITY / PROCESS
Correr por el parque
Mirar a alguien fijamente
Cultivar tomates

ACCOMPLISHMENT
Gastar una broma
Correr una maratón
Leer una novela

ACHIEVEMENT
Notar algo extraño
Ver a los ladrones
Llegar a la cabaña

Figure 11.1: Graphic chart for determining the lexical aspect of a predicate
Continuing with other venues for future research based on the limitations of my own investigation, I suggest the design of activities that allow teachers to discern whether students, in addition to recontextualizing linguistic resources appropriated through co-authoring activities with literary texts in their own compositions, at some point are able to recontextualize those resources to other (literary) texts. Students in the LTL study were provided with three additional texts for the literary interviews for analysis (Anzoátegui’s “Monólogo del amor que no sabe amar,” Benedetti’s “A imagen y semejanza,” and Cernuda’s “Donde habite el olvido”). However, most students were unable to provide coherent interpretations based on the style of these texts, because text analysis was unmediated, and students still lacked the necessary discourse proficiency or the appropriate mediating analytical tools to interpret those texts independently. This, again, suggests the necessity of renovating whole programs rather than aiming at transitional, “fix” courses, if the attainment of discourse literacy is our ultimate curricular goal.

As an alternative or in addition to the literary interviews, students could be provided with a set of texts for individual analysis and another set for commentary in pairs or groups. Some texts may be accompanied with traditional pieces of information on the author, texts with contextual circumstances different from those of the author’s, and finally texts with no content at all. Students should be allowed to rewrite and improve their commentaries throughout the course. Students’ additions to the commentaries and the quality of learners’ interpretations (for example, mere anecdotal accounts versus critical multilayered readings based on the recontextualization of stylistic choices appropriated in co-authoring or rewriting activities, interpretations of texts connecting stylistic choices with diverse contexts, including the student’s personal experiences, etc) could be used as a source of data for similar studies.
Additional suggestions are presented below:

- The present study has focused on the recontextualization of linguistic resources in students' written assignments for reasons explained in Chapter 6. Future research could focus on the recontextualization of such resources in oral speech as students intervene in (literary) scenarios based on Di Pietro's work on strategic interaction (1987) and drama-based approaches to pedagogy.

- Means of tracking students' attitudes towards and orientation to language outside the course under study could be created in order to be fully able to investigate the impact of language-based pedagogies of literature on students' linguistic development.

- A future research study could compare linguistic awareness and the recontextualization of meaning-making operations in reconstructing activities in contrast with close reading and activities based on analysis of rather than on intervention in texts.

- A study based on a concept-based LTL course at the most basic level of the foreign language instruction may help dispel traditional reservations about the unsuitability of explicit, complex knowledge and texts (especially, of the literary kind) in the beginning levels.

- Future research could determine whether appropriation is better facilitated when students create their own materializations (as opposed to using the instructor's already made materializations). In addition, future investigations could contrast appropriation of concepts in students that start with reconstruction activities with literary texts in their L1 and then move on to reconstruction activities based on literary texts in their L2, as opposed to students that only work with literary texts in their L2.
A longitudinal study could shed light on whether students are able to generalize mediating tools to different tasks. For example, it would particularly interesting to observe whether students are able to recontextualize mediating tools used in literary texts to non-literary texts (which as was explained above would be a sign of true development), to blend genres creatively, and to understand the relations between context and language. As to the last point, that would imply that the student would be able to establish the connections between content (such as cultural information or information about a particular author and his or her literary movement) to how discourse is manipulated in a literary work. But it would also imply that the learner understands how s/he himself or herself and other interlocutors make meaning out of literary and non-literary texts in light of his or her particular circumstances and the context that they bring to the communicative event. In sum, a longitudinal study could provide a more complete picture of linguistic development, i.e. the ability to read between the lines of both literary and non-literary discourses through the recontextualization of diverse linguistic mediating tools.

Finally, in tune with Carter’s (2007b) recommendation in his critical response to the special issue of *Applied Linguistics*, further research connecting everyday creative uses of language and creativity in literary texts is needed, especially in languages other than English. This type of research is the necessary basis for classroom practices.

**11.6 Conclusion: Foreign Language Departments, reveal the secret art of (im)possible worlds!**

The LTL study has presented an investigation of how literature in Spanish can be taught through language, its impact on students’ discourse proficiency, and on their
attitudes towards language, literature and language learning. In addition, the present study tangentially sheds light on how traditional rule-based, empirical knowledge of language contributes to difficulty with interpretation of texts. This is because (as controversial and shocking as this may sound) rules of thumb are not about language or how language works in authentic (literary, non-literary, academic, causal, conversational, writerly, etc.) contexts. Therefore, it makes sense to conclude that we need to exchange the fake for the original, that is, textbook representations of ‘language’ for the genuine craft of constructing worlds of meaning through linguistic tools.

This piece of research has also shown that, even from the students’ perspective, it is difficult to find reasons to postpone certain contents in the foreign language curriculum, which suggests the need of contemplating more integrative ways of organizing foreign language instructional programs. The MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages perceives this historical moment as optimal for change:

The two-tiered configuration has outlived its usefulness and needs to evolve. The critical moment in which language departments find themselves is therefore also an opportunity. Many factors in the world today make advanced study of languages and cultures appealing to students and vital to society. Replacing the two-tiered language-literature structure with a broader and more coherent curriculum in which language, culture, and literature are taught as a continuous whole, supported by alliances with other departments and expressed through interdisciplinary courses, will reinvigorate language departments as valuable academic units central to the humanities and to the missions of institutions of higher learning. In our view, foreign language departments, if they are to be meaningful players in higher education—or, indeed, if they are to thrive as autonomous units—must transform their programs and structure. This idea builds directly on a transformation that has already taken place in the profession.

(MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, 2007, p. 3)

The 2007 MLA annual report is referring to the “transformation” that is clearly manifested in scholarly and theoretical discussions, but still rare in pedagogical practices. Scholarly debates, discussions and dialogues on this topic are increasing as
much as urgent calls for further empirical, classroom-based research and applications. The present investigation is just one empirical study in a field still dominated by theory and a relative lack of action. As Byrnes comments, “these perspectives cannot be simplistically resolved through talk” (Byrnes, 1995, p. 14). She continues:

   Particularly in education, where the coin of the realm so often is talk, it is wise to remember these words. But might it also be that our world made up of a network of words can all too easily become our iron cage of inaction? Could we, through working things out on the ground, with all the pitfalls and difficulties that entails, rather than loftily talking about them, find a consensual common ground that will allow us to move forward intellectually and practically, even in untidy ways?

   (Byrnes, 1995, p. 14)

   The present study, though, admittedly, in very “untidy ways,” has analyzed the role of literature, personal meaning and creativity in the foreign language classroom through talk and action. In exploring (im)possible literary realms, students can find their own original voices and recognize those of others. The purpose of such exploration is none other than examining the ways in which doors of participation in a foreign culture can be opened to every individual, which answers Hall’s query about the role of literature as social practice (2005). Along these lines, the argument of a great defender of fantasy in education seems to summarize the need for developing students’ voices and their ability to read discourses and (im)possible worlds: “Todos los usos de la palabra para todos,” me parece un lema bueno y con agradable sonido democrático. No para que todos sean artistas, sino para que nadie sea esclavo [“All uses of the word for everyone,” I think that is a good motto and with an agreeable democratic echo. Not so that everyone becomes an artist, but so that nobody becomes a slave] (Rodari, 1973, p. 12).

   Further research that reveals the connections between the literary and the ordinary is still needed. However, our mission does not end there; quality explanations of
language based on such connections must be bridged to our classrooms. We as researchers and instructors need to work on developing sound descriptions of language, and thus teach the yet secret art of (im)possible worlds to future generations of students.

Maybe in that way, words will truly be able to travel “throughout centuries,” throughout cultures, “rising above titles and catastrophes,” not only to look back to “their home,” but also to look forward to the future, to stay in the present by our side in our quotidian activity, as their distant echoes free themselves from the still marble of perennial time to enter into dialogues with “the world of the living.”
Bibliography


# Appendix A

## Chart of the Spanish article and other determiners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICULARIZACIÓN</th>
<th>GENERALIZACIÓN</th>
<th>PARTICIÓN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Información dada en el discurso</td>
<td>Información nueva en el discurso/énfasis en miembro de una clase</td>
<td>Entidad/Clase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Información nueva en el discurso/énfasis en miembro de una clase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Los toros entraron en la plaza</strong></td>
<td><strong>Un toro entró en una plaza</strong></td>
<td><strong>Los toros son animales herbívoros</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Me gusta la música</td>
<td>Llamamos a un abogado</td>
<td>Me encantan los viernes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La tierra es redonda</td>
<td>Juan es un buen abogado</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Las aventuras de Casanova son bien conocidas por todos</td>
<td>Juan es un abogado que conocimos el otro día</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El español es una lengua muy rica</td>
<td>Aquí tengo un bolígrafo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La casa tiene un patio muy grande</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Toda la clase</strong></td>
<td><strong>El toro es un animal herbívoro</strong></td>
<td><strong>Cada uno de los miembros de la clase</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No) pasaron Ø toros
Ø Toros, Ø toreros y Ø público corrían por la calle
Comimos Ø carne y Ø bebimos vino
(No) escucho Ø música
Estudio / Tomo Ø español

Toda la clase
El ser humano es capaz de las hazañas más loables y las acciones más despreciables
Un ser humano puede sobrevivir varios días sólo comiendo dátiles

Un toro puede llegar a vivir 100 años
Un ser humano puede sobrevivir varios días sólo comiendo dátiles
LA PERSPECTIVA TEMPORAL: TIEMPO Y ASPECTO VERBAL

ALGUNOS TÉRMINOS

TEMPORAL PERSPECTIVE (PERSPECTIVA TEMPORAL): it is the temporal point from which the interlocutor/ narrator/ the person who speaks about an event views this event. One can place oneself earlier in time than the event that is described (therefore, the event will be described as a future event). One can also place oneself later in time than the event (thus, the event will be past), or the event can viewed from the same point in time in which the event is taking place (thus, the event will narrated in the present). P

FOCUS (PUNTO DE MIRA) = it is the object or the event that is talked about (in most examples below “running”) F

MOMENT OF SPEAKING (TIEMPO DEL HABLA) = this is the narrator’s present, the time when the narrator is actually speaking. It doesn’t have to coincide with the temporal perspective or the focus. For example, I can say “Christopher Columbus arrives in America in 1492”, where the temporal perspective (1492) from which the speaker views the focus/ event talked about (Columbus’ arrival) coincides with the space where the focus is temporally located (1492). However, if this is something that a history teacher says in a class today, we know that the moment of speaking doesn’t coincide with either the perspective or the focus. Therefore, it is erroneous to think of time in objective terms (for example, present doesn’t necessarily mean “now”). As in stories, people manipulate temporal perspectives in narrative ways in their everyday speech. M

Activity: Señala con el símbolo = los significados de estas formas verbales que son iguales a los usos del inglés. Indica con ? los usos que son diferentes. Si hay algún significado en inglés que no exista en español de alguna de estas formas verbales, añádelo e indica con el símbolo X que ese uso no existe en español.
Jazmín corre en este momento. Jazmín corre los fines de semana. En 1936 la gente corre huyendo de una guerra.

Mañana corro en una maratón. Vuelvo en dos semanas. Ayer va y me dice que no quiere continuar con el proyecto.
¡He ganado!
Ha participado mil veces y nunca ha ganado.
Jazmín ha vivido la mayor parte de su vida en Nicaragua.
Jazmín me ha contado hoy que no va a ir a correr.
PRETÉRITO (Jazmín corrió --Jazmín ran-preterit)

A las 5 / esa tarde / en ese momento corrió hacia la estación de trenes

A las 5 / esa tarde / en ese momento se sentó
Ayer esa tarde corrió

El año pasado corrió todos los días. Corrió en un equipo de atletismo por dos años.
IMPERFECTO (Jazmín corría-- Jazmín ran)

Ayer/ en ese momento/ esa tarde corría
El año pasado Jazmín corría todos los días
Sandra era una persona con mucho entusiasmo, pero ahora vive completamente amargada.
Aquella tarde Jazmín corría.
Jazmín corría a las 5.
Juan está muy contento. Esta tarde comía en casa de los padres de su novia y les pedía la mano de ésta.
Esta mañana ya se sabía los resultados de las elecciones.
Esta tarde había una fiesta, pero no sé qué habrá pasado al final/ la han cancelado.
Quería hablar contigo.
Tengo tanta energía que ahora mismo corría 2 kilómetros.
¿Tienes un minuto para hablar? Bueno ... emm ... iba a salir ahora.
PLUSCUAMPERFECTO (Jazmín había corrido-- Jazmín had run)

Hacía mucho calor y el sol pegaba fuerte. Jazmín había corrido demasiado y no se encontraba muy bien. Sólo había comido un plátano.
Jazmín ya había corrido (cuando yo la me la encontré en el gimnasio).
Manolo sólo decía tonterías. Menos mal que Jazmín había ido al baño.

FUTURO (Jazmín correrá -Jazmín will run)

Será muy buen pintor y todo lo que tú quieras, pero yo no entiendo sus cuadros.
A esta fiesta vendrán al menos 70 personas.
¿Sospechará que estamos preparando una fiesta sorpresa para el día de su cumple?
¿Dónde estará Jazmín ahora?
¡Serás bestia!
FUTURO PERFECTO (Jazmín habrá corrido --Jazmín will have run)

Supongo que Jazmín habrá corrido hoy también.
¿Habría llamado Jazmín?
Si lo ha hecho, habrá dejado un mensaje.
Para cuando llegues ya habremos terminado.

CONDICIONAL (Jazmín correría --Jazmín would run)

Habría elecciones en mayo de nuevo.
Pensé que tú también vendrías.
A mí me dijo que correría más tarde.
Saldría más a comer (pero no tengo ni tiempo ni dinero)
Yo de ti se lo diría antes de que lo hiciera otro.
Colón llegó a América en 1492. Los indígenas serían exterminados y la geografía del continente cambiaría para siempre.
CONDICIONAL PERFECTO (Jazmín habría corrido -- Jazmín would have run)

Jazmín estaba segura de que para las 5 de la tarde ya habría corrido probablemente unos 5 kilómetros.
Me habría gustado ir a ver la película.
Appendix C

Tentative chart of tense and aspect based on Bull (1960)
Appendix D

Content exercise based on Lorca’s *Cogida y muerte*

---

*Lee esta pieza crítica de la obra y trata de encontrar qué partes del texto de Lorca justifican la opinión de este crítico.*

Lorca, then, has begun his elegy much as the tradition required. He has expressed shock, dismay, despair. He has arraigned the natural order for its complicity, its coldness, its injustice. And he has called out for those about him to join in mourning the dead.

