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Carrera de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa

Modern literature in reading and writing II at the University of Cuenca

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Resumen

Este trabajo investigativo estudia las opiniones y percepciones de estudiantes y profesores en de la carrera de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa en la Universidad de Cuenca. La investigación se enfoca en la relevancia del uso de la literatura, a través del género de cuentos cortos como herramienta para mejorar el desempeño general de los estudiantes, haciendo hincapié en la capacidad lectora y comprensiva. La información recolectada contiene tanto datos tanto cuantitativos como cualitativos con el fin de obtener resultados precisos. Los resultados muestran una gran aceptación tanto del uso de cuentos cortos como de la literatura en general en de las clases de inglés gracias a sus varios beneficios desde una perspectiva de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Basándose en los resultados presentados, una compilación literaria de cuentos cortos junto con actividades es propuesta como un complemento para ser usado en las clases de Reading and Writing II.

Palabras clave: cuentos cortos, literatura, capacidad lectora y comprensiva, aprendizaje de ingles



Abstract

This research studied opinions and perceptions of English language major students and teachers at the University of Cuenca on the relevance of literature usage, through the genre of short stories, as a tool to improve the overall performance of students, with an emphasis on reading comprehension. The information collected has both quantitative and qualitative origins in order to obtain accurate results. The findings showed a high acceptance of short story usage in English classes, as well as the use of literature in general, thanks to its many benefits. These benefits were found in both the learning process and in the teaching process. Based on the presented results, a literary compilation of short stories along with activities is proposed as a complement to be used in Reading and Writing II classes.

Keywords: short stories, literature, reading and comprehension, English learning



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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my parents, Manolo and Cumanda, my sister Nataly, and my fiancé Jorge Andres, whose constant support since the first day of the major has been a fundamental pillar to achieve this goal.

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Introduction

The following project seeks to analyze the different perspectives of both students and teachers on the role that literature plays in the English learning process. At the end of the project, a literary compilation is proposed as a tool to improve student performance, mainly reading comprehension. The compilation consists of five different short stories, including thriller, horror, and history-related stories that were selected based on teachers' and students' ideas. Accompanying each story, activities grounded on both Lima's (2009) approaches, specifically the Language-Based and Reader-Response methods, as well as the opinions of the interviewed teachers, were created and added to the compilation.

This project is developed in six different chapters. The first chapter encompasses the context and the motivations behind the research by showing the statement of the problem, justification, background, objectives, and finally the research question. The second chapter presents a set of theories and concepts related to the use of literature, how it entered the educational field, and its benefits, along with a discussion of short stories and their characteristics. A number of studies related to the field of literature and short stories are presented in the literature review in chapter three. The fourth chapter outlines the complete methodology of the study, including the nature of the study and its design, information about the participants, and the instruments and process of collecting and analyzing data. The fifth chapter presents the results and offers interpretations, as well as an explanation of the literary compilation and how the selection process took place. Finally, chapter six offers conclusions and recommendations. Additionally, it should be noted that the literary compilation is presented as a booklet that accompanies this study separately and is not included as an appendix.



Chapter I

Description of the Study

1. 1 Statement of the Problem

This paper focuses on enhancing student performance by using a compilation of modern literature with short stories. Each story will come with a set of activities that will evaluate students' comprehension. While improving their overall performance, learners will enhance their reading comprehension ability. Furthermore, students will gain a great amount of literary knowledge that will eventually be useful as future language teachers.

This compilation is aimed at students of Reading and Writing II during the second semester of the English Language Major. The subject is divided into two different perspectives: one related to the writing segment, and the other related to the reading section, which is of course the part this paper focuses on.

The reading section of this course emphasizes the development of comprehension skills in order for students to perform better. For this reason, a compilation of literary works will fit perfectly in this subject. Since this paper is targeted to students of Reading and Writing II, it is accurate to say that they will have some previous knowledge from the earlier courses that will be useful to understand each of the stories in the compilation.

Each story will be selected based on both teacher and student interests. Teachers' opinions are vital since they are the ones who know how each story will be useful for the students, while students' interests are important in order for them to engage with the reading and take advantage of each of the stories (Jimenez, 2007).

The idea of creating a literary compilation arises from an existing problem in the English major. In terms of our context, it is correct to say that literature does not appear in the early stages of the major (Universidad de Cuenca, 2014). As a result, the benefits provided by literature are not perceived from the beginning of the major.



Therefore, using literature in the earliest levels of the major will provide the students the knowledge they need in order to be more prepared and competent.

1. 2 Justification and Background

Literature is nothing but the purest form of language. Despite what is commonly believed, literature not only helps to enhance reading skills, but also the overall performance of learners. Its presence inside an L2 environment is necessary since it provides a vast amount of advantages for students, such as enrichment in their vocabulary and cultural knowledge, comprehension skills, reliable material, among others (Parab, 2007).

Teachers should avoid imparting language as an isolated structure. As mentioned before, literature is completely linked with culture, and it is necessary for teachers to take advantage of that connection. Given the fact that literature is not made specifically for the purpose of language learning, it provides students with authentic material that serves as a tool for their study. Literary works are an open door to other cultures and societies that are shown through different times, authors, characters, etc. Thus, it is the most accurate material when trying to connect the learners with the places where the target language is spoken (Hişmanoğlu, 2005).

Literature also aids the improvement of our language skills. Students easily absorb any form of written structure while they read and become more conscious about the target language and how it has to be used. Murat Hişmanoğlu (2005) stated “Students also become more productive and adventurous when they begin to perceive the richness and diversity of the language that they are trying to learn and begin to make use of some of that potential themselves” (p. 55).

The usage of diverse forms of literature to teach a language is a gratifying experience for both the teacher and the students. Matthew Lynley (2011) confirmed “Diverse forms of literature presented to students can engage and appeal to a vast range of learner types and



levels of appreciation” (para. 4). As teachers, it is necessary to help students reach this advanced stage in which they are engaged with literature and that they realize its importance.

Moreover, for students to commit to literature, it is important to provide them with literary works that have some sort of meaning for them, or for which they feel attraction. Teachers have to take into consideration students’ opinions and interests, and they need to be aware that learners’ points of view are important to contemplate if they want students to engage with literature. Lyney (2011) mentioned “An understanding of students’ literature and relevance of the literature to the individuals concerned plays an important role in the success of the literature's appeal. Appealing literature directly impacts language and literacy development” (para. 7).

The sooner students are in contact with literature, the sooner they will benefit from it. Consequently, it is not wrong to say that teachers should begin using literature from the earliest stages of the language learning process. A classroom in which a teacher uses literature has a dynamic and motivating environment that creates a permanent effect for students to develop their performance (Koutsompou, 2015).

To see a clearer connection between language learning and literature, it is important to provide activities that could help enhance students’ comprehension (Koutsompou, 2015, p. 4). Pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities are useful to observe how students’ performance develops in each level.

In the nine semesters of the English major at the University of Cuenca, four Literature classes are offered distributed between semesters four, five, six and seven (Universidad de Cuenca, 2014). Based on all these points, the significance of creating a compilation of modern literature that could be used during the Reading and Writing II classes has a remarkable importance in the English Language Major. In this way, students will be in touch



with literature earlier, and as a result, they will enhance their reading and comprehension skills as well as their overall performance.

1.3 Research Question

What are the most suitable short stories and activities to enhance reading and comprehension skills in second semester students?

1.4 Objectives

General Objective

To analyze how pieces of modern literature may enhance reading and comprehension skills in the second semester at the University of Cuenca.

Specific Objectives

- To analyze the importance of literature in the classroom environment.
- To choose short stories based on teachers' and students' perceptions and interests.
- To develop reading activities based on the selected short stories to enhance reading and comprehension skills.



Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

2.1 What is Literature? A Constant Discussion

Finding a single definition of literature has become an impossible task over time. Meyer (1997) affirmed that one reason is that the definition would always depend on the person who tries to define it and the purpose of the definition. For instance, a lawyer and a novel writer would not have the same idea of what literature is, since neither of them would define it using the same approach. However, over time, several concepts about what literature is and what it represents have become accepted.

One of the most known and used definition of literature is the one provided by Moody, who stated that “literature is like an umbrella term giving information on every business” (as cited in Türker, 1991, p. 299). The concept behind this statement is that literature serves as a tool to express ideas and notions on any matter, such as literature for medicine, literature for construction, and so on (Türker, 1991). Another important but general definition of literature was given by Alexander Baird, who affirmed that “Literature is the use of language effectively in suitable conditions” (Baird, 1969, p. 203).

Additionally, since literature is the purest form of a language, there are of course definitions from a linguistic point of view. For example: The Collins English Dictionary defines literature as “all of such writings considered as having permanent value, excellence of form, great effect, etc.”

Beyond these definitions, there are other types of concepts that place literature on a more artistic and aesthetic level. For instance, according to Boas, “literature is the record of experience interpreted by personality that behind every book which the race has preserved is a human being’s eager effort to give life meaning, to create beauty, to express vivid emotions and ideas, to make men aware of themselves and the life they lead” (as cited in Koutsompou,



2015, p.74). Another great definition from an artistic perspective stated that literature's purpose is to awaken thoughts and feelings, and that literary texts have a fuller and deeper meaning than any other regular written piece (Risdianto, n.d.).

As stated above, the conception of literature will always vary according to the purpose for which it is being used. Taking into account the purpose of this paper, there are certain characteristics that can be outlined based on the definitions given above. To begin with, any literary work must use correct and accurate language without grammatical or semantic errors, since it should be an example of good language. Furthermore, literature should always appeal to our emotions and imagination, and try to give the reader an increased awareness of different topics.

2.2 The Place of Literature in the English Learning Process

2.2.1 A Brief Historical Review

Literature, as an instrument to teach a language, has increased and decreased in importance over the years, depending on the different educational approaches that have influenced the language learning process.

During the beginning of the 20th century, studying a language through literature was based on a canonical approach. Literature was only considered a source of language correctness, full of syntax and rules from which students could learn. Teachers only focused on helping students master the grammatical aspect of the language. Throughout this time, the content of the literacy text used was not relevant (Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000).

In the middle of the 20th century, the Grammar-Translation method waned in importance as well as influence in the language learning sector. Following this disuse, literary texts were no longer seen as effective tools for learning a language. In fact, during the 1940s, literature practically disappeared from the language curriculum (Carter, 2007).



Throughout the 1960s, scholars began to speak again about the use of literature as a valid instrument for teaching a language. In 1963, for the first time in a while during an educational conference, the use of literature to improve communicative competence was highlighted by some scholars. Nevertheless, there were still many others who remained skeptical over the use of literature again. As a result, there were not many changes until much later (Bobkina, 2014).

According to Stern, real changes started to appear in the mid-80s, when students' lack of basic English skills worried both teachers and families (as cited in Bobkina, 2014). After this, support for the use of literature as a teaching technique grew. In fact, Hess stated that once literature started being used again, people saw it as unique tool that provided a reading experience that no other text could give (as cited in Bobkina, 2014, p. 249).

Currently, the importance of literature is backed up by many linguists and authors who have corroborated on this idea by supporting its use in the classroom. For instance, Daniel Schwarz pointed out that literature should be considered a cross-disciplinary tool that, when used correctly, could increase students' desire to read (as cited in Romero, 2016).

Furthermore, the perception of literature in the classroom has shifted towards a more positive attitude. In fact, the idea of teaching non-linguistic aspects of a language is well-accepted by teachers. Kramsh (2013) agreed by saying that "teaching about the history, the institutions, the literature and the arts of the target country embeds the target language in the reassuring continuity of a national community that gives it meaning and value" (p. 63).