But there are differences. Lorca’s grief is much wilder than that of any elegist before him. It is apparently uncontrolled, hysterical, and offers no promise of consolation or final tranquility. Moreover, the entire world in which Ignacio dies is cruel and ugly. Lorca has removed himself from the beautiful pastoral imagery, with its idyllic landscape, its trees and streams. For all the arraignment of nature and for all the shock and dismay, the pastoral elegist traditionally cast his lament in a world of beautiful things, inevitably softening the grief and making the promise of final victory. There is little we can call idyllic or beautiful in the first section.

[…]

Ignacio dies in a modern, chaotic, nightmarish world, far removed from the classical pastoral setting with its ideal beauty, its streams and forests and flowers. Yet after an initial moment of surprise at the modern circumstance, I think that even an elegist like Milton would have understood what Lorca was about: that in depicting the world as accomplice in the death of Ignacio, he was arraigning the world for not having prevented this death which should not have been; that in bewailing the victory of the bull over the man, he was rising up against the power that would permit such an unjust victory; and that in crying before the struggle between the dove and the leopard, he was indicting a creation in which the good and the beautiful were viciously mutilated. Lorca is complaining, as the elegist has always complained, that this death was wrong, without a reason, and without purpose.

Appendix E

Literature-through-language provisional syllabus

SPANISH 300W: LITERARY DISCOURSE AS LANGUAGE IN USE. ADVANCED GRAMMAR AND COMPOSITION

The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: The University's policy on academic integrity can be found on the world wide web at http://www.psu.edu/polreg/studguid.html#R64. Section 49-20 of this code describes academic dishonesty by including cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized examinations, submitting the work of others or previously submitted work without instructor's permission, and tampering with the work of others. Students violating this code will fail the course and be referred to Judicial Affairs to further disciplinary action.

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF THIS COURSE

The purpose of this course is not to learn grammatical items or rules in isolation (such as the subjunctive, the imperfect, prepositions, etc). The purpose of this course is to interact with instances of discourse, i.e. language in use, so that the processes by which meaning is constructed become conspicuous to the learner. These instances of discourse will be literary texts for its most part. It is expected that the student will end up with a repertoire of discourse strategies for meaning construction by the end of this course. Although the vast majority of the texts used in this course will be literary, the learners will also interact with other types of texts, with the focus being again on the fusion of linguistic meaning, form and function. By investigating this fusion, the student will not only be learning about literary discourse, but also about discourse in general, including everyday and spoken language, since all types of discourse tap into the same linguistic resources.

The student will be required to have an active attitude in this course. S/he will be required to hand in all the work that s/he does in class, at home, individually or in group throughout the whole semester; therefore, the assessment will be daily, weekly … continuous, and the student must be ready at all times. Along the same lines, the reading process will be designed to be an authoring constructive and reconstructive activity (rather than a passive or analytical process). Because of this, the student will be encouraged to show both what s/he knows and what s/he does not know without self-judgments (and without fearing judgments from others), to take risks and to be aware that, most of the time, there will not be a right answer for the task at stake. It will be in the struggle with the language, not in the right answer, where the student will find a springboard for learning advancement. This realistic attitude will hopefully help the instructor in teaching students, not teaching texts, and in dealing with the students' real
needs. It is because of this that the syllabus will certainly change according to what is necessary for learning enhancement at each moment of the semester.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS
*Harper Collins Spanish College Dictionary*, 3rd Edition (or similar)
Webpage: [www.personal.psu.edu/mxy159/span200.htm](http://www.personal.psu.edu/mxy159/span200.htm)
Materials distributed in class or via e-mail

COURSE ASSESSMENT
Portfolio = 40 %
Take-home compositions = 30 %
Consistent work and participation throughout the course = 30 %

NO LATE OR INCOMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED
ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE TYPED (unless otherwise indicated) AND DATED

COMMENTS, FEEDBACK AND INDICATIONS GIVEN BY THE INSTRUCTOR MUST BE FOLLOWED UP BY THE STUDENT IN A FINAL VERSION OR REFLECTED IN LEARNING LOGS

GRADING SCALE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95 – 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>76 – 79.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60 – 69.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 94.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84 – 86.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70 – 75.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>80 – 83.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 – 59.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PORTFOLIO

The course portfolio is a daily course assignment that must represent what the student has learned and the consistent, constant work that s/he has put into the course. The portfolio will be collected very often during the semester (for the most part of the semester, as often as once a week). The portfolio must be well organized and complete, and must be easy to use (binder organized in different sections). The student must complete certain assignments of the portfolio daily and be always ready to hand in the whole portfolio. The following are the minimum requirements for the portfolio:

Daily learning log: organized, user-friendly, context-independent, systematic, well-structured sheets/ outlines/ study guides containing the information of the (grammatical) points seen in class every day. These logs must be based on the class discussion and the ideas from grammar textbooks, but MUST NOT be just the notes taken in class or an explanation copied from a grammar book, handout or website. This information must be more elaborated, systematic and personalized. It must be complete: whole paradigms must be offered, all uses of a form listed and multiple examples given. These (grammar) sheets will often have to be accompanied with activities that the instructor will assign. The student will have to do this assignment everyday after class with the material that has been taught that day (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, punctuation, etc.). If several subjects have been dealt with in the same class (for example, grammar and pronunciation, or two distinct grammatical topics), the student will have to do separate logs unless they are closely related.
Format for each log entry (you can add more categories if necessary):

Date _____________________
The topic of this class was __________________________________________
My own explanation/ outline/ study guide of what I understood:

DO create a complete, well-structured explanation of the topic according to your understanding from class discussion and activities by putting your notes together and arranging them in an easy-to-follow, systematic way.

DO NOT give empty “explanations” that do not provide any real content, for example: today in class we saw word order. I learned a lot because this is something we had never seen in other Spanish courses. I think I have a better understanding now of the order that the different elements of a sentence should have and of what their meaning is.

Examples (and explanation of examples if necessary)
Sources from which I got this information and the examples (class, myself, the textbook, another book, a friend, a text …)
Activity related to that topic (will be assigned in class)
Questions, points, examples, cases, uses … that I still don’t understand or that I need more work on/ help with

Word bank: the students will be required to construct vocabulary sheets with each reading, or to put together a series of vocabulary activities or vocabulary daily learning logs. The learners will not only be required to use a good bilingual dictionary, but also monolingual and synonym/ antonym dictionaries, corpora and authentic texts from the web. The students will be asked not only to write the word and its meaning, but also other information such as the word category (noun, adjective, verb …), the gender (masculine, feminine, neutral, both), examples/ the content from which it was taken, and other pertinent information. Other times the students will have to look for synonyms or antonyms (opposites), for words in the same semantic field, etc.

*Metalinguistic glossary* the learner must keep a record of words that are useful to talk about language, such as noun, preposition, clause, sentence, conjunction, phrase, non-finite, antonym, etc. Each entry must have a *definition*, an indication of *possible forms*, an indication of its *function* or how that linguistic item is used in language, examples, and sources.

Model:

Preposición/ Preposition: it can be a word (a, con, de, en, entre, sin, por, para, hasta, según) or several words (antes de, en frente de, en contraste con, etc) [indication of possible forms] that is followed with a noun or anything that functions as a noun (pronoun, infinitive, noun phrase). These words join verbs with nouns or nouns with other nouns to indicate relations such as time, space, direction, movement, origin, company etc., but the difference with an adverb is that adverbs do not combine with nouns and the like, adverbs go alone (hoy, ayer, ahí, solo, etc) [definition and function]. The personal pronouns that can go alter a preposition are: mí, ti, usted, él/ella, nosotros,
vosotros, ellos. Some prepositions such as con, menos, excepto, etc do not use “mí,” “ti” [function or use]. Examples:

Vivo en la casa azul con mi perrito. No puedo vivir sin él.
Sources: Avanzando Textbook, p. 117.

*Literary glossary: the learner must keep a record of words that are used to talk about figurative language, such as metaphor, allegory, repetition, anaphora, rhyme, parallelism, irony, etc. Each entry must have a definition, an example and an explanation of one of the possible effects that that figure may cause in the example.

Model:

Metáfora/ Metaphor: the use of an entity to represent another entity that has some characteristic in common [definition]. For example, “las perlas de tu boca,” where “pearls” represent “teeth,” with which they have in common the color, shine and the hardness. This metaphor beautifies the teeth, which we imagine intensely white, shining, polished, clean and precious, since now the idea of pearls convey some of their characteristics to the image of the teeth.

In-class/ at-home activities: whether individual or in groups, the student is responsible for completing all the activities that are assigned to them according to the requirements that have been established. These activities will have to be submitted to the instructor the next day or at some point in class or by e-mail. When an activity is assigned to a group of students, all students in the group are equally responsible for the activity. That means that each of the members of the group will have to create their own individual report or response. In addition, there must be an indication of how each member contributed to the completion of the activity. These activities must be further revised according to the instructor’s comments. Activities must be dated.

Follow-ups: all activities, commentaries and compositions in this course will receive comments, calls for revisions and changes, and other indications. Students must follow up on the feedback provide by the instructor by correcting or making the suggested changes, in the first place. In the second place, they also will have to do a follow-up log explaining what they have learned from the comments. These follow-ups will be attached to the particular activity they are referring to.

Format for the follow-up log:
The problem was (give the full sentence or the full context):
The solution or one of the possible solutions of the problem is:
The problem can be explained in the following way/ This is what I have learned from this mistake: (IMPORTANT: use linguistic information to explain the mistakes, explain why something is wrong, don’t say “I have to review prepositions,” “wrong pronoun,” “wrong use of tense,” “punctuation,” “I have to pay more attention to spelling;” instead give a grammatical explanation that show your new understanding of the problem, such as

“Lapiz” changes to “lá-piz” has an accent mark on the “a” because the stress falls on the next to the last syllable (aguda) and the word ends in a consonant other than “n” or “s”

“yo comió muchos bocadillos” changes to “yo comí muchos bocadillos”: the ending attached to the verb “comer” –ió corresponds to the 3rd person singular ending
(“él comió”), therefore I need “yo comí” instead, the preterit endings are: í, iste, ió, imos, isteris, ieron.

*Commentaries: a web forum that will be set up so that students can post their opinions on a discussion board that can be access by everybody in the class. Students will be asked from time to time to write a commentary about a variety of issues or to write a reaction to others’ commentaries. It can be an opinion issue, a cultural issue or their interpretation of a text. You will need to print out your comments or reactions to others’ comments and include them in your portfolio.

Diary: the diary will be written once a week and will consist of two parts. 1) Students will have to write about something about their personal lives that they want to comment on in Spanish (maybe just as personal as a reaction to a movie or a show that they watched in Spanish). 2) They will also have to comment on how they feel about their learning of Spanish, what has worked, what has not worked for them that week (in English or in Spanish). This assignment must also be dated.

TAKE-HOME WRITING EXAMS
There will be three “take-home” compositions or writing exams in this course (2nd week, 7th week and 15th week). The process will be the following. Students will be assigned a topic for a composition. After handing in the first version, the student will have some days to make changes to his/her composition to improve it. In addition, the instructor will require the student to make the composition sound in a particular way (for example, more dramatic, more emotional, angrier, happier, more fictional or literary-like, etc). WARNING: you cannot give your composition to a tutor, friend, etc to edit it for you. You can ask punctual questions of grammar or vocabulary to your instructor, and use sources, but you must indicate all the sources that you used and how you used them. When the days that you have to make changes to your composition are over, you will go to the instructor’s office and explain all the changes that you have made, the effect pursued with each of them, etc. This is the composition interview. This part will be tape recorded. You can use notes or a written log as a prop. Then, your instructor will give you comments on the improved version and the student will have to produce a final version with a written log explaining the changes.

CONSISTENT WORK AND PARTICIPATION
This category refers to the same in-class/ at-home activities from the portfolio, and, in general, any activity related to this course. The in-class and at-home activities will be collected and graded to count in the grading category of “consistent work and participation” the first time they are collected. Before including them in the portfolio and making them count towards the portfolio grade, the student must revise the activity and follow up on the comments and indications given by the instructor. After revising the comments, the student must attach a written follow-up (see above under “portfolio”). Once the activity is revised and reflected upon by the student and a follow-up has been added, the activity will count towards the portfolio.

The student will also be able to evaluate his/her own participation in the course. S/he will receive a grade that may coincide with his/her own assessment. This participation grade will average with the grade obtained in the in-class/ at-home activities and the average of the two will constitute 30% of the total grade.
ASSESSMENT OF ORAL AND CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS

In this course language is conceived of as something active and in use. The characteristics of oral language and of so-called “common language” are pervasive in written language and “literary” language, and the other way around. That is why students will also be required to take an exam that will evaluate their oral and conversational skills in Spanish. Since this is a composition and grammar course, the grade obtained in this assessment will not count towards the course grade. However, just like in other courses it is a requirement to watch a movie or to do field work, in an advanced language course like this it is a requirement to take these oral and conversational tests. These exams will not count towards your grade, but, as with any other requirement, you will not have a grade if you do not take them. These exams will provide the instructor with information about the students’ linguistic needs (as they show more easily in spontaneous oral production). At the same time, the instructor will provide the student with recommendations, comments, information and help that will be tailored to his/ her specific needs. These tests can be really useful to your learning so think of this part of the course as free speaking/ conversation tutoring whose results, good or bad, will not affect your grade negatively.

ATTENDANCE

Practice makes perfect. This is especially true of language. Therefore, attendance in this course is compulsory. Missing classes will harm grades and performance in this course greatly, since most of the assignments (portfolio, constant work and participation) are based on class discussion and daily work. Two instances of unpunctuality or early dismissals will be treated as an absence. However, it is understood that special circumstances arise. No more than 2 unexcused absences (a whole week of class) will be allowed (save them for job interviews, minor sickness, etc). Excused absences include serious sickness, death of a family member, or any other situation beyond your control. The student will be responsible for notifying the instructor about possible absences as soon as possible and for bringing a written excuse upon return to class. EVERY ABSENCE AFTER THE SECOND WILL LOWER YOUR FINAL GRADE 2.5 POINTS. Do not let it happen!