2.2.2 Benefits of Using Literature in the Classroom

Many teachers who think using literature in the classroom is time-consuming are not aware of the advantages that it could have on their students' performance (Collie & Slater, 1987). In fact, once literature gained an important role in the language teaching



process, scholars started to tout literature as a tool to help enhance all language skills (as cited in Bobkina, 2014, p. 249).

In 1987, Collie and Slater published a book that is still considered a masterpiece for using literature in the classroom. This manuscript contains an outline explaining why it is relevant and significant to use literature when teaching a language. The authors classified the relevance into four categories: valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, personal involvement, and language enrichment (Collie & Slater, 1987).

Valuable Authentic Material

One of the challenges that language teachers face is finding authentic material for the classroom. Literature, per se, has authenticity as a main characteristic; this means that it normally uses real language made for native speakers within an authentic context. This helps students gain genuine exposure to the target language. As Aghagolzadeh and Tajabadi (2012) explained:

the use of literary texts as authentic material, from a language teaching point of view, will be

Likewise, Hişmanoğlu (2005) also mentioned that when using literature, students would usually deal with language that was meant for native speakers. As a result, they would become more familiar with different linguistic structures normally used in the target language.

Cultural Enrichment

Language itself has always been part of culture, expressing people's thoughts and ideas. Thanks to language, it is easier to explore different folk aspects of civilizations worldwide. Based on this idea, it can be concluded that when learning a language, one is inevitably culturally enriched (Collie & Slater, 1987). Koutsompou (2015) pointed out that when students are exposed to literature, they open their minds to accept and learn about different beliefs, behaviors, and emotions (p. 75).



Usually a language is linked to a specific country or territory, and one of the motivations for language learning is to travel and use the language in a real way. One way to accomplish this is by becoming involved in a society where the language is permanently used. By reading a culture's literary works, one can learn about it before visiting (Collie & Slater, 1987, p. 6). As Hişmanoğlu (2005) confirmed, "literature is perhaps best regarded as a complement to other materials used to develop the foreign learner's understanding into the country whose language is being learned" (p. 55).

Personal Involvement

Teachers have an important role to play when choosing which literary works students should read. Fostering students' interest in literature could help them not only get more involved with a specific genre or author, but also develop a great desire to read, which could push students to seek more advanced and complex books (Hişmanoğlu, 2005). Collie and Slater (1987) agreed with the previous idea by stating that:

When a novel, play or short story is explored over a period of time, the result is that the reader begins to feel what happens as events unfold; he or she feels close to certain characters and shares their emotional responses. The language becomes 'transparent' – the fiction summons the whole person into its own world. (p. 7)

Language Enrichment

The development of the four main skills when learning a language (writing, speaking, reading, and listening) should always be considered, regardless of the method or technique used, since they are the base of the linguistic learning process. Literature can serve as a path for learners to cope with the need to improve any language skill and enhance language performance (Aghagolzadeh & Tajabadi, 2015).



The advantages of using literary texts for linguistic purposes goes beyond learning new vocabulary. Collie and Slater (1987) acknowledged that rich literary texts offer context from which students can make connections. Thanks to these connections, any lexical or syntactical item could become more memorable in students' minds. Furthermore, by frequently reading, students gain a greater understanding of different written language features, for instance, how to connect ideas, the functions of each sentence, etc.

2.2.3 Difficulties of Using Literature

Like any other teaching tool, literature has its weaknesses when used in the language learning process. Bobkina (2014) stated that “the most common problem is language itself, more specifically, syntax and vocabulary. Literary vocabulary and grammatical structures are often considered to be too complicated, making reading a highly demanding activity” (p. 251).

Furthermore, McKay said that there are some cultural implications in literary texts that can be counterproductive. If a student is an inexperienced reader, all the cultural aspects can cause frustration and comprehension difficulties (as cited in Bobkina, 2014).

Lastly, according to Lima (2005), the intuitive analysis, which normally focuses on the reader's natural reaction to any text, can be considered a worrying aspect. The problem lies in the fact that students' intuition cannot always be trusted since it can be manipulated by the text itself and the narrators' opinion.

Although certain authors talk about the disadvantages of the use of literature, the aforementioned benefits become more relevant and more evident. That is why literature has achieved greater importance in the process of teaching a language.

2.2.4 Literature and Reading Comprehension

Since this project focuses on the creation of a literary compilation that may help enhance students' reading comprehension ability, it is essential to point out what reading



comprehension is. Like literature, there are several definitions of reading comprehension; however, there are two that are worth mentioning within this paper.

The first concept of reading comprehension is the one given by Kintsch (1998), who stated that:

Reading comprehension is the process of making meaning from text. The goal, therefore, is to gain an overall understanding of what is described in the text rather than to obtain meaning from isolated words or sentences. In understanding read text information, children develop mental models, or representations of meaning of the text ideas during the reading process. (as cited in Woolley, 2011, pp. 15-16)

Moreover, Horowitz (2014) elaborated that reading comprehension is a complex process that relies upon many factors working together simultaneously. The reader must be aware of the vocabulary and structures without losing focus on total comprehension while the reading occurs. To achieve these guidelines, strategies must be applied that connect the readers' expectations with the selected reading (Horowitz, 2014).

Literature plays an important role when trying to incorporate all the features mentioned in the previous definitions. By reading various literary texts, learners encounter different literary experiences. For example, students increase their metacognitive consciousness, improve their comprehension, start using their previous knowledge to create mental images, improve their skills to analyze and synthesize, etc. This shows the significant link that exists between literature and reading comprehension ability (Ahmet, 2014).

2.2.5 Main Approaches to Teaching Literature

Trying to find a unique approach that fits everybody's expectations and interests is a never-ending task. Normally, each teacher has some priorities in mind related to what is considered more important when teaching English. For instance, some educators prefer to highlight grammar and syntax, while others prefer to focus attention on stylistic features and



socio-cultural aspects. For this reason, there are plenty of methods on how to use literature. Yet, only a few are considered relevant and significant in the EFL/ESL environment (Bobkina, 2014).

In 1984, Wellek and Warren developed an approach divided into two different groups: an intrinsic and extrinsic method. The intrinsic method tries to focus on all the linguistic aspects that literature can offer, such as grammar structures, meanings, register, and style. Alternatively, the extrinsic method concentrates more on the features of the literary text itself. In this method, the historical, philosophical, and aesthetic aspects are the key to teaching a language through literature (as cited in Bobkina, 2014).

Following Wellek and Warren, in 1989 Maley also articulated an approach divided into two methods. First was the critical method, which should be used only with advanced language students, since its focal point of study is the literariness of texts. This means that teachers try to motivate students to understand literary texts beyond the linguistic characteristics. Aspects such as motivation, characterization, and author background are essential to consider in this method. In contrast, the stylistic method aims at helping beginner and intermediate students engage with literary language by encouraging them to analyze and describe what they read (Khatib, 2011).

Another important approach is the one provided by Carter and Long in 1991. This approach was specifically developed for the use of literature in the EFL environment, while the others were conceived for any language learning process (as cited in Bobkina, 2014). This approach is subdivided into three specific models. One is the cultural model, which tries to spread all the cultural ideas linked to the target language. Next is the language model, which emphasizes only the language provided by the literary texts. Lastly, the personal growth model is the first model that remarks on the importance of reader experience as a key to increase language awareness (as cited in Bobkina, 2014).



Finally, the most current approach is the one developed by My Van in 2009, which elucidated a more thorough and meticulous vision of the purpose of using literature (as cited in Bobkina, 2014). This approach, unlike the others, is segmented into six different methods: New Criticism, Structuralism, Stylistics, Critical Literacy, Reader-Response and Language-Based.

The first method, new criticism, refers to how meaning is found solely inside the text itself, without taking into account reader's feelings or the author's intention. Consequently, the reader's role is to find the meaning based on analysis of literary elements, such as rhyme, meter, imagery, and theme (My Van, 2009).

Structuralism, which is the second method, sees a literary text as an individual entity, without considering the aesthetic value of literature. It focuses on how specific language structures work, and as in New Criticism, it leaves behind the reader's feelings (My Van, 2009).

Alternatively, Stylistics is very different approach from the previous two. In Stylistics, the emotions and sensitivity of the students towards literature is enhanced based on unconventional language structures that could be found in different genres, specifically in poetry. As a result, students make judgments based on their opinions and emotions. Sometimes this could be a little problematic, since students may get a little carried away by their perceptions and miss the main meaning of the literary text (My Van, 2009).

The fourth method, called Critical Literacy, does not come from an educational perspective; however, it could fit by combining critical thinking and language. The idea behind this approach is that in literature there is a great amount of language that expresses what society thinks and represents. The role of a teacher is to clarify language doubts without imposing any kind of external opinion about the literary text itself (My Van, 2009).



Likewise, the Reader-Response method is the combination of the reader's role by considering his thoughts and emotions and an oriented reading process with encouraging activities that demonstrate students' interpretation of each literary piece (My Van, 2009). Additionally, Rosenblatt talked about this combination as a "transactional relationship" between the reader and the text by explaining that:

The events that take place in a literary work occur at a particular time and place, and different readers react to these events in different ways, depending on their unique interests and

Lastly, the Language-Based method is grounded in students' awareness of the language in each text. This method involves a greater amount of responses and experiences with the literary text than any other approach. As a result, it is the most accurate one when using literature in an EFL environment. One important characteristic of the Language-Based method is the variety of activities that a student must complete before, during, and after reading. This approach responds to the different language needs that the readers may have (My Van, 2009).

Due to the fact that My Van's approach is the most current and detailed one, the short story activities in the literature compilation will be based on the Language-Based and the Reader-Response approach.

2.3 Short Stories

2.3.1 Definition and Characteristics

Edgar Allan Poe, one of the greatest proponents of the short story, defined it as "a narrative that can be read at one sitting of from one-half hour to two hours, and that is limited to a certain unique or single effect, to which every detail is subordinate" (as cited in Abrams, 1999, p. 286). Complementing this definition, Hansen (2016) added that, in a short story, there is a fluid plot with no background and just a few significant scenes.



When talking about the features of short stories, there are four elements required for this designation. First, a specific length that goes from 1,200 to 20,000 words. Next, a subject, which normally is related to a main theme that can go from daily activities to more complex topics. Additionally, a limited number of characters are found in this genre, which improves the flow of the plot. Finally, a short story usually initiates *in media res*, which is Latin for *in the middle of things*; this refers to the fact that there is no kind of background for the plot (Wimmer, n.d.). *The Tell-Tale Heart* is a great example of a short story that starts in the middle of events. Edgar Allan Poe (1843) begins the text by writing:

It's true! Yes, I have been ill, very ill. But why do you say that I have lost control of my mind, why do you say that I am mad? Can you not see that I have full control of my mind? (p. 1).

This story does not start with background information about the plot or characters. As seen above, the story begins with a discussion of which the reader has no prior knowledge. Yet, as the reader progresses with the story, the setting and context become clearer.

2.3.2 Benefits of Short Stories as a Literary Tool for the English Learning Process

Short stories, as a literary genre, serve as a great instrument to improve students' language skills. Abu and Farrah (2016) confirmed that encouraging students to be in touch with short stories can benefit them in a multi-disciplinary way.

One of the main reasons to use short stories is the length of each literary text. For students who are not used to reading, starting with a text that is not very long can be less overwhelming (Pardede, 2011). Furthermore, their length is an advantage for teachers as well, given the fact that the analysis and discussion must be done in only a few sessions (Abu & Farrah, 2016).