* Missing a class is not justification for not coming to class prepared the following day. Call a classmate or contact me to find out about the information given in class the day that you missed and the assignments to be done for the next day.

RESPONSIBILITY AND WORK IN THIS COURSE

This course will adjust to the pace required by students, and, because of this, the syllabus will be subject to changes. However, this is a course that will require your constant dedication. In this course your daily work throughout the semester will be constantly evaluated. Students are hereby discouraged to complete assignments in the last minute and/ or without paying attention to instructions and requirements. To succeed in this course, students must attend class, take notes, ask questions, work everyday on assignments, and follow the instructions that will be given for activities in class or via e-mail. Students are responsible for the information sent in e-mails and for asking for clarification when they have doubts. “I don’t read emails,” “you send too many emails,” “I receive lots of emails and I lost/ deleted yours” will not be considered valid or serious excuses. You will be responsible to keep all the information of this course organized (a particular diskette or CD, a folder, etc) and to keep track of deadlines.
PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

**Learning investment and amount of work:** I always complete all the assignments on time and conscientiously, I try to excel in everything that I do for this class, I actively engage in all the activities of this class, I come prepared to class, I take notes and use them, I study after class, I do everything I can to make the most of this course.

**Level of activity:** I always take a proactive role in all group activities both in and out of class; I am always on task; I take an active role in class activities; I collaborate with others to complete assignments; I meet my classmates outside of class if an assignment needs to be completed in groups; I always do my part in group work; I offer my ideas, opinions, etc.; my contributions in class and/or to others are valuable.

**Learning autonomy:** I do what I need to achieve my own learning goals, I take action when I notice that a specific area is problematic, I look for examples in texts, I look for information in textbooks or the dictionary or in the webpage, I am not scared to struggle with language and linguistic resources, I eventually ask questions to my instructor or seek other forms of assistance when I need this type of help, I use the comments and feedback that I get from my instructor and other classmates.

**Interest:** I am truly interested in the Spanish language, not only in its most popular aspects, but also in linguistic, cultural, artistic, literary aspects. I understand that writing is the most sophisticated of skills and the best for linguistic reflection and awareness, the best one for making the link between form, function and meaning, and the best for developing speaking and reading too. I am interested in the contents of this course or when something does not correspond with my interests or needs, I collaborate and let my instructor know what my specific linguistic needs are.

**Motivation:** It is easy to tell that I am in this course to learn as much as I can, and that my main motivation is not the grade or to maintain a certain GPA; I enjoy anything that gives me a chance of advancing my knowledge of the Spanish language; I do other activities outside this course or other courses, such as watching movies or TV shows in Spanish, reading texts in Spanish, etc.

**Responsibility:** I always complete all assignments on time; I always complete all assignments according to requirements; I always use the right format; I do not skip questions or tasks with the hope that it won’t be noticed; I do fair play; if I use other sources (whether texts or people) I always cite them; I’m aware of deadlines; I never hand in late or incomplete work.

**Planning and organization:** I never do assignments in the last minute, I do not turn my hurry into my instructor’s hurry or into the hurry of other members of the group because of poor planning on my part; I do not plan to go to office hours just hours or the day before an assignment is due; I do a lot of work on my own before going to office hours; I do not go to office hours to study or without studying previously or to ask about something that I can easily find in the dictionary, my notes or the textbook.
Attention and respect: I am always on task; I do not chat with classmates about topics that are not related to the activities at issue; I am not disruptive, specially while other classmates or the instructor are talking to the class; I respect the instructor and the other classmates; I am always paying active mental attention; I do not do things that are not related to this course while in class, such as reading the newspaper, using a cellular phone, completing the assignments for another class, etc.

Language use: I interact as much as possible in Spanish with instructor and peers, I use English to assist my Spanish learning, I compare both languages to understand Spanish better, I also try to learn metalinguistic concepts, such as “phrase,” “auxiliary,” etc., that will help me have a better understanding of how language works.

Punctuality and attendance: I am always punctual for class and I never leave early, I have never missed class.
PORTFOLIO GRADING CRITERIA

| 100-95%  | this is a model portfolio; totally and thoroughly completed and corrected; extremely user-friendly; total interest is obvious; shows enjoyment and effort to create a useful guide to Spanish |
| 94-90    | thoroughly completed; all activities are present and corrected; very useful, personalized, very user-friendly; interest is evident; the student has carefully planned all the assignments |
| 89-84%   | the vast majority of activities have been completed (with very few exceptions) and corrected, useful, personalized, easy to use, carefully planned, but there’s room for optimization |
| 79-70%   | although most activities have been done, some requirements are missing or incomplete or not corrected, somewhat difficult to use or somewhat disorganized, which shows that the student has not carefully planned the completion of the tasks of the portfolio |
| 69-60%   | some activities are present but the most part is missing or incomplete or not corrected, doesn’t respond to personal needs, messy, the completion of assignments do not respond to an interest in learning, it fails to serve the purposes for what the creation of this portfolio was intended |
| 59-0%    | although some activities may be present, there is hardly evidence of consistent work throughout the semester, no corrections, no planning, no interest |

1. **Completion**: all assignments are present and have been completed, no missing activities; it is obvious that this portfolio has not been done in a hurry or in the last minute; the portfolio was ready and it is obvious that all assignments have been carefully planned

| 100 | 95 | 90 | 85 | 80 | 75 | 70 | 65 | 60 | -60 ... |

2. **Thoroughness**: each assignment has been done conscientiously and thoroughly; there are no missing parts or insufficient/ inadequate information/ content in the assignments; every task has been done in as much depth as possible; there are plenty of examples; detailed word sheets and detailed entries to the metalinguistic glossary and to the literary glossary

| 100 | 95 | 90 | 85 | 80 | 75 | 70 | 65 | 60 | -60 ... |

3. **Reflection**: there is evidence of reflection in this portfolio; the student has tried to extract some important linguistic knowledge from class discussions, assignments and corrections/ comments; good commentaries, reactions, logs and diary entries

| 100 | 95 | 90 | 85 | 80 | 75 | 70 | 65 | 60 | -60 ... |

4. **Follow-ups**: the student has read and effectively acted upon the instructor’s comments and corrections; the student has used multiple resources (dictionaries, corpora, textbooks, notes) when necessary to solve problems autonomously or has eventually sought the instructor’s help; the student has shown excellent research/ problem-solving skills

| 100 | 95 | 90 | 85 | 80 | 75 | 70 | 65 | 60 | -60 ... |
5. **Amount of work**: it is obvious that the student has paid attention in class, has taken notes and has created good logs; the student has also efficiently availed of resources (such as dictionaries, corpora, texts and others); the student connected the tasks and activities of the portfolio to his/her own personal needs; there are signs that the student is truly interested in learning and not only in just getting the requirements done

6. **User-friendliness and format**: the material is presented in such a way that it allows easy and quick access to information (binder with different sections, colors have been used, pages are easy to turn over, etc); the format required for each assignment has been followed; all assignments are dated and sources are cited

**COMMENTS:**

GRADE= ______ / 600 POINTS $\times 0.167 = \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\%$
This SCHEDULE will change with all certainty in order to adjust to the learners’ needs throughout the course of the semester.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W</th>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>IN CLASS</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS (write down assignments due below)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>T, 13</td>
<td>Writing sample (diagnostic exam, compulsory for everybody) and presentation of the course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| I | R, 15 | Presentation of the course (continuation)  
Internet resources (lab)  
*** Class meets at 06 Sparks (computer lab) | |

**Make an hour appointment with your instructor for this week (II) for the oral/conversation-skill evaluation**

| II | T, 20 | Mystery text: utterance, text, sentence, phrase, word, agreement, punctuation, syntagmatic relationships | Turn in take-home writing exam # 1 |
| I | R, 22 | Mystery text: utterance, text, sentence, phrase, word, agreement, punctuation, syntagmatic relationships | |

**Make an hour appointment with your instructor for Monday or Tuesday (week III) for the take-home-writing-exam interview**
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>T, 27</td>
<td>Mystery text: utterance, text, sentence, phrase, word, agreement, punctuation, syntagmatic relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R, 29</td>
<td>Mystery text: utterance, text, sentence, phrase, word, agreement, punctuation, syntagmatic relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEBRERO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>T, 3</td>
<td>“Donde habite el olvido”: utterance, sentence and clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R, 5</td>
<td>“Donde habite el olvido”: utterance, sentence and clause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T, 10</td>
<td>“Denominación de origen”: spoken and written language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R, 12</td>
<td>“Denominación de origen”: spoken and written language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>T, 17</td>
<td>“Mulata”: spoken and written language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>R, 19</td>
<td>“Mulata”: spoken and written language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Make an hour appointment with your instructor for this week (VII) for the oral/conversation-skill evaluation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>T, 24</td>
<td>“Mulata”: spoken and written language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>R, 26</td>
<td>“Cogida y muerte”: lexicon and metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>MARZO</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>T, 2</td>
<td>“Cogida y muerte”: lexicon and metaphor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>R, 4</td>
<td>“Cogida y muerte”: aspect, tense and coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>T, 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>X</strong></td>
<td>R, 11</td>
<td>Vacaciones de primavera, no hay clases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T, 16</td>
<td>“Cogida y muerte”: aspect, tense and coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R, 18</td>
<td>“Con Jimmy en Maracas”: aspect, tense and coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>XI</strong></td>
<td>T, 23</td>
<td>“Cogida y muerte”: reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R, 25</td>
<td>“La noche bocarriba”: reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>XII</strong></td>
<td>T, 30</td>
<td>“La noche bocarriba”: reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>XIII</strong></td>
<td>T, 6</td>
<td>“La noche bocarriba”: narrative voice and (free) indirect speech</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ABRIL**
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R, 8</td>
<td>“Aura”: perspective, point of view and focalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIV</td>
<td>T, 13</td>
<td>“Aura”: perspective, point of view and focalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R, 15</td>
<td>“Aura”: perspective, point of view and focalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make an hour appointment with your instructor for this week (XV) for the oral/conversation-skill evaluation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T, 20</td>
<td>“Aura”: clauses and phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV</td>
<td>R, 22</td>
<td>“Aura”: clauses and phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make an hour appointment with your instructor for Monday or Tuesday (week XVI) for the composition interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>T, 27</td>
<td>“Aura”: (free) (in)direct speech/thought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R, 29</td>
<td>“Aura”: (free) (in)direct speech/ thought</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix F

## Alice's Syllabus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>IN CLASS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T. 13</td>
<td>Writing sample (diagnostic exam, compulsory for everybody) and presentation of the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. 15</td>
<td>Presentation of the course (continuation) Internet resources (lab) <strong>Class meets at 06 Sparks (computer lab)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Make an hour appointment with your instructor for this week (ii) for the oral conversation skill evaluation

### Make an hour appointment with your instructor for Monday or Tuesday (week iii) for the take-home-writing-exam interview

### The beginner's level A1-A2 (first semester)

| T. 20 | Mystery text: utterance, text, sentence, phrase, word, agreement, punctuation, syntagmatic relationships |
| R. 22 | Mystery text: utterance, text, sentence, phrase, word, agreement, punctuation, syntagmatic relationships |

| T. 27 | Mystery text: utterance, text, sentence, phrase, word, agreement, punctuation, syntagmatic relationships |
| R. 29 | Mystery text: utterance, text, sentence, phrase, word, agreement, punctuation, syntagmatic relationships |

| T. 3 | "Donde habita el olvido": utterance, sentence and clause |
| R. 5 | "Donde habita el olvido": utterance, sentence and clause |

| T. 10 | "Denominación de origen": spoken and written language |
| R. 12 | "Denominación de origen": spoken and written language |

### Workbook Activities

- Learning Logs
- Vocabulary exercises

### Post Group Story

- Workbook Activities
Appendix G

Students’ models of sentence

G.1 Scheherazade’s model of sentence (presents some erroneous information in relation to the notion of clauses)

* 1 verbos = 1 cláusulas * Que makes a sentence function as a noun.
G.2 Ulysses' model of sentence
Appendix H

Students’ models of punctuation

H.1 Gulliver’s model of punctuation
H.2 Ophelia's model of punctuation
Appendix I

Students´ drawings of Cortázar´s *Continuidad de los parques*

I.1 Drawings representing the first half of the story (man reading in studio and disengaging from reality)

I.1.1 Alice’s drawings (items are captioned as “the studio,” “a window,” “the train,” “book;” at the tops reads “I'm not an artist”)

![Image of Alice's drawings](image-url)
I.1.2 Juliet’s drawings
I.1.3 Dorothea
I.1.4 Scheherazade’s drawing
I.1.5 Ophelia's drawing
I.1.6 Darcy’s drawing
1.2 Drawings representing the end of Cortázár’s story (man being killed by the fictional character in the novel that he is reading)

1.2.1 Ernest’s drawing (paper had been cut with a razor; student’s caption reads as: “Artistic representation of deeper meaning of the text.” Frowning face with bubble reading “Um” was drawn by T).
1.2.2 Jane’s drawing
1.2.3 Darcy’s strips
1.2.4 Emma’s drawing
1.2.5 Ulysses’ drawing
1.2.6 Alice’s drawing (student’s caption reads “Reading his destiny”)
Appendix J

Students’ predictions on Cortázar’s story

J.1 Predictions about what is going to happen after the man in the story gets absorbed in the reading

J.1.1 Dulcinea’s prediction

Lo que paso al siguiente

Pienso que el hombre oye un ruido pero él no abre la puerta. El piensa que es el mayordomo y no tenga miedo. Un poco después, cuando esta leyendo su novela, ve un ladrón en el parque de robles porque su sillón esta enfrente de la ventana.

J.1.2 Lara’s prediction

La continuacion del cuento

Creo que el cuento continuara con un inesperado de eventos. Por ejemplo, pienso que el cuento que el hombre esta leyendo ocurrrira en realidad. Pienso que los personajes y la accion de la novela apareceran enfrente del hombre y el sera un parte del cuento.