Another important benefit is grounded in the fact that a short story can be used at any level or age, from basic to advanced, or from child to adult. Not all literary genres have this advantage; for example, to read a poem, it is necessary to have a great knowledge of figurative language (Pardede, 2011).

Lastly, there is an extensive collection from which teachers can select appropriate short stories that fit the students' needs and aptitudes (Pardede, 2011). Moreover, since one main characteristic of a short story is to focus its plot on one specific theme, it serves as a tool to encourage students' critical thinking skills (Abu & Farrah, 2016).

Chapter III

Literature Review

3. 1 Introduction

The objective of this bibliographical review is to analyze the latest studies that have been conducted on the use of literature within the English language educational process. The first studies show the different perspectives of teachers when trying to include literature in the classroom. Moreover, studies that focus on students' perceptions and opinions are also discussed.



To show more empirical results, studies on how the use of short stories benefit students are also included. Each study focuses on improving a different aspect, such as refining students' cultural awareness, enhancing their writing skills through the Reading for Writing model, and finally improving their reading and comprehension abilities.

Finally, this literature review also analyzes the role of literature within Latin American realities, such as Chile and Costa Rica. These studies analyze two important aspects: the use of literature in different universities to show its importance and relevance, and the difficulties and limitations that teachers face when implementing literature in the class.

3. 2 Analyzed Studies

As already stated in the theoretical framework, literature and reading skills go hand in hand. Based on this idea, Anja Bakken and Ragnhild Lund (2018), presented in their study reasons why Norwegian secondary teachers use reading practices in their English classes.

The participants were 18 English teachers from six lower secondary schools. All the respondents were deliberately selected to include a diverse group in terms of age, experience, educational background, and gender. The data was collected based on semi-structured interviews and class observations of some of the participants. Teachers were asked to bring any kind of relevant material that they thought could be useful for the study.

Based on the nature of the group, one of the first findings was that each teacher has a different perspective when choosing a literary text. The authors stated that:

It appears that an educational background and interest in history or literature, for instance, make some of the teachers prioritize these aspects in their English teaching. Teachers who are also teachers of Norwegian seem more inclined towards text analysis. In addition, the teachers' own reading experiences might matter. (p. 82)



Despite the differences between the participants, the results demonstrated two justifications for students to read. The first is that teachers linked literary texts with the improvement of language skills and reading comprehension. The authors confirmed that “texts are sources of input for vocabulary building and as starting points for oral and, to some degree, written work” (p. 86). The second reason is that reading serves as a source of information for students to be in touch with different English-speaking countries. Thanks to literary texts, they increased their cultural awareness, proving one of the aspects of Collie and Slater’s (1987) theory that has been previously mentioned.

A similar study was conducted by Ahmet (2014), in which the reasons why university English teachers use or do not use literature for reading comprehension activities were studied. The participants were 140 non-English language teachers from four state and four private universities in Turkey.

In order to collect information, the author used a five-Likert-scale questionnaire to extract all the needed data. The questionnaire went from one to five, with one signifying ‘totally agree’ and five ‘totally disagree’. The interrogations were based on the two research questions of the study: ‘Why do teachers use literature or literary works in their reading classes?’, and ‘Why do teachers use few or no literary works in their reading classes?’

To answer the first question, the author explained that the results showed that “ELT Teachers are not contented with the reading activities in the course books, that is, they do not think reading comprehension activities are sufficient for improving reading comprehension skills” (p. 70). Based on this premise, teachers start to use real literary texts to close the gap that exists in the course books.

Furthermore, participants also considered literature a multi-disciplinary tool that could enhance students’ skills. The author stated that “participants believe that literature raises students’ language awareness, develops students’ interpretative abilities, sparks curiosity,



helps students become more productive and creative, stimulates students' language acquisition, and helps students to be more actively involved intellectually and emotionally in learning English" (p. 71).

Additionally, Ahmet (2014) explained why some teachers do not use enough literature in their reading classes. The first reason was because students need background literary knowledge to start reading texts. A second reason was linked to the difficulty of reading authentic literature. The author confirmed this idea by saying that "the perception of literary works to be linguistically difficult and therefore demotivating for the average student appears as another reason why teachers are disinclined to use literature" (p. 71). The final reasons were connected to problems inside the educational system, such as: class time, number of students, and curriculum barriers.

These two articles clearly show the different challenges that teachers face when using literature as an English teaching tool for reading skills. However, students are the ones who will be benefited or harmed by its use. For this reason, learners also play an important role when using literature in EFL classes.

Bloemert, Paran, Jansen and Grift (2017) directed a study about students' perceptions of literature in EFL classes. The main focus of this research was to listen to students and understand their insights about literature usage. The authors selected 15 Dutch schools in the northern regions, with a total of 635 participating students from 15 to 17 years old. To collect the data, researchers used only one open question: What do you think are the benefits of EFL literature lessons? The reason why the authors used this method was due to the number of participants; an open-ended question was easier than having personal interviews. Each student was given 10 minutes to answer the question in bullet points.

Some of the participants gave a lot of answers that addressed a range of elements. For example, one student mentioned six benefits of using literature: "social development,



general knowledge, English history, language development, development of understanding texts of a higher level, improving reading skills” (Bloemert et al., 2017, p. 6). Others gave a more direct and concrete answer, such as the following: “you see how grammar which you encounter in the course book is more concrete and how it is used in real life” (Bloemert et al., 2017, p. 6). Furthermore, there were also some negative answers to the use of literature. For instance, one student said that students will not get interested in learning about authors and books, and that they will eventually forget about them.

Despite all of these variations in the answers, the results showed that the majority of participants saw literature as an important element in their English classes. Most of the participants (74%) considered the literary component complementary to language skills development. Yet, they still acknowledged that literature has some other positive effects in their classes. The authors confirmed this by saying that “the students indicated that they primarily see the EFL literature component as a means of improving their language skills but they also, in varying degrees, indicated benefits related to the context, reader and text approach” (Bloemert et al., 2017, p. 17).

In addition, Pardede (2010) completed a research study on the perceived needs and attitudes of sixth-semester English major students at the University of Kristen in Indonesia when using short stories in their classes. This work was based on the idea that literature has gained an important role in the language teaching process. The author confirmed this premise by stating that “the use of literature has recently been resurrected as an essential component of English language programs, including English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL)” (Pardede, 2010, p. 1). Thus, to gather the data, the author used a 25-item questionnaire based on three different elements: interest, perception, and perceived needs. In addition, open-ended interviews were also conducted, with the intention of understanding participants’ points of view.



The results showed that around 80% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the use of short stories in their classes. One of the participants explained that “we can see short stories as the most complete learning materials. A single short story could be used to enrich vocabulary, to develop reading skill, to study new expressions for conversation, and many others” (Pardede, 2010, p. 10). Since the participants were future English teachers, the author explained that some of them even felt that a teacher candidate must know how to correctly use literary resources to help learn a language.

Along with discovering the interests and perceptions of both students and teachers involved in English instruction, it is even more relevant and significant to talk about empirical results when using literature in the classroom, especially short stories.

Abu and Farrah (2016) conducted a study that evaluated how the use of short stories enhances students’ language performance. The participants were second and fourth English major students from the University of Hebron in the West Bank. The selected short story was *Thanks Ma’am* by Langston Hughes, published in 1958. To determine if this literary text helped improve student performance, the authors divided the study into three periods with different activities: pre-reading, while reading and post-reading.

In the pre-reading stage, the authors gave students some background information about elements related to the selected short story, such as author, title, and cultural aspects. Based on these features, some questions were asked in order to facilitate a discussion. The second phase, while-reading, was aimed at students becoming more actively engaged with the story. The authors confirmed that:

During the reading phase, students were asked to pay attention to language and grammatical rules, the style of the writer and the new vocabularies. The activities were suggested to further develop students’ comprehension ability. While reading



stage included activities pertinent to the theme, grammar, vocabulary and idioms.

(Abu & Farrah, 2016, p. 20)

In the last stage, post-reading, the authors used a variety of tools to check students' comprehension and critical thinking. Re-writing the story, writing about the theme, and discussing students' reactions were some of the activities that the participants had to perform.

The results revealed that the participants had a positive response both when reading the short story and when doing the activities. In addition, based on students' answers, this study confirmed that students enhanced their overall performance. The authors ended their research by stating the following:

The authenticity of the literary work, the richness of the language, the scope of imagination and creativity and the process of critical thinking, are just a few advantages for using literary genres in the language classroom. Therefore, incorporation of short stories in the EFL texts will equip students with the necessary language skills and thus increasing their language proficiency to survive in the targeted language. (Abu & Farrah, 2016, p.26)

Similar to this previous study, Ceylan (2016) carried out research on the benefits that short stories had in students at Bulent Ecevit University. The participants were forty first year students in the English Language and Literature department who were taking Reading Skills I as a mandatory class. Instead of using the usual course book for reading, the author used fifteen different short stories throughout the semester, including *Overcoat* by Nikolai Gogol, *Araby* by James Joyce and *The Necklace* by Guy de Maupassant.

At the end of the semester, the author collected data by using a questionnaire where the participants explained how short stories helped them to enhance their performance. All the questions were asked in a way that the participants could reflect



on their own knowledge. The results showed that almost unanimously, students confirmed that reading short stories during a whole semester helped them to improve their understanding not only of the language, but also of their critical thinking.

The use of literature in EFL teaching, as already explained, can help to improve the general ability and proficiency of students. However, thanks to all its advantages, literary texts, such as short stories, can also help to improve a specific aspect of language learning.

Nasirahmadia, Madarsarab and Aghdamc (2014) performed a research study on the connection between culture, literature, and language learning. This study is grounded in the fact that teaching culture has a great impact on students who are learning a second language. The authors highlighted four main reasons to teach culture: the inseparable nature of language and culture, its benefit of offering higher-order thinking, its (integrative) motivational benefits, and developing intercultural competence.

Fourteen students from an Iranian language institute were assigned into two different classes. One was referred to as the experimental group, who were given short stories from *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, while the other class, referred to as the control group, were not given the mentioned short stories.

In order to collect data, the authors applied a large number of activities to the experimental group only. Some activities were selected to analyze participants' reading skills, such as general questions on the board (to improve students' skimming ability), period of silent reading (to analyze the gist of the story), and detailed questions on the board (to improve students' scanning ability). Other activities were related to language proficiency, for example, grammatical points and language expressions found in the text. Lastly, a general discussion between experimental group participants and the teacher took place, with the



objective of analyzing students' critical thinking. At the end, all of the students had to take the final exam of the English course.

The results revealed that students from the experimental group achieved higher grades compared to the control group. This premise confirmed the idea that culturally-loaded literary texts serve as a great tool to improve English skills. In fact, the authors confirmed that the experimental group, as a side effect, improved their speaking fluency and their confidence.

Similar to the above mentioned study, Bartan (2017) carried out research on how reading short stories could potentially enhance writing skills. The whole scheme was based on the Reading for Writing model, which is an adaptation of the Talk for Writing model by Corbett (2013).

The participants were seventy-nine students from the seventh grade in a private primary school in Ankara, Turkey. Forty-eight of the participants were part of the experimental group, while the remaining thirty-one were part of the control group. Based on a survey given to three experienced children's English teachers, seven different short stories were selected: *A Mouthful*, *Just a Pigeon*, *Hairy*, *Umbrella Man*, *The Sound of Annie's Silence*, *Mouse*, and *Me and My Cat*.

During the process, both groups kept using the course book, with the difference that the experimental group was also exposed to the Reading for Writing model. This last group read the selected short stories and performed different activities related to them. Finally, they were encouraged to write their own independent short story. At the end of the research, all students took a test to evaluate their writing skills.