J.1.3 Darcy’s prediction

Lo que pasa al siguiente
Hay un golpe a la puerta, pero no es el maydomo. Nadie esta. Pues, el hombre esta caminando por el pasillo, y entonces el oye mucho ruido. El sigue el ruido hasta que termina el pasillo, donde una aparicion aparece y lo toma fuera. Eso hombre nunca fue visto de aqui en adelante.

**J.1.4 Emma’s prediction**

Continuacion

Pienso que el hombre va a dormirse y sonar que es un de los personajes del cuento. El cuento se convertira en la vida real y el hombre estara en el escenario con los otros personajes en vez de su sillon del estudio.

**J.1.5 Juliet’s prediction**

Continuacion

El acaba de empezar a leer el libro cuando un ruido fuerte del otro cuarto llama su atencion. El sale el cuarto para investigar. Cuando el no encuentra nada, el regresa a su oficina a encontrar un cuerpo muerto en su silla... es que de su mayordomo.

**J.1.6 Ulysses´ prediction**

Continuacion

Con la espalda a la puerta, continua a leer el libro. Cada pagina ensena mas sobre el cuento. Le gusta mas con cada turno de papel. lee sin interupcion. Esta cerca
del fin cuando lo ocurra......el hombre misterio le golpea en la cabeza con un objeto muy duro!

Con la evidencia nueva, Mr. Plum levanta y proclama a Mrs. White, "Fue el mayordomo, con el candelabro, en la sala de libros!!" Entonces, Mrs. White le dice, "es verdad, ganas el partido 'Clue'!"

**J.1.7 Dorothea’s prediction**

Continuación

Creo que el hombre empezará a soñar despierto como él lee y se imagina el cuento que animando con él en el cuento. Pienso que el cuento tiene lugar en el bosque por su casa y será de siglos hace.

**J.1.8 Jane’s prediction**

Continuación

Cuando al repantigarse en el sofá, él continúa leer el libro que absorbe completamente su atención. Leer el cuento chispea su imaginación, lo haciendo quiere escribir una novela él mismo. Porque él quiere romance en su vida, él recoge papel y escribe sobre de que él desea encontrar. Sin embargo, la persona que él describe no es completamente ficticia, él es ya en amor con un extraña.

**J.1.9 Alice’s prediction**

Continuación
El hombre continua a leer el libro por muchas horas. No oye un golpe en la puerta ni el ruido del teléfono. De repente, el hombre ve una pelea entre de un muchacho muy feo y una muchacha muy bonita en el parque. El hombre del cuarto observa la situación y el hombre de parque le da un golpe en la cabeza de muchacha y él lleva la muchacha fuera del parque. El hombre del cuarto llama a la policía inmediatamente.

**J.1.10 Ophelia’s prediction**

Continuacion

Él continuará leer en su sillón de terciópelo. Dejará más en la trama de la novela, y no miría en la ventana cuando un ladrón corre en el parque a la casa. También él no oiría cuando el ladrón viene en su oficina con una espada y le mató en su silla. Al fin, solamente hay un libro, y un cabeza tocando el terciopelo verde de su sillón favorito.

**J.1.11 Scheherazade´s prediction**

Continuación del cuento sin leer

Un invasor vestido en ropas sucias y muy raros viene al estudio para robar la novela. Ve que el hombre esta leyendola y en un abrir y cerrar de ojos, saca una botella de pocion de domir. Pone un poquito de la pocion en una toalla y se tapa la cara del hombre con ella. Se queda dormido y se cae el libro. Rapidamente, el invasor recoge y abre el libro de golpe, como ya sabia donde queria leer y empieza. Inmediatamente, el desaparece.
Predictions about what the lovers discuss in the log cabin (each group had a representative that had to post the group’s prediction)

### Alice, Emma, Dulcinea and Lara’s prediction

La mujer camina rápidamente, entre los árboles, durante el sol atardece, a la cabaña. Tiene que volver a la cabaña para encontrar con su amor. Esperar en la cama, ella mira a su anillo de boda.

El hombre entró la cabana con un puñal en la mano.

La mujer se sobre saltó para besarlo pero él la rechaza.

“No,” dijo el hombre, “no quiero continuar viéndola a escondidas.”

La mujer miró al puñal y le dijo, “No necesitamos continuar viéndola a escondidas más.”

### Ulysses’s group’s prediction

La chica en un vestido bonito con los sueños de su amante, entra la cabana. El chico no esta allí, pero en un poco tiempo el entra en la misma cabana. El hombre tiene una herida de una rama, pero ninguna rama puede parar su amor. La mujer camina a el y empieza a besarlo con calor y pasión. El aparta a mujer y dice, “no quiero continuar viéndote a escondidas a las sombras de la noche.” El dice, “necesitamos tener un plan para matar su esposo.”

### Dorothea’s group’s prediction

El Cuento
Un día, una mujer esperaba por su amante en una cabana. Cuando entró, ella vio una herida en la cara del hombre y un punal en su mano. Iba besarlo, pero el amante era enfadado y la rechazó.

>>No quiero continuar viéndote a escondidas!<< Exclamó Paco.

**J.2.4 Swann’s group’s prediction**

Los dos planean matar al esposo de la mujer y hacer parecer como un accidente. Durante la cena ella pondrá veneno en su comida. Cuando él muera, ellos van a ponerle en su coche con botellas vacías de alcohol y lo conduce de un precipicio en el mar.
Appendix K

Soap opera transcript

DEMETRIO: Verónica... mi vida, mi alma. Haré lo que tu quieras... no habrá esfuerzo, no habrá sacrificio, no habrá expiación que yo no sea capaz de aceptar; pero no me rechaces, no me digas que nunca podrás amarme, no me digas que tu amor ha muerto, que es peor que si el sol se apagara...

VERONICA: No tengo ya derecho a perdonarte... He dado a otro mi palabra... al que me protegió en la hora mas amarga de mi dolor, al que fue en mi abandono mi único amparo. No puedo serle desleal!...

DEMETRIO: ¡Yo le hablare, Verónica!... Le hablaré y tendrá que comprender. Es un hombre noble, es un hombre honrado...

VERONICA: ¡Razón de más para que yo no sea desleal!...

DEMETRIO: Me arrastraré a sus pies. Sabré suplicarle, sabré hacerle comprender que sin ti no es posible para mí la vida... Si es eso sólo lo que te hace rechazarme, yo estoy seguro de que monsieur Belot...

BELOT: Pronunció usted mi nombre, monsieur San Telmo?...

VERONICA: Belot!...

DEMETRIO: Belot... amigo mío...

BELOT: Amigo suyo!... Ha dicho usted la palabra exacta... su mejor amigo y el más dichoso de ver que por fin llega para usted la felicidad...

VERONICA: ¡Belot!...

BELOT: Perdóneme haber estado escuchando; pero me importaba demasiado...

DEMETRIO: Belot... Le suplico...
BELOT: No me suplique nada, monsieur San Telmo... No es necesario... Nunca pensé arrebatarle a su linda esposa...

DEMETRIO: ¿Qué dice usted?...

BELOT: Recuerde que se lo di a entender la primera vez que se puso celoso en mi viejo hotel de Cuyaba... Lo que le dije entonces debo repetírselo ahora...

VERONICA: Monsieur Belot... no siga usted mintiendo...

BELOT: Mentía antes, ma cherie. Ahora estoy en lo cierto. Mire usted estas arrugas, estas canas... Antes de diez años seré un viejo y usted una mujer aun más esplendida que es hoy, si cabe. Seríamos algo demasiado desproporcionado, algo sin sentido. Es usted por suerte demasiado mujer para hallar en esas condiciones la felicidad y yo no soy lo bastante egoísta para poder ser dichoso a costa de su sacrificio...

DEMETRIO: ¡Amigo mío!...

BELOT: Fue gracioso que yo me declarara a usted en aquel viejo hotel del camino del Pan de Azuca. Usted necesitaba hacer algo. Se tranquilizó al aceptarme... Todo se ha hecho como debía hacerse; pero ahora pasaron las nubes, pasó la noche, el sol ha llegado... ¡Sean ustedes felices!...

DEMETRIO: ¡No tengo palabras con que darle las gracias, Belot!...

BELOT: ¡Oh, lala!... las palabras no hacen falta. Ahora se que va usted a hacerla todo lo dichosa que ella merece, y que cuando pasen por Cuyaba se detendrán en mi hotel por lo menos una semana. Ahora voy a dormir unas cuantas horas... es muy tarde. A primera hora debo estar en el Juzgado para retirar cierta denuncia por el robo de una lancha automóvil. La juventud y el amor son breves... No malgasten más las horas de felicidad...

Se ha ido sin que ellos hallen gesto ni palabra en la enorme emoción que les domina...

Apenas han notado que va cada vez más deprisa. No se han dado cuenta de que al
trasponer la verja se ha enjugado una lágrima. La juventud y el amor gritan demasiado fuerte en sus corazones apasionados...

DEMETRIO: Verónica... mi vida, mi alma... ¿Me perdonas?...

VERONICA: ¡Te amo!...

FIN DE LA OBRA
Appendix L

Models of Lakoff’s oral narrative scheme

L.1 Ophelia’s model
L.2 Juliet's model

Abstract => Resumen

Orientación => personaje, ¿qué pasó?

¿Dónde, cuándo, y en qué?

Complicating => miedo (enot) // entonces,

¿Qué paso? Entonces es el problema?

Evitar solución => éste escuchas

Resolución => Descender => llagasas al final

dado => puente que establecer relaciones

Advierte que pasa

Entonces, delante de nuestros propios ojos

Sigue ser muy ego

El efecto del modo en presente =>
L.3 Scheherazade's model
L.4 Darcy's model

We began class with a little review of perspective and Tiempo c.t. then looked at what all narratives have in common.

- Abstract (resumen): intro: "you need to know what happened today."
- Orientation (orientacion): people, who, where, when etc.
- Complicating (nudo): contains nudo/capitulos/ eventos
  - ej. testar (s) sin mas, de la escritura propia.
  - res: que paso
  - ej. testimonios, sin mas = out of the blue
- Evaluation (evidencias): ej. esto fue lo peor que ha pasado en mi vida (interwale)
- Resolution (desenlace): allegamos al final del problema
- Coda (coda): relate of show relevance to the rest of life as we work.

In the nudo tere is a change to present tense to involve the reader more. We then looked at the difference in the future.
Appendix M

Students´ comments on Cortázar´s story

M.1 Dulcinea’s interpretation

Interpretación del cuento:

Pienso que el hombre se duerme cuando está leyendo y tiene un sueño sobre que está en la novela. Pienso que es un sueño porque el fin es una lista de observaciones.

Pienso que hay 2 narradores:

Un narrador está diciendo la historia del hombre y el segundo es el hombre diciendo el cuento de su sueño.

Titulo que nuestro grupo: De espalda a la puerta

M.2 Lara’s interpretation

Hoy en clase, debatimos la conclusion del cuento misterioso. Hablamos sobre interpretaciones posibles en grupos y como una clase. Yo pensaba que el hombre se duerme y en su sueno el es una parte del cuento y el completa el cuento que estaban leyendo en su sueno. La evidencia que apoya esta interpretacion es las partes en el cuento que dice “gozaba del placer…y sentir a la vez que su cabeza…,” “adquirian color y movimiento” (una transicion o una descripcion que indica la diferencia entre realidad y
ficcion), el uso del imperfecto (indica un sueno porque en un sueno la accion ocurre momento por momento) y la posicion de los comas. Tambien, pensaba que habia dos narradores en el cuento. El hombre (la parte del sueno y el autor del cuento).

Otras interpretaciones que discutimos eran 1. dentro del sueno (el hombre en el sillon en realidad...el resto es sueno) 2. alucinacion 3. toda la narracion es realidad

Entonces, Carmen decia que el cuento es del estilo indirecto libre y corriente de la conciencia.

**M.3 Emma’s interpretation**

En nuestro grupo, discutimos la posibilidad de que el hombre se duerme mientras esta leyendo el cuento y suena que es el personaje del cuento que la mujer y su amante planean a matar. En este caso, el primer parte del cuento seria real y el segundo parte en que el amante entra en el cuarto donde esta el hombre seria un sueno. El uso de las comas y el tenso imperfecto por el autor apoya esta interpratacion, asi como las palabras como "gozaba del placer" y "descansaba comodamente en el terciopelo."

**M.4 Dorothea’s interpretation**

La interpretacion del cuento es el hombre se duerme y tiene un sueno sobre el cuento. El primero parte es real hasta que el cuento dice absorbido por la sordida
disyuntive de los heroes,...,adquirian color y movimiento. También, en general usamos el imperfecto a describir suenos.

Creo que el cuento tiene dos narradores. El primero es en el principio durante la real parte y el segundo es el hombre durante el sueno.

El título es Continuidad de los parques

---

**M.5 Ernest's interpretation**

Nuestro grupo tiene 3 ideas sobre la historia.

1. Todo es la realidad.
2. Es un sueno sobre el cuento
3. Es entre la realidad y un sueno

Preterito significa realidad e imperfecto significa el cuento pero creo que ambos son realidad y el hombre morira. También el proposito del cuento era questionar la idea de realidad y suenos.

---

**M.6 Alice's interpretation**

Está Clase: un discurso en grupos de la interpretación del cuento
Interpretación del cuento: el hombre se duerme y tiene un sueño sobre el libro que está leyendo. El hombre piensa que él sea parte del cuento.

*la posición de las comas
*también el uso del imperfecto implica que es un sueño y no son eventos completos.
*las imágenes que se concertaban y adquirían color y movimiento: implica que él está soñando porque las imágenes del texto están adquirriendo cosas y no son simplemente de la página.
*el pretérito indica la real en el cuento
*la división real del cuento: Sin mirarse ya-el principio del segundo párrafo.

2. el narrador: hay dos narradores
   - da una historia del hombre; el narrador enfoque las acciones
   -el hombre que está leyendo el cuento

3. La mezcla de realidad y ficción: el hombre en el sillón es la realidad. El libro es ficción y los eventos misterios son ficción.

4. El título posible:
   -de espaldas a la puerta
   - terciopelo verde
   -una vista del parque
   -REAL: continuidad de los parques

M.7 Ophelia’s interpretation

Mi interpretación del cuento:
es una mezcla de ficción y la realidad. Creo que el hombre esta leyendo un libro pero esta cansado, después de pasa unos minutos leer, esta durmiendo con el libro en los manos y soñando sobre los acciones entre la novela, y que esta haciendolas.