The results revealed that students from the experimental group had better writing skills in terms of language, content, organization, and communicative achievement in comparison to the participants from the control group. Towards the end, the author suggested



that the Reading for Writing model should be used inside the schools' curricula since it has proven its efficiency.

These last two articles demonstrate how the use of short stories can benefit a specific aspect, such as the ability to write, or how the cultural aspect is related to the language learning process. Beyond that, it is more than relevant to also demonstrate the relationship between this literary genre and reading comprehension capacity.

In 2013, Pourkalthor and Kohan performed a study on how short stories can develop students' reading comprehension. The authors began their study by expressing that "Proficient readers do not read word by word to get the meaning, but they comprehend the text as a whole" (p. 55).

The participants were forty Persian adults, ranging from age 18 to 24. All of them were enrolled in an advanced English course at the Kish Institute at the Islamic Azad University in Iran. Like one the previously mentioned studies, the authors divided the participants into experimental and control groups. All of the participants took a reading comprehension pre-test selected from a TOEFL book, and the results showed almost no difference between the two groups. After this first stage, only the participants of the experimental group were exposed, during the whole semester, to short stories and activities from the book "Modern Short Stories in English" by Robert J. Dixon. At the end of the course, all the participants took an identical post-test that consisted of five different reading passages.

The results showed that there was a significant difference between the grades of the experimental group compared to the control group. The authors concluded that their research actually proved their hypothesis that students' reading comprehension ability can improve through the use of short stories for a period of time.



Making a compilation of all the articles already mentioned, it is easy to see how in different countries the use of literature has significant importance. However, it is a bit challenging to find studies that show the use of literature within the Ecuadorian context. Luckily, there are studies done in other Latin American countries that have a similar context and reality to Ecuador's.

Gabriela Romero (2016) analyzed the role that literature had in eight English programs from eight different universities in Santiago de Chile. All the programs and universities had to be accredited by the CNA (Comision Nacional de Acreditacion) for at least four years in order to be part of this research.

In order to get a broader perspective of the subject, the author chose participants that belonged to three different groups: seven program directors, seven literature teachers, and eighty-four students enrolled in the English programs of the participating universities.

Depending on the group, an anonymous survey was conducted with each participant to obtain the necessary information. The surveys handed to program directors and English teachers included close-ended questions as well as open-ended questions, related to the role of literature in their classes, programs, and universities. On the other hand, the students' survey consisted of closed questions, with options provided, about their perceptions of the literature usage as English major students, as well as its relevance for them as future English teachers.

There were various important findings based on the surveys. The author expressed the first important finding by stating that "I can see that there is a consensus among the majority of the participants in these surveys that literature plays an important role both for the linguistic development and the development of critical and creative thinking" (Romero, 2016, p. 101).



Additionally, students believed that literature is necessary knowledge for them as future English teachers. However, teachers believed that the number of literature courses offered in their universities was not sufficient to cover all the literary knowledge that students may need later on, contrary to what the directors stated. At the end, the author suggested that “more courses should be offered in order to have enough time to properly teach students how to carry out analyses that also pay close attention to the intrinsic values of the literary work” (Romero, 2016, p. 102).

To complement this study, Araya et al. (2017) carried out a study on the weaknesses and strengths of teachers’ academic training when using literature for EFL classes in Costa Rica. The goal of this research study was to analyze the current reality of English teachers from different high schools. The participants were thirty-six English teachers, ranging from 20 to 50 years old, with different educational background; some of them had only a Bachelor’s degree, while others had a Master’s degree.

Surveys and interviews were used as tools to obtain data. First, structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted, which served as instruments to identify participants’ socio-demographic information, teaching experience, and perceptions about the implementation of literature in the class. Afterward, surveys with sixty-nine questions were completed in order to obtain a deeper knowledge of the participant’s methodology, issues, and perceptions about the syllabus.

According to the results, the authors expressed that:

An average of 79% of teachers believed that Costa Rican TESOL and EFL majors should offer mandatory courses on U.S. literature, poetry, drama, British literature and reading comprehension, but teachers also warned that this academic background knowledge is insufficient to fulfill the expectations regarding the implementation of the English literature syllabus. Even though 79% of teachers believed that the English



literature courses they took at university were important, 88.6% think that more teaching courses need to be offered if they are to meet their professional and academic needs (Araya, et al., 2017, p. 141).

This means that the participants did not feel trained enough to teach English literature, even with an English Bachelor's degree. Additionally, teachers felt that there was a gap between their training as teachers and the use of literature in the curriculum.

The relevance of these last two articles lies in the fact that the same problems and weaknesses, revealed by these Latin American authors, can be found in our Ecuadorian context. The idea that English major students are not well prepared in terms of literary knowledge is not an unknown reality.

3. 3 Conclusion

All the articles presented within this literature review relate in one way or another to the use of literature within English classes, either as a foreign language or as a second language. Showing the opinions and perceptions of both students and teachers provides a clearer picture of the role that literature plays.

Likewise, analyzing the results of the use of short stories serves to emphasize that their usage benefits students in different ways, making more distinction in the connection between literature and reading comprehension ability. Finally, analyzing the use of literature in Latin American demonstrates a reality close to the Ecuadorian context.



Chapter IV

Methodology

4. 1. Research Approach and Design

In this study, a mixed method approach was used to meet the previously stated objectives and research question. The reason why this type of approach was chosen is based on the fact that the data needed for this study has both a quantitative and a qualitative origin. For a clearer understanding, Kelle explains that:

A mixed method is the combination of different qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and data analysis in one empirical research project... it can be used to gain a fuller picture and deeper understanding of the investigated phenomenon by



relating complementary findings to each other which result from the use of methods from the different methodological traditions of qualitative and quantitative research. (as cited in Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2017, p. 119)

In addition to this approach, this study has an exploratory design. According to Manerikar and Manerikar (2014), an exploratory research “usually, provides greater understanding of a concept or crystallizes a problem. Exploratory research is initial research conducted to clarify and define the nature of a problem” (p.95). Based on this definition, it is easy to label this study as exploratory since it seeks to have a greater understanding of literature usage, especially short stories, in the EFL classroom.