*El nivel extradiegetico es la realidad, el hombre leyendo un libro
*El nivel intradiegetico es la ficción, su sueño y que esta entre la novela

-->usa el estilo indirecto libre, es un corriente de la consciencia

-otra interpretación en mi grupo:

-->:todo es la realidad, el hombre no esta soñando y el amante de su esposa se matará en el sillón de terciopelo verde

Verbos: hay un dominio del imperfecto porque estamos mirando los pensamientos del hombre, no los acciones o dialogo directo de la novela. El pretérito es un marcador que algo es real

Narradores:

en mi grupo creiamos que hay 2, el hombre y uno más grande que narra los acciones del hombre (que esta sentado en su sillón favorito..etc.)

Posibles títulos:
-comienza o fín
-de espaldas a la puerta
-a caras del parque
-terciopelo verde
**M.8 Scheherazade's interpretation**

En mi mente, la historia es una mezcla de la realidad y de la ficción. Creo que el autor tuvo esta finalidad de confusión porque la vida nunca es tan clara. En mi grupo, pensamos en pocos títulos, pero ninguno era adecuado. Me gusta el título de 'ontinuación de los parques'. Es muy adecuado para la historia. Captura la visión de los dos historias.
Appendix N

Students’ everyday metaphors collected 1/15-1/20

N.1 Dulcinea’s metaphors

Run around like a chicken with its head cut off
Put a sock in it
It’s raining cats and dogs
There’s more than one way to skin a cat
Keep your eyes peeled
Put your foot in your mouth
Keep your chin up

N.2 Darcy’s metaphors

Men are dogs
She’s slower than a turtle
He ran with bullish intensity
That woman is a fox
A sea of troubles
N.3 Ophelia's metaphors

High Horse
Daily Grind
Paper Thin
Porcelain Skin

N.4 Ulysses and Alice’s metaphors

You crack me up
Bite the bullet
That stinks
You fell off your rocker
There are plenty of fish in the sea
   Every cloud has a silver lining
Don’t count your chickens before they hatch
Don’t put all your eggs in one basket

N.5 Ulysses’ metaphors

You're a tool.
Hit the bottle.
Being high.
Checking someone out.
Tall tale
hi the road.
I see what you mean.
Footing the bill.
Get the ball rolling.

**N.6 Dorothea’s metaphors**

Life in the fast lane.
She followed in her mother’s footsteps.
His head was spinning with excitement
The business was about to take flight.
Hardly a word was spoken.

**N.7 Juliet’s metaphors**

Leap of faith
Step in the right direction.
Time flies.
On his/her high horse.
Daily grind.
Hit the ground running.

**N.8 Gulliver’s metaphors**

Hotter than Hell
She flew by
That Rolex must be hot
Higher than a kite
You stepped on my feelings
That wench broke my heart

N.9 Jane’s metaphors

She had a special place in his heart
A child needs room to grow
Writer’s block
A blanket of snow
A brilliant idea

N.10 Scheherazade’s metaphors

A blanket of snow fell through the night
The growth of the economy
Life is in the fast lane
Tolerance is the window to peace
She followed in her mother’s footsteps
Appendix O

Examples of everyday literary figures in horoscopes

Aries
21 marzo - 20 abril

Cáncer
23 junio- 22 julio

Libra
23 sept.- 22 oct.

Capricornio
22 déc.- 19 enero

Tauro
21 abril- 20 mayo

Leo
23 julio- 22 agosto

Escorpio
24 oct.- 22 nov.
Amor. Tu atracción será más fuerte y podrás estar suspirando en tus sueños a cualquier persona que desees. Salud. No subas estóicas y se dé pronto. Para ti es más importante su forma de ser que sus acciones. Dias favorables: 30 y 1.

Aguairio
21 enero- 19 febrero

Géminis
22 mayo- 21 junio

Virgo
23 agosto - 22 sept.
Amor. Si sabes disfrutar de los momentos de problemas verás las cosas con mayor claridad. No todo lo que dices por perdido lo está para siempre. Recuerda que el amor tiene muchas fuerzas. Salud. Te conviene buscar la arena para hacer más ejercicio. Trabajo. Dejarte llevar por tu alegría en el trabajo. Dias favorables: 29 y 30.

Sagitario
23 nov.- 22 dic.
Amor. Hay un buen momento para revisar tus objetivos sentimientos y realización de lo que tienes que hacer. Dias favorables: 28 y 1.

Piscis
20 feb.- 20 marzo

Milenia Llop, astrologa
Appendix P

Literariness in non-literary texts

ASÍ LLEGÓ EL ALTO EL FUEGO

El 16 de septiembre de 1998, ETA anunciaba una tregua indefinida y sin condiciones que comenzaría dos días después. Un mes más tarde, la organización terrorista insistía ante las cámaras de la BBC británica en la seriedad del proceso que había iniciado. Tras el cumplimiento del primer aniversario, ETA destacaba en un nuevo documento las luces y sombras del proceso.

AGOSTO DE 1999

ETA propone al PNV y EA un segundo acuerdo, basado en el redactado en agosto de 1998. El texto no fue aceptado por los nacionalistas y ETA volvió a coger las armas.

DECLARACIONES AL 'FINANTIAL TIMES'

Moratinos advierte de que España retirará sus tropas si la ONU sólo hace 'cambios cosméticos'

http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2004/04/06/internacional/1081238756.html

El futuro ministro de Asuntos Exteriores, Miguel Angel Moratinos, advirtió de que España retirará sus tropas de Irak, tal como prometió el partido socialista en la campaña electoral, si la nueva resolución del Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU para dar un mayor papel a Naciones Unidas en este país sólo supone "cambios cosméticos," en una entrevista que publica hoy el diario 'Financial Times'.

POWELL ADMITE QUE LOS DATOS SOBRE LOS LABORATORIOS MÓVILES DE ARMAS QUÍMICAS EN IRÁK NO ERAN TAN SÓLIDOS

ELMUNDO.ES | EP/AFP

WASHINGTON.- Dos meses después de que el secretario de Estado de EEUU, Colin Powell, declarara la posibilidad de que Irak no tuviera armas de destrucción masiva, las confesiones se vuelven más concretas. Ahora, Powell admite que las informaciones que presentó ante Naciones Unidas sobre los laboratorios móviles iraquíes, que presuntamente se usaban para crear armas químicas y biológicas, no eran tan sólidas.

“En el momento en el que preparaba mi presentación esto se me había presentado como algo sólido,” pero “ahora parece que no es así, que no era tan sólido,“
declaró Powell a los periodistas que le acompañaban en el avión de vuelta a Washington desde Bruselas, donde participó en una reunión de la OTAN.

[...]

Estados Unidos acusó al depuesto régimen iraquí de poseer y almacenar armas de destrucción masiva y utilizó ese argumento para lanzar la invasión en marzo del año pasado.

**AZNAR CONSIDERA UN "GRAVÍSIMO ERROR" RETIRAR LAS TROPAS DE IRAK**

http://es.news.yahoo.com/040322/159/3bchq.html

MADRID (AFP) - El presidente del Gobierno en funciones, José María Aznar, consideró este lunes un "gravísimo error" la retirada de las tropas españolas de Irak anunciada por su previsible sucesor en el cargo, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, y defendió asimismo la "honestidad" de su ejecutivo en la gestión informativa tras los atentados del 11 de marzo en Madrid.

En una entrevista concedida a Telecinco, Aznar dijo que "se ha tomado nota por parte de quien se puede beneficiar del terror y por parte de los terroristas" de las intenciones de Zapatero, y consideró un "muy grave error" una decisión que según él supondría "debilitar la coalición internacional que lucha contra el terrorismo."

"Creo que el mundo es mucho mejor sin Sadam Husein," aseveró, justificando su postura en que, según él, tanto la ONU como el Consejo Europeo creía que había armas de destrucción masiva en Irak.

"Algún país tiene que asumir sus responsabilidades," dijo respecto a su apoyo a la guerra de Irak en la cumbre de las azores con George W. Bush y Tony Blair, subrayando que, según él, "hicimos lo que teníamos que hacer por el bien de la lucha contra el terrorismo, por el bien de nuestro país y por el bien de la legalidad internacional."
Appendix Q

Chart for creating literary figures to describe a bull

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANIMALES</th>
<th>PIEL</th>
<th>DEFENSAS</th>
<th>LÍGARES</th>
<th>SONIDO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TORO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELEFANTE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEÓN/TIGRE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERPENTE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COCORMLLO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HORMIGA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Example of literary figures derived from the chart in Appendix Q

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homero</th>
<th>Homenaje</th>
<th>Pérez</th>
<th>Vence</th>
<th>Comedias</th>
<th>Díaz de León</th>
<th>Elmer Seidler</th>
<th>VIII</th>
<th>COCOBILLÓ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rio</td>
<td>Juan Alvarado</td>
<td>Alvarez</td>
<td>Gracia</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Hermosillo</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Vence</td>
<td>Rio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean</td>
<td>Rubén Darío</td>
<td>Alvarez</td>
<td>Gracia</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Hermosillo</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Vence</td>
<td>Ocean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheet Sheds</td>
<td>Alfred de Grazia</td>
<td>Alvarez</td>
<td>Gracia</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Hermosillo</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Vence</td>
<td>Sheet Sheds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close Encounters</td>
<td>Víctor Díaz</td>
<td>Alvarez</td>
<td>Gracia</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Hermosillo</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Vence</td>
<td>Close Encounters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Julio Cortázar</td>
<td>Alvarez</td>
<td>Gracia</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Hermosillo</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Vence</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havana</td>
<td>Thomas Mann</td>
<td>Alvarez</td>
<td>Gracia</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Hermosillo</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Vence</td>
<td>Havana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havana / Pinar del Río</td>
<td>Ignacio Ramírez</td>
<td>Alvarez</td>
<td>Gracia</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Hermosillo</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Vence</td>
<td>Havana / Pinar del Río</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonido</td>
<td>Audiovisual</td>
<td>Alvarez</td>
<td>Gracia</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Hermosillo</td>
<td>Chihuahua</td>
<td>Vence</td>
<td>Sonido</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Appendix*
Appendix S

Students’ comments on Lorca’s *Cogida y muerte*

**S.1 Lara’s interpretation**

First half of the poem

Verb Tenses:

I think that the author chose to use preterite and imperfect tenses because he wanted to depict the poem as a news story, so he chose to use the past tenses to show that the event happened in the past.

Metaphors:

Ya luchan la paloma y el leopardo a las cinco de la tarde

-This line seems to represent "good" and "evil" or the "gentle" (the dove) and the "ferocious" (leopard).

What makes it a poem:

I think that this text is poem like because of its structure. Because the author repeats the line "a las cinco de la tarde" it gives the text a rhythm through its repetition.
S.2 Alice’s interpretation

Second half of the poem

The author uses the preterit tense to exemplify the completion of actions, and to show that they immediately start then stop.

Metaphors:

“la muerte puso huevos en la herida…” (I think this is similar to the English phrase: salt in a wound)

“un ataúd con ruedas es la cama…” (A coffin with wheels is the bed-final resting place)

The author also uses repetition of the phrase "a las cinco de la tarde" to stress the importance of the event. It serves as a reminder to the reader.

S.3 Dulcinea’s interpretation

The poet uses repetition of the phrase "a las cinco de la tarde" throughout the entire poem to express the importance of the event of the bullfight. He also uses a lot of metaphorical language to create specific images in the mind of the reader about the event.
S.4 Ulysses’ interpretation

I noticed that a good amount of the articles are el, la, los and los indicating that the poem makes us feel as if we were at the scene and we know everything that is being spoken about. In my opinion it makes us involved in the poem allowing us to actually feel an emotional tie to the words.

Then I noticed something interesting about the verb tenses. It is mainly told in the preterite and the imperfect, however, there are a few lines that appear in the present tense--Ya luchan la paloma y el leopardo a las cinco de la tarde. I actually do not know why this is. Maybe there are lines in the present tense to emphasize very important actions. Another example is--A lo lejos ya viene la gangrena a las cinco de la tarde.
Appendix T

Questionnaire on students’ previous L2 learning histories

Name ________________________________

Spanish courses taken prior to college:

Previous Spanish courses taken at PSU:

Previous Spanish courses taken at other institutions:

Native language/s__________________________________

Experience with other languages (insert in boxes a number from 0-5 to evaluate each skill, 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest value)

(Language) _____________ speaking □, writing □, listening □, reading □

(Language) _____________ speaking □, writing □, listening □, reading □

(Language) _____________ speaking □, writing □, listening □, reading □

(Language) _____________ speaking □, writing □, listening □, reading □

(Language) _____________ speaking □, writing □, listening □, reading □

Write a composition in Spanish about your experience with learning Spanish. The result must be a coherent/ cohesive text where you can find the answers to the following questions (questions can be answered in whatever order seems more logical to you):

1. Describe some of your experiences with learning Spanish (in different courses, abroad, with different instructors, etc.)
2. Why did you choose to study a foreign language?
3. Why Spanish of all foreign languages?
4. What do you expect from learning Spanish?
5. What do you expect from this course?

6. How has learning Spanish/ a foreign language affected you, your life, the choices that you have made, etc?

7. If you could change something about your learning experience, what would you change or at least improve? (you have to talk about at least one thing)
Appendix U

Informed consent form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH
The Pennsylvania State University
Title of Project: THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE AS DISCOURSE (IRB #17234)
Principal Investigator: María del Carmen Yáñez Prieto (Researcher/ Course Instructor), Scott Bldg., Cubicle #14, phone: 865-3944
Dissertation Director: James P. Lantolf (Dissertation Director), Professor of Applied Linguistics & Spanish, Director of the Center for Language Acquisition, 304 Sparks Building, phone: 863-7038
Recruitment Person: Silvia Álvarez Olarra, 342N Burrowes Bldg., Cubicle #15, phone: 865-0035

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to show how the current dichotomies in Foreign Language Teaching between the focus on meaning, on the one hand, and the focus on form, on the other, can be fused through the teaching of Literature as Discourse, or, in other words, Literature as language in use. To put it simply, while students will be taught grammar and how the language works, they will also see how language operate in contexts and can be manipulated to create meaning and stylistic effects in texts of literature and other texts. This study aims at casting some light at the current split between the language and the literature programs and at seeking for continuity in the students’ second-language acquisition process in upper-level courses.

Procedures to be followed: Participation is voluntary. The Principal Investigator and Instructor of the course will not know who will be participating in the study until the course is over and all the grades have been assigned (that is why the Instructor is not being present at this recruitment session). Participation in this research will include just the completion of the requirements of this course. If you decide to participate in this study, you will not be asked to do anything different from the rest of the class (for example, you will not have to take extra tests or diagnostics apart from those that are required in this course for all students). By participating in the study, you will only be giving permission to the researcher/ instructor to use your compositions, recordings, assignments, written samples,
etc as data for her dissertation. Your written production will be transcribed, but in order to keep your identity secret, you will be given a nickname and any information that can be linked to you will be suppressed. The recorded material (videotapes and audio tapes) will be transcribed and coded too. This audio/video material will only be used for the purposes of this research. Likewise, nicknames will be given to the participants and any information that can be linked to them will be suppressed. The recorded material will not be seen by any person other than the two investigators named above unless the student gives his/her permission to the main investigator to use clippings of audio-taped or video-taped material at the defense of this prospective dissertation and at conferences for the Linguistics community by checking the box below.

I understand that by checking (✓) this box I give permission for clippings of my audio/video material to be shown at the defense of this prospective dissertation and at conferences. By not checking this box (just leave it blank), my video/audio material will just be transcribed, coded and used as part of the research data; therefore, no clippings will be displayed to others. In either case, I will be given a nickname and information concerning my real identity will be suppressed.

Discomforts and Risks: There are no known discomforts or risks to participating in this study. Any task that is connected to this study is found in any other regular language course taught at the university level. Anything on the written data or recordings that could identify you will be suppressed. You will be given a nickname so as to avoid linking your name to any text or samples of speech produced by you. Any data will be kept in a locked file in the Principal Investigator’s office, at 342 N Burrowses Bldg. as well as other material from the class, but your data will not be transcribed and used for this study unless you hereby give your consent. Once the data has been entered into the pool, the original data will be destroyed. The only individuals who will have access to data before they are erased are the Dissertation Director (Dr. James Lantolf), and the Principal Investigator. It is anticipated that all data will be transcribed and coded by the end of Spring 2005. The recordings will be erased by no later than the end of Spring 2005 unless you have given permission to use your clippings for conferences.

Benefits:
a. The benefits to participants: you will have had the opportunity to learn with an innovative learning approach to Foreign Languages, to gain enhanced understanding of language learning, and to contribute to a worthwhile research endeavor focused on improving the quality of Foreign Language and Literature education in general.

b. The benefits to society include the possibility of casting more light on an innovative literacy-based way of teaching foreign languages that is currently implemented at the Department of German of Georgetown University. This study may have curricular applications that may solve the split between the language and the literature programs in Foreign Language Departments.

Duration/Time: participating in this study will not take you more time than not participating in it. All students will have to do the same. Your participation will be over once the course is finished.

Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. The Instructor/Main Investigator will not know whether you are participating in this study.
until the semester is over and until she has assigned you a grade. Therefore, only the two persons in charge named above and, in any event, Silvia Álvarez Olarra (the recruitment person) will have access to your identity. In the event of publication of this research, no personally identifying information will be disclosed. To make sure your participation is confidential, all information pertaining to you will be given a nickname and code number, and only the persons in charge can match names with codes and nicknames. No clippings of the audio/video material will be displayed unless you give your permission by checking the box in point # 2.

**Right to Ask Questions**: Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Penn State’s Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775.

**Compensation**: no monetary or academic compensation will be received from participating in this study. This study will not affect your grade in any way.

**Voluntary Participation**: Participation is voluntary. Participants can withdraw from the study at any time. You are free to stop participating in the research at any time by notifying the Recruitment Person, Silvia Álvarez Olarra (sxa188@psu.edu). You are also free to decline to answer any specific questions without penalty. This project is not connected to your grade in this language course in any way.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

| ____________________________________________ | __________________________ |
| Participant Signature                      | Date                        |

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

| ____________________________________________ | __________________________ |
| Investigator Signature                     | Date                        |
Appendix V

Addendum to informed consent form

ADDENDUM INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: THE TEACHING OF LITERATURE AS DISCOURSE (IRB #17234) –FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW (NEW PROTOCOL)

Principal Investigator: María del Carmen Yáñez Prieto (Researcher/ Course Instructor), 342N Burrowes Bldg., Cubicle #5, phone: 865-0035

Dissertation Director: James P. Lantolf (Dissertation Director), Professor of Applied Linguistics & Spanish, Director of the Center for Language Acquisition, 304 Sparks Building, phone: 863-7038.

Recruitment Person: Silvia Álvarez Olarra, 211 Burrowes Bldg.

1. Purpose of the Study: The study for which the participants gave consent was completed in Spring 2004. This addendum consent form is for a follow up interview, a protocol that is an addition to the original study. The completed study aimed to show a way of dissolving the current split between the language and the literature programs and at seeking for continuity in the students' second-language acquisition process in upper-level courses. This follow-up interview is aims to investigate how this course might have impacted the students’ performance in other Spanish-related advanced courses.

2. Procedures to be followed: The participation in the original protocol was voluntary and kept secret until the grades were assigned in the study course thanks to the intervention of a recruitment person other than the Principal Investigator and Course Instructor. The participants were not asked to do any especial assignments; they just gave permission to the Principal Investigator to use their compositions, recordings, assignments, written samples, etc in an Advanced Spanish course as data for her research. Participants have been given
nicknames and any personal information leading to their identification has been suppressed.

After the study course and data collection have been completed, the Principal investigator has planned to make a follow-up interview with the students who originally participated by signing the consent form in the original study. This new protocol will consist of the following steps: a) the main investigator will interview the participants about their performance in other advanced language-related or literature courses; b) then, in exchange for agreeing to the interview, the students will be able to have tutoring assistance with one of their Spanish course papers; c) finally, apart from students’ questions on their paper, the Investigator will cover other issues on the paper concerning the linguistic choices made by the student. These interviews will constitute further data for the dissertation.

All the subject protection rights that were valid in the previous protocol still hold for this new protocol. Participants’ identities will be suppressed in the transcripts of this interview by the use of nicknames. No clippings of audio material will be played to people other than the investigators above unless the box below is checked.

☐ I understand that by checking (✓) this box I give permission for clippings of my audio material to be shown at the defense of this prospective dissertation and at conferences. By not checking this box (just leave it blank), my audio material will just be transcribed, coded and used as part of the research data; therefore, no clippings will be displayed to others. In either case, I will be given a nickname and information concerning my real identity will be suppressed.

3. Discomforts and Risks: There are no known discomforts or risks to participating in this study. The participants’ identities will be unknown to people other than the Principal Investigator. Participants can withdraw from this study at any time by sending an email to mxy159@psu.edu expressing that purpose. All data will be kept in a locked file in the Principal Investigator’s office, at 342 N Burrowes Bldg. Once the data has been entered into the pool, the original data will be destroyed. The only individuals who will have access to data before they are erased are the Dissertation Director (Dr. James Lantolf), and the Principal Investigator. It is anticipated that all data will be transcribed and coded by the end of Spring 2005. The recordings will be erased by no later than the end of Spring 2005 unless the participant has given permission to his/her clippings for conferences.

4. Benefits:
   a. The benefits to participants: participants will have had the opportunity to learn with an innovative learning approach to Foreign Languages, to gain enhanced understanding of language learning, and to contribute to a worthwhile research endeavor focused on improving the quality of Foreign Language and Literature education in general. They will also have a chance to reflect about and improve their paper.
b. The benefits to society include the possibility of casting more light on an innovative literacy-based way of teaching foreign languages. This study may have curricular applications that may solve the split between the language and the literature programs in Foreign Language Departments.

5. **Duration/Time**: The follow-up interview may take between one and 2 hours per participant.

6. **Statement of Confidentiality**: Your participation in this research is confidential. To make sure your participation is confidential, all information pertaining to you will be given a nickname and code number, and only the persons in charge can match names with codes and nicknames. No clippings of the audio material will be displayed unless you give your permission by checking the box in point # 2. The Office for Research Protections and the Social Science Institutional Review Board (IRB) may review records related to this project.

7. **Right to Ask Questions**: Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Penn State’s Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775.

8. **Compensation**: No monetary or academic compensation will be received from participating in this study. However, the participants may benefit from the chance to ask questions regarding to a working paper from a Spanish-related course.

9. **Voluntary Participation**: Participation is voluntary. Participants can withdraw from the study at any time. You are free to stop participating in the research at any time by notifying Carmen Yáñez Prieto at mxy159@psu.edu. You are also free to decline to answer any specific questions without penalty. This project is not connected to your grade of any course that you might be taken in any way.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

___________________________________  ___________________
Participant Signature                  Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

___________________________________  ___________________
Investigator Signature                 Date
Appendix W

Composition grading criteria

Each section is worth 25 points, and each of the items within each section is worth 5 points.

This is a holistic grading criteria guide that explains what each grade for all the sections:

25 pts= A= 100% = an excellent attempt at being coherent, perfect match between form and meaning, effort to explore new aspects of language, excellent reflections, no missing parts in this assignment.

21 pts= B= 84% = good effort at being coherent but there's some room for improvement, some linguistic problems persist despite discussion/ comments, some risks were taken but there is room for more creativeness, good reflections, no missing parts in this assignment, more changes should have taken place.

15 pts= D= 60% problems with any of the sections below persist, no substantial changes have been made to improve the composition, there is no significant reflection, parts of the assignment are missing.

10- 0 pts= F some minimal work has been done but the requirements of the task have not been fulfilled.

TEXTUALITY AND COHERENCE ____________ pts/ 25 pts

1. The genre (type of text) of this composition matches its meaning, form and communicative purpose
2. The student has done the analysis of the coherence system in his/ her composition
3. Seems to be aware of how ideas relate and connect in his/ her composition
4. Has used sentence punctuation meaningfully.
5. Has used paragraph punctuation (breakdown of paragraphs) and distribution of ideas in a meaningful way.

LANGUAGE, FORM, AND MEANING ____________ pts/ 25 pts

1. There is a match between the linguistic forms used and their effect/ consequences on meaning.
2. The student has corrected the mistakes that were dealt with during the composition interview
3. Has corrected other mistakes that were simply marked in his/ her draft/s on his/ her own.
During the composition process, the student has tried to self-correct as many mistakes as s/he could on his/ her own, especially mistakes that were related to areas such as agreement, spelling, verb formation, and others that can be found by the use of a spell checker, a dictionary, a conjugator, etc. The student is making an effort to gain more and more autonomy in the writing process.

The student has made a good contextualized analysis of his/ her mistakes in the composition learning log.

**CREATIVITY ____________pts/ 25 pts**

1. The student has presented a good number of these strategies in the log, and has provided the context for them too.
2. Has made an effort to present the content in an interesting way.
3. Has taken risks to explore the expressive potential of language and to move from what s/he already was able to do with language.
4. These strategies have been used effectively and meaningfully in accordance with the genre at hand.
5. When these strategies were not effective or did not work completely, the student made changes and adapted these strategies to make them work in Spanish (for example, metaphors).

**REFLEXION AND ACTIVITY ____________pts/ 25 pts**

1. The student has been conscientious with all the different parts of this writing process and has shown that s/he is trying to do each part in a way that has meaning to him/ her rather than just to complete the assignment.
2. There is evidence in the whole composition process that the student is trying to be more reflective and aware of language and writing.
3. The student has made an effort to discern which aspects of language are similar in both English and Spanish, and which differ in both languages.
4. The student has written good and useful reflection comments on this composition learning log (what new things s/he has learned, what s/he needs to improve).
5. The student has done and self-corrected an exercise based on what s/he needed more practice with.

**COMMENTS**

**TOTAL GRADE ____________pts/ 100 pts**
Appendix X

Composition log (LOG) questions

X.1 Composition 1 log (LOG1) questions

Take into account that your grade will depend on how much you show that you have learned by doing the different phases of this composition. For activities 2) through 6) you can take examples from any of your drafts. You can handwrite this log. However, there are parts of it where you may want to copy and paste parts of your drafts.

1) Analyze the structure of your composition (use the last draft):
   a) Summarize in one short sentence what the central idea of your composition is or the main idea you have tried to get across.
   b) On one of the margins, next to each paragraph, write what the central point/purpose in that paragraph is.
   c) What is the relationship between each of the paragraphs? Is the connection made clear by the flow of ideas (internal coherence) or by some kind of transitional phrase or linking word (external coherence)? Comment on this. If the latter is the case, underline this phrase or word. Use # where there is no coherence and ^ where there is.
   d) Now turn to the sentences within each paragraph. Highlight the central point or theme in each sentence. Is there external/internal coherence from one sentence to the next? Comment on this. If there is external coherence, underline this phrase or word. Use # where there is no coherence and ^ where there is on the margins.
   e) Analyze the effect of the first sentence of your composition.
   f) Analyze the closure of your composition.
   g) Does the structure of your composition match the purpose of your composition and its central idea? Comment on this.
   h) Fix the problems that you see as a result of this analysis. You don’t need to type changes and print out another copy, just use a pen of a different color from your printer’s ink. Explain the changes in a separate piece of paper.

2) Comment on the strategies used in your composition to make the story sound more literary, interesting, entertaining (for example, specific metaphors, specific instances of vocabulary, repetition, etc …). IMPORTANT: include (cut and paste from your drafts) the exact words, expressions … that you used. Be specific. Comment each case: 1) Does it work in Spanish? 2) Did you have to make adjustments or changes? 3) What was the effect/meaning created?

3) Correct, comment, and explain at least 10 errors in your composition. Copy and paste the whole context (the sentence/s involved). You need to formulate the rule/s that was/were broken by these mistakes and correct the mistakes under each of these categories. Please, give specific explanations, avoid just say things such as
“problem with pronoun,” “I have to be more careful with agreement.” Instead, explain in detail what the problem was. Choose different types of errors (vocabulary, verb, agreement, time perspective, etc).

4) **Comment on 5 items of vocabulary that you have learned by writing this composition.** Comment of the meaning and use of each. Also provide grammatical information (noun –masculine, feminine-, verb –reflexive, transitive, preposition required-, etc).

5) **Comment on something new that you have learned that you did not know before.** Give examples from your composition.

6) **Think of a point of grammar or vocabulary that you would like to improve.** Look in the course textbook for a chapter where there is an explanation of that point, write a brief explanation/ summary and do a related activity from the course workbook.

**X.2 Composition 2 log (LOG2) questions**

Take into account that your grade will depend on how much you show that you have learned by doing the different phases of this composition. For activities 2) through 6) you can take examples from any of your drafts. You can handwrite this log. However, there are parts of it where you may want to copy and paste parts of your drafts.

1) **Analyze the structure of your composition:**
   a) What type of genre was your first draft? Why did you decide to write that type of text? What characteristics or features are essential to say that a certain text is that genre? Which of those characteristics were present in your first draft? How did you structure/organize the text in your first draft? What was the main communicative goal/ purpose in your first draft?
   b) What type of genre was your second draft? Why did you decide to write that type of text? What characteristics or features are essential to say that a certain text is that genre? Which of those characteristics were present in your second draft? How did you structure/organize the text in your second draft? What was the main communicative goal/ purpose in your second draft?
   c) What changes have you made with respect to genre in your third draft? Why?
   d) Talk about the different temporal perspectives that you have adopted in your third draft.
   e) After this analysis, do you see any problems in your draft 3? Would you change anything else to improve it?

2) **Comment on the strategies used in your composition to make the story sound more literary, interesting, entertaining (for example, specific metaphors, specific instances of vocabulary, repetition, manipulation of aspect or tenses, etc …).** IMPORTANT: include (cut and paste from your drafts) the exact words, expressions … that you used. Be specific. Comment each case: 1) Does it work in Spanish? 2) Did you have to make adjustments or changes? 3) What was the effect/meaning created?
3) Correct, comment, and explain in depth the 5 most frequent error types in your composition. Each of these errors must be different (for example, 1) problems related with agreement between adjectives/ determiners and nouns; 2) problems related with agreement between subjects and verbs; 3) spelling mistakes; 4) problems with tenses, etc). Give numerous and representative examples from your composition. Copy and paste the whole context (the sentence/s involved). You need to formulate the rule/s that was/ were broken by these mistakes and correct the mistakes under each of these categories. Avoid just say things such as “problem with pronoun,” “I have to be more careful with agreement.” Instead, explain in detail what the problem was. Choose different types of errors (vocabulary, verb, agreement, time perspective, etc).

4) Comment on the items that have an arrow in your draft # 2 (if you haven’t commented about them already), i.e. explain about the meaning intended, why a specific form was used, etc. Note that not all items that have an arrow are necessarily mistakes.

5) Comment on something new that you have learned that you did not know before. Give examples from your composition.

6) Think of a point of grammar or vocabulary that you would like to improve. Look in the course textbook for a chapter where there is an explanation of that point, write a brief explanation/ summary and do a related activity from the course workbook.

Revise/ edit your composition 3 draft # 2 according to the feedback and comments that you have received and produce a third draft.

X.3 Composition 3 log (LOG3) questions

Take into account that your grade will depend on how much you show that you have learned by doing the different phases of this composition. For activities 2) through 6) you can take examples from any of your drafts. You can handwrite this log. However, there are parts of it where you may want to copy and paste parts of your drafts.

1) Analyze the structure of your composition:
   a) What type of genre is your first draft? Why did you decide to write that type of text? What characteristics or features are essential to say that a certain text is that genre? Which of those characteristics were present in your first draft? How did you structure/organize the text in your first draft? What was the main communicative goal/ purpose in your first draft?
   b) What type of genre was your second draft? Why did you decide to write that type of text? What characteristics or features are essential to say that a certain text is that genre? Which of those characteristics were present in your second draft? How did you structure/organize the text in your second draft? What was the main communicative goal/ purpose in your second draft?
c) As we saw with the Nicolás Guillén’s poem written as we pronounced in relaxed contexts, with David González’s poem about the prison (which looks like a dictionary entry) and Benedetti’s *El sexo de los ángeles* (which is a short story that sounds like an expository text), literature is creative not only at the level of the language or the sentence, but also at the level of the text. This creativeness is not in vain, but geared to present us with an image of reality or the world that would change how we think about it. Think about your composition now: is there anything creative that you could do at the level of the text or the genre to be creative? Comment on it and explain the ideas for your composition that you may come up with.

2) Comment on the strategies used in your composition (with especial attention to the meaning/ effect created) in order to
   o make the story sound more literary, interesting, entertaining (for example, specific metaphors, specific instances of vocabulary, repetition, manipulation of aspect or tenses, etc …).
   o present time in a psychological / symbolical way

IMPORTANT: include (cut and paste from your drafts) the exact words, expressions … that you used. Be specific. Comment each case: 1) Does it work in Spanish? 2) Did you have to make adjustments or changes?

3) Correct, comment, and explain in depth the 5 most frequent error types in your composition. Each of these errors must be different (for example, 1) problems related with agreement between adjectives/ determiners and nouns; 2) problems related with agreement between subjects and verbs; 3) spelling mistakes; 4) problems with tenses, etc). Give numerous and representative examples from you composition. Copy and paste the whole context (the sentence/ s involved). You need to formulate the rule/s that was/ were broken by these mistakes and correct the mistakes under each of these categories. Avoid just say things such as “problem with pronoun,” “I have to be more careful with agreement.” Instead, explain in detail what the problem was. Choose different types of errors (vocabulary, verb, agreement, time perspective, etc).

4) Comment on 5 items that have an arrow in your draft # 2 (if you haven’t commented about them already), i.e. explain about the meaning intended, why a specific form was used, etc. Note that not all items that have an arrow are necessarily mistakes.

5) Comment on something new that you have learned that you did not know before. Give examples from your composition.

6) Think of a point of grammar or vocabulary that you would like to improve. Look in the course textbook for a chapter where there is an explanation of that point, write a brief explanation/ summary and do a related activity from the course workbook.
Appendix Y

Sample literature-through-performance exercises formulated for Sergio Vodanovic’s Delantal blanco

“We all exercise this sort of power on a small scale repeatedly in our daily lives. In describing the world, we are often constituting it.”

(Hanks, 1996, p. 237)

Many of the aspects that matter the most in communication are the topics that are paid the least attention to in the standard language classroom (McCarthy and Carter, 1994; Bauer, 2002). Some of these aspects are “adaptability (i.e. the ability to match one’s speech to the person one is talking to), speed of reaction, sensitivity to tone, insight, anticipation; in short, appropriateness” (Maley, 1991 p. 7; italics in the original), which also include nonverbal behavior (Kramsch, 2000, p. 134; Wylie, 1985, pp. 777-778; Allen, 1999).

According to Brauer (2002), a drama-based pedagogy for foreign language offers “unique insights into the multiple levels of communication that comprise the human drama” (p. 138). For example, in performance, there is an opportunity for learners to “embody” the foreign language and its cultures (p. 138), to attend to subtext and be aware of addressivity. Utilizing drama, students may develop the sense of a reader, as they cultivate a feeling of otherness through the embodiment of characters for the sake of which it will be necessary to predict, resist, attune, oppose, and adjust to other characters’ agendas and actions in culturally-sanctioned ways. This is important, since it is difficult to create real readers in the classroom (see Cazden and Lobdell, 1993). (For more information on drama and education, see the movement of Theatre-in-Education...
Delantal blanco [White Apron] is a very appropriate text for a unit on drama because the games in which characters involved perfectly illustrated the point T wanted make in the course about language. It is a one-act play in which the two main characters, a Lady and her Maid, spend the day on the beach. The Lady’s little son plays on the sand and is invisible for the whole play, to the extent that we only know about him from the other two characters’ comments. The child, who is observed by his mother and the Maid, and given free rein by the former, bullies other children to the Lady’s admiration, who interprets this attitude as a sign that social class (conceived of as the feeling of superiority that allows some to walk over others) already runs in the little boy’s veins.

The play presents an extraordinary asymmetry of power between the two female characters through a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic semiotic systems. To start with, the Lady is suntanned and appropriately dressed in a swimming outfit, while the Maid is pale in her humble clothes on top of which she wears a white apron. In addition, the Lady ‘shows’ her alleged ‘high social class’ (whatever that is) by being an aggressive, intrusive and impolite interlocutor. Her sense of entitlement is conveyed by her control of the initiation of turns and the allocation of topics in dialogue. In addition, she uses very direct speech acts, most of which are directives, representatives and expressives. In turn, most of the directives are very personal questions and commands in the imperative form with no summons or elicitations (as if the Maid should be waiting with bated breath for the Lady’s words). The majority of the Lady’s representatives are flippant remarks and crudely biased appreciations of others to which she compares herself, always to her advantage. Her expressives are also loaded with a large measure
of condescension and contempt for others. From the very beginning, the reader finds that the Lady addresses her child with the formal form of the second person singular, which is common even among relatives in certain parts of Latin-America, such as Colombia and Peru. In contrast, the Lady uses a less deferential informal form of the second person singular to address her Maid. This together with the lack of vocatives, and any type of summons to elicit the domestic’s attention, clearly establishes a distinct hierarchy in which the young woman is placed at the very bottom.

In the Lady’s construction of the Maid, the former presents the latter as an ungrateful, aggrieved person, by means of defensive statements of negative polarity (such as “no se te paga tan mal, entones” [you’re not so badly paid, then]). In contrast, statements of positive polarity (“entones, se te paga bien” [then, you are well paid]) would have been more appropriate to the Maid’s innocuous, diffident attitude. However, the Lady’s intention is to dictate reality and to put words into the Maid’s mouth, as she expects her life style to be very much coveted. The Lady plays a semiotic game full of pre-emptive statements and ventriloquations in which her classist complexes and her stereotypical views of the Maid insist on pushing the young woman into the role of an unappreciative, starry-eyed young servant who is, ‘understandably’, envious of her magnificent Lady. In turn, the Maid seems somewhat abashed, lost and not really committed to the ‘conversation’ or to the issue of social class. As a result, the Lady does not seem to hold a dialogue with the Maid, but with herself.

In her soliloquy, the Lady presents social class as an inherent, innate characteristic, a feature that runs genetically in families, as a property that cannot be acquired, imitated or concealed. The Lady senses –or even fears- that the Maid may not agree with her from her irresolute, sometimes slightly opposing, and, most of the time, uncommitted answers and silences. The Lady seems particularly irritated at the same
time as amused with the Maid’s liking of Cinderella-like stories from gossip magazines, as the former feels that the plots of these stories contradict her classist ideas.

The conversation turns to the attires of people at the beach. Determined to amuse herself at any cost and to show evidence for her ideas on social class, the Lady thinks of a game involving an exchange of roles. She proposes that she and the Maid exchange attires, arguing that she wants to know “what the world looks like from an apron.” Although the Maid is uncomfortable and reluctant to the idea of exchanging attires, she feels nonchalant and expansive as soon as she gets on the Lady’s clothes. The Maid appropriates the Lady’s discourse to the amusement of the latter for some time, but soon enough the Lady starts to feel insulted and threatened when the Maid gets too involved in the “game.”

In the end, there is an explosive argument between the Lady and the Maid, who is not disposed to abandon her new role. People intervene in the turmoil and do not doubt for a second the idea that the Maid is the Lady, and vice versa. The Lady is thought of as a mentally disturbed Maid and carried away by the group of observers. As she sees her oppressor being taken away by the crowd, the Maid, now the legitimate Lady, listens to a Gentleman’s reflections on the consequences of the spread of Communism and his trust in the fact that the Establishment will always be in order. At the end, the Maid is alone, still acting like the Lady and talking to the Lady’s child as if he were her own son. The play finishes with an image of perfect domestic order.

The social hierarchies have been completely reversed in the simplest of manners and nobody has even noticed, not even the one who is genetically related to the real Lady, the little boy. In the end, social class was just a construction elaborated with semiotic codes: a way of engaging with the world and a perspective habituated by a language game, attires, a certain demeanor, a white apron and nothing to do with genes,
blood, family, innate qualities, or any other natural category. In the end, the gentleman was right: despite of Communism, the Establishment would remain the same. The institution of social class would survive the exchange of aprons and discourses between Ladies and Maids. As it appears, the palliation of an unfair social situation does not depend upon its reversal. It does not depend on the oppressed daydreaming on becoming the oppressor, or on the oppressed appropriating the oppressors’ instruments against themselves and others.

I wanted students to consider how language traps us into invisible worlds and allows us to participate in games. As in the play, language gives us the tools to construct our own and others’ identities, to make somebody appear guilty or innocent, envious or indifferent, to accept or change positions in hierarchies, to consent or resist oppression, to enslave or liberate our human fellows.

**Exercise 1: A silent scenario: constructing a classist self without words.**

This improvisation forms part of a scenario (based on Di Pietro, 1987). For this activity, the class would have been divided in two groups. Each group would have to represent a role described in a card:
THE LADY: It is 1956, Chile. You are an extremely classist Lady from the ‘upper class’. You are a completely full-of-yourself, patronizing person. You are always sneering at those that you believe to be inferior to you, who are the vast majority of humans. Right now, you are at the beach with your new Maid and your little son, who is bossing other children around. Your rich husband is doing business in the big city and is not accompanying you on your beach vacation. You are bored, so your only alternative is to entertain yourself with the Maid, whom you find particularly amusing. You think that hearing everything about her life will give you a good laugh and will help you kill your boredom. You cannot help yourself thinking how badly she must envy your superior class. After all, she should be so grateful to you. You need to let her know this and make it clear to her what her place is and will always be; no matter what, you two will never belong to same world. Some things will never change.

THE MAID: It is 1956, Chile. You are a Maid and you are at the beach with your Lady and her little son. The Lady’s husband is working and will be not accompanying her. The little boy is play with other children on the sand. You are new to this job and you still feel a little bit insecure and uncomfortable. You come from a tiny, poor village, and desperately need to keep this job so that you can help your parents and younger siblings economically. The Lady is suntanning now and you feel free to read your magazine. You like magazine stories of people who went from rags to riches. Sometimes you dream that something like that will happen to you. Then, you won’t have to serve others anymore –then maybe others will serve you. Life can change any time! You are extremely shy and you do not like to talk, so you avoid conversations and being on the spot as much as possible.
Members of different groups should not discuss each other’s characters – just as in real life one does not have access to other people’s agendas. After each group reads their own character, they have to decide how to play their role without using language first. All other sorts of props are welcome.

Even if students are not supposed to use words, many other semiotic codes can be deployed, for example, clothes, make-up, hairstyle, accessories, gestures, demeanor, body posture, position of hands, and gaze. How close to someone can one be without invading his/her personal space? How far can one be without appearing to be dismissive, defensive or bashful? How does one indicate that one does not wish to engage in any kind of interaction without appearing to be rude? Does one keep or avoid eye contact? Does one smile? On what occasion? Does one stand or stay seated if the other person is sitting? Does one sit cross-legged and cross-armed if one wants to appear as cooperative? Does one sit on the same imaginary line with the other people, a little bit behind that line, side-by-side, face-to-face, back-to-back? Does one mirror the other person’s movements, move differently, or not move at all? Does one point at all with one’s finger? Does one touch one’s hair, play with some object in one’s hands, or let one’s hands rest on one’s lap? Is one allowed to touch people? Does one touch the other person’s personal objects while they are holding them, for example, a magazine? What if the object has been left close to them? Is there a facial gesture for asking for permission? In this particular scenario, how do asymmetrical relationships of power affect the physical space one occupies with another person? Students have to decide this in a manner that is both culturally and situationally appropriate. In order to do that, each group can resort to the instructor, the internet or informants… But, even if they do not obtain specific information, the educational value in this exercise is to make students
aware that the ways in which we move have meanings that might be interpreted differently in diverse social situations and in other cultures.

After the silent scenario is played in front of the class, each group discusses, first as a group and later as a class, about the other character and tries to find out what her role and her game were about. The group that holds the role that is discussed must not confirm or deny any information to the other group.

**Exercise 2. Playing the scenario with words.** After each team has a non-verbal taste of the other character, the members can use their guesses and expectations to prepare a strategy to address and interact with the other character with words. They can also improve their own character’s performance based on the other group’s impressions and comments. In this scenario, all games, verbal or non-verbal, are allowed. If the Lady group has been able to materialize her intrusiveness through her mien and deportment, now they will have to think of the linguistic ways of reflecting her way of pushing the Maid’s personal limits. Students will have to take into account that the concepts of privacy, intrusiveness and appropriateness are culturally relative (for example, directives in the imperative, interruptions, conversational topics such as politics and religion, the concept of political correctness do not come across the way in different communities). Issues of power can be made manifest also in the dialects chosen by each interlocutor.

**Exercise 3. Discussing the scenario.**

The class should discuss how each character enforced her own agenda, and then how the performance of each role can be improved. For example, students should try to mimic dialects of power and stigmatized dialects. They should also establish a
modality gradient of speech acts in order to be able to select utterances according to the impoliteness or self-effacement that is conveyed.

The instructor should assist the students in discussing a series of issues that are normally overlooked in language courses. Some of these issues are prosody, turn-taking, gestures that complement grammar, etc. Apart from ‘words’, many choices can be made. For example, the students can decide on choices concerning loudness of speech, and interruptions. One can be the dominant interlocutor in a conversation by controlling loudness. For example, by speaking in a lower, calmed voice, one may force the other interlocutor to lower his or her voice or even stop talking altogether to be able to listen (especially, if one continues speaking, thus not supporting or even challenging the other person’s moves). By speaking in a louder tone and continuing to launch (re)opening moves, one can show disregard of the other interlocutor’s turns, and indicate that one’s questions are not real attempts at eliciting any response. Students need to examine specific parts of their scenario and decide how the Lady can show her sense of superiority without expressing that feeling explicitly. That means that students should avoid easy statements such as “I am superior to you, you mean nothing, what you say or think is not important.”

**Exercise 4. Comparing the scenario and the play.** The student should read the first part of the play (up to the point in which the Lady proposes changing attires). Students can discuss a series of questions: How different are the characters in the play with respect to the scenario? What strategies do the Maid and the Lady use to achieve their goals? What strategies can be applied to improve the scenario that students just played? How can the play be improved?
Exercise 5. **Guessing and writing a scenario.** The class is divided into three groups. In each group, there must be students from each of the previous two groups, i.e. Maids and Ladies. T needs to inform students about the Lady’s joke about exchanging attires. The students have to guess what is going to happen now. Each of the three groups will write a scenario that the other two groups will represent: again, one of the other two groups will be the Maid and the other will be the Lady. They can include more characters if necessary.

**Exercise 6. Performing the play and keeping a performance log.** Students should read the whole play. Then they need to read it again more carefully from the point of view of a theatre director. They have to take notes on all the details of an official performance (clothes, hair style, makeup, gestures, bearing, position on stage, emotional script, intonation, attitude, etc). They have to share their notes in order to organize a performance. They will keep a log of the whole process in which they will relate their performing decisions to the text and their interpretation. The purpose is to make this log an interpretational text (as the illustration in the Cortázar’s story or the performance of the poem) that will mediate, enhance and give structure to meaning making processes.

**Exercise 7: Improvisation, parody and collage** (based on Pope, 2002). There is a scene in which the Lady is particularly intrusive and insulting. It is the fragment in which she snatches the Maid’s magazine and starts flipping over its pages to laugh about the pictures of people. The students have the opportunity to intervene in this scene in favor of the Maid or the Lady by impersonating a fictional or real character that can add a differing or supporting perspective on the issue of social class at stake in this
scene. The possibilities are immense and potentially interesting: Jay Gatsby, Maya Angelou, Nelson Mandela, Queen Elizabeth, Jesus Christ, Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Carl Marx, Oprah Winfrey, Rigoberta Menchú... The collage interventions can take place in any genre – from a dising rap to a parable, etc.

**Exercise 8: Analysis of the play.**

The class will discuss a series of analysis questions. Some topics will involve comparing *Delantal Blanco* to works in the student’s L1 that deal with the same or similar topic. The purpose of contrasting *Delantal Blanco* with works in the students’ L1 is to use the learners’ history to establish new meaningful connections with works that are closer to their ZPDs. By doing this, not only do instructors assist students in making meaning of works in the students’ L2, but they also improve the ways in which learners can make meaning of works in their L1. Moreover, culturally relative concepts such as power, social class, politeness, privacy, etc can be discussed.

1. How does the Lady play her ‘class game’ in this one-act play? Explain her linguistic and non-linguistic means. How is class constructed by the Lady and the Maid? Provide concrete linguistic evidence to justify your answers.

2. Compare the discourse of the Lady while she was the Lady, with the Maid pretending to be the Lady. What did the Maid appropriate from the Lady that makes her sound so convincing? Now do the same with the Maid while she was playing Maid and the Lady when she played her servant. Do you think that the Lady relinquished a sense of herself while she was wearing the white apron? If so, at what points in the text? What about the Maid?

3. What do you think that the play teaches about social class?

4. What in your opinion is the message of this play?
5. Why do you think the work is called “Delantal Blanco”? Give this play a different title and explain your choice.

6. Divide into groups and choose two of the topics listed below to write an essay:
   a. Compare the view of Communism in Vodanovic's Delantal Blanco with that in George Orwell's Animal Farm.
   b. Discuss the topic of language and the construction of social class and social identity as you compare Delantal Blanco with two of the following works: i) the movie My Fair Lady or Bernard Shaw’s play Pygmalion; ii) the novel Los Santos Inocentes by Miguel Delibes or the movie of the same title; iii) Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel The Remains of the Day or the movie of the same title; iv) the poem “Mulata” by Afro Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén; v) the code-mixing song “Dame el poder” by Mexican band Molotov.
   c. Discuss the topic of language, power and the construction of truth and reality as you compare Delantal Blanco with one of these three court stories: the contemporary movie Interrogation of Michael Crowe, the classic To Kill a Mockingbird, or Jorge Luis Borges’ short story “Emma Zunz.”
   d. When grammar has a body: gestures, body posture and gaze are not only physical phenomena; they have a metaphorical dimension in languages such as Spanish and English. Discuss the ‘physical script’ of Delantal Blanco in relation to the physical and spatial metaphors in both Maya Angelou’s “Still I Rise” and Miguel Hernández’s “Aceituneros.”
7. Can you think of other literary works, movies, comic strips, jokes, songs, news, scandals, court cases, etc. in English, Spanish or other languages that share similar thematics or techniques to *Delantal Blanco*?

8. Do some research about Sergio Vodanovich's biography. He was a deeply idealist writer, with a preoccupation with ethics, social oppression, hypocrisy and corruption. He was especially concerned about the issue of unemployment in rural areas and the lack of a strong middle social class in Chile, a circumstance in Chilean society that lead to a dated, abysmal division in society between a class of 'masters' and a class of 'servants' in the middle of the twentieth century. What do you think Vodanovic would say about the class’ performance? What do you think that the author would like to change?

9. Read what the critics say about this work [a handout would be given to students with quotes from critics]. What would you have to change in the performance to capture the meanings interpreted in this work by critics? Is there anything that you would accentuate or de-emphasize? How would you do it? What do you think that Sergio Vodanovic would think about the critics’ opinions of his work?

10. Do you agree with the critics? Defend your position (whether you agree or disagree) with examples taken from the play, the performance process and the information that you have about the author and his time.

11. Consider all the possible representations of the performance (an initial version created according to your own interpretation, a second one in light of the author's preoccupations, and a final version that takes account of critics’ opinions). Which version would you prefer to perform and why? (You can mix aspects from different versions).
12. All works, even canonical works, are susceptible of being remade, completely modified, parodied or modernized. Take Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*; there are countless versions of the same theme: an opera version by Charles François Gounod (1867), a ballet adaptation by Sergei Prokofiev (1938), the movie *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) starring Leonardo DiCaprio, to works with similar thematics but reflecting different concerns, such as the antagonism of two gypsy family clans in Lorca’s play *Bodas de Sangre* (1932), and the rivalry between Puerto Ricans and American gangs in *West Side Story* (1961). If you had to create your own version or remake of Vodanovic’s play to reflect a contemporary in your own society, what social preoccupation would you choose? What changes would you have to make in the play to capture that social situation?

13. In light of the discussion of this play (physical and language activities, scenarios, performance, comparison with other works, analysis, content, critique and all possible versions), create a billboard advertisement of your preferred version of this play. In order to create an effective design, think of the ideology and the concerns of the audience with which you want to connect.

**Exercise 9: Reflection and expansion.** Language games mediate human activity. They make ways of doing, speaking and thinking manifest. Write a list of all the language games in which you or others engage during the day and the activities in which they are embedded. What are the recurrent characteristics of each of these games? How can those language games be resisted?
Appendix Z

Traditional composition criteria

Spanish 100/200 Drafts 1 and 2
Comp # _____ Draft # ________

SEE COMMENTS ON BACK
for ____________________

FOCUS/CONTENT

Excellent to Very Good
25 26 27 28
Content strongly reflects the rhetorical techniques required for this essay; the writer fully anticipates reader’s questions in selecting information; topic well-thought-out and carefully developed with effective supporting detail; interesting to read.

Good -- Adequate
21 22 23 24
Content shows evidence of the rhetorical techniques required for this essay but requires minor to major revisions; the writer has anticipated most reader questions in selecting information; topic may not be fully explored; development is adequate although some ideas may be incompletely supported or irrelevant; interesting ideas in places.

Fair -- Poor
17 18 19 20
Content reflects little evidence of the rhetorical techniques required for this essay; the writer has anticipated few reader needs in selecting information; topic explored only superficially and inadequately developed with many ideas unsupported or irrelevant.

Needs a lot of work
16
Content reflects no evidence of the rhetorical techniques required for this essay; writer shows no awareness of reader needs; ideas superficial or uninteresting or inappropriate for assigned writing.

ORGANIZATION

Excellent -- Very Good
16 17 18
The writer has fully anticipated reader needs in organizing and presenting information; clear thesis; flow of ideas fluid and logical; a pleasure to read.

Good -- Adequate
13 14 15
The writer has anticipated most reader needs in organizing and presenting information; main ideas stand out, but sequencing of ideas sometimes choppy or disconnected; reader may sometimes have difficulty following flow of ideas.

Fair -- Poor
11 12
The writer has anticipated few reader needs in organizing and presenting information; ideas frequently confused and/or disconnected, with logical breakdowns apparent; reader frequently has difficulty "getting the point" of message as communicate

Needs a lot of work
10
The writer shows no awareness of reader needs; logical organization absent.
VOCABULARY

Excellent -- Very Good
language choices appropriate for topic, purpose and reader; excellent use of idioms and precise, colorful vocabulary; little or no evidence of English interference

Good -- Adequate
language choices usually appropriate for topic, purpose and reader; vocabulary accurate but somewhat limited; some errors or interference present but meaning rarely obscured

Fair -- Poor
language choices sometimes inappropriate for topic, purpose and reader; vocabulary very limited, with overuse of imprecise or vague terms; English interference evident, particularly with respect to idioms; meaning often confused or obscured

Needs a lot of work
language choices often inappropriate for topic, purpose and reader range of vocabulary extremely limited; English interference frequent

GRAMMAR -- Part A

Excellent -- Very Good
wide range of structures with few or no significant errors (e.g., sentence structure)

Good -- Adequate
adequate range of structures, but little variety; tends to overuse simple constructions; both significant and minor errors (e.g., agreement) present, but meaning seldom obscured

Fair -- Poor
limited range of structures with control of grammar uncertain; errors frequent, especially when more complex constructions attempted; meaning often confused or obscured

Needs a lot of work
frequent and persistent errors of basic grammar and sentence construction; meaning blocked as text dominated by errors

GRAMMAR -- Part B

Excellent -- Very Good
No errors with respect AGR, ART, SP, P, S/E

Good -- Adequate
Less than a total of 5 errors with respect AGR, ART, SP, P, S/E

Fair -- Poor
Less than a total of 10 errors with respect AGR, ART, SP, P, S/E

Needs a lot of work
Eleven errors or more with respect AGR, ART, SP, P, S/E

TOTAL POINTS __________

100
*Failure to write on assigned topic and follow all directions as stated in the syllabus and by the instructor will result in a grade of zero for the first draft of the composition and the student will default on receiving the instructor’s comments and input.
Rev. 02/04/02
VITA

Maria-del-Carmen Yanez-Prieto

Education


-M.A. with Honors in Foreign Languages (Spanish) and Pedagogy (2000), University of Delaware.

-M.A. (Licenciatura) in English Philology (1998), University of Granada (Spain).

-M.A. (Licenciatura) in Translation and Interpretation (1996), University of Granada (Spain).

Publications


Positions


-Instructor: courses of beginning and intermediate Spanish and two advanced courses (Advanced Composition, Teaching of Romance Languages) (2000-2005), the Pennsylvania State University.


Awards and distinctions