4. 2 Setting

The entire study was carried out in the English language major of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Cuenca. This major seeks to teach the English language to students who are studying to be future educators of this foreign language. In its curriculum, there are subjects that respond to the different linguistic skills that students need to know (Universidad de Cuenca, 2014). Since this study is directly linked to reading ability, the class of Reading and Comprehension II was selected as the main setting.

4. 3 Participants

The participants of this study were both professors and students of the English language major at the University of Cuenca. To gain more information about each of them, participants were divided into two different groups.

4. 3. 1. Students

English major students from the second semester were selected to be participants of this study. The reason these students were chosen was based on their enrollment in the Reading and Writing II class. Since this project is based on the use of literature, the aforementioned subject was the one that most closely fit the goal of this study. In addition,



for students to be able to enroll in the target subject, they had to first pass Reading and Writing I, which meant they had prior knowledge of both writing and reading.

A total of 29 students were part of the study. The students' age varied from 18 to 24, with only one being 24 years old. Only four males were enrolled in this class, while the rest of the participants were females.

4. 3. 2. Teachers

All five teachers who participated in this study are part of the English major, with the exception of one who is a former full-time teacher and now works at the major only as a substitute teacher. Nevertheless, all participants have been involved in teaching classes that are related in different ways to the use of literature such as Reading and Writing, Masterpieces, Short Stories, and Contemporary Literature.

The ages of the participants were very diverse and ranged from 29 to 60 years old. Three of them were women and the other two were men. All participants had at least a master's degree, and although all degrees were related to education, not all had a direct link to English.

4. 4. Methods and Data Collection

As previously stated, this study follows a mixed-method methodology; for this reason, the resources were aimed at obtaining both quantitative and qualitative information. The instruments used in this study were created from scratch and designed to fit correctly with the two different groups of participants. For the group of teachers, a semi-structured interview was used, while for the group of students, a survey with a Likert scale was used. Additionally, extensive bibliographical research was conducted to obtain information about the target topic.

4. 4. 1. Qualitative Data Collection

Bibliographical Research



In order to demonstrate the role that literature plays in the foreign language educational process, an extensive document review was carried out. Theories and concepts related to the subject were investigated and used in this paper. Moreover, studies that demonstrate the advantages and problems of the use of literature for both teachers and students were cited to provide a more empirical perspective on the subject.

Semi – Structured Interview

The information that teachers provided helped to understand their perceptions, opinions, and experiences about literature usage, especially short stories, within their classes, and how important they consider them to be. Based on this search, a semi-structured interview was developed to obtain all the necessary information. All the interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed (see appendix B and C).

The primary benefit of using a semi-structured interview is freedom between the interviewer and the interviewee to be able to modify the interview depending on the answers given (Doyle, 2018). For this reason, a guide with eight premises and questions was used as an outline for conducting the interview.

The first premise was related to the participants' background information, such as their age and degrees. The second and third questions were related to the importance of literature for teachers, and their experiences when using it in classes. The next premise was for teachers to explain the relationship between reading comprehension and literature. The three following questions were all related to the use of short stories, while the final premise was an open-ended request for participants to add any other important information they felt it was relevant for the study.

4. 4. 2. Quantitative Data Collection

Six Likert Scale Survey



The survey was aimed at obtaining information about students' interests as readers in order to better choose a variety of short stories that they would like to read. Likewise, their opinions about the use of literature to improve their reading skills and overall performance was also obtained.

A Likert-scale interview with six possible answers was prepared (see appendix D). Within each survey there were three different groups of statements, for a total of twelve. The first group was made up of 4 statements about the role that literature plays in their learning. The second group consisted of 3 statements related to the characteristics of short stories. Finally, the last group with 5 statements made references to the reading preferences of the students. For each statement, the students checked one of the six possible answers: strongly disagree, disagree, disagree to a certain extent, agree to a certain extent, agree, and strongly agree.

4. 5. Data Analysis

Since each instrument in the study has either a qualitative or quantitative nature, different processes were used to analyze the information obtained.

Semi-structured Interview

To analyze the qualitative information of this study, content analysis was used. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) stated that this type of analysis is “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p.1278).

Kent Löfgren (2013) explained how to properly analyze data for qualitative interviews step by step. The author included seven steps, each with an explanation to achieve correct coding analysis of the information. The steps are the following: reading the transcripts



carefully, labeling relevant pieces, create codes themes or patterns and categorize them, label the most important categories and their connections, create a hierarchy among the categories, and lastly write conclusions and results. The reason these steps have been mentioned is because they were followed in the analysis of the semi-structured interviews.

Six Likert Scale Survey

As previously explained, the students' survey was divided into three different groups. The reason for this division was grounded on the idea of analyzing each group separately and thus obtaining precise results on each group. Both the first and the second group (literature relevance and short stories) were examined in the same way, while the third group (students' preferences) was analyzed differently.

Before analyzing each group of the survey, a database was created where all the answers of each statement for each group were transcribed using Microsoft Excel 2010. In addition, a value was assigned to every option of the survey: 1 (*strongly disagree*), 2 (*disagree*), 3 (*disagree to a certain extent*), 4 (*agree to a certain extent*), 5 (*agree*), and 6 (*strongly agree*).

When analyzing the first two groups, a frequency table was used. Leahy (2004) stated that "a frequency table displays frequencies and/or percents of the response items" (p. 8). The table in the study was made to obtain information about the trend of agreement in a general way among all the statements of each group in the form of percentages. By analyzing the information in this way, students' perspectives on the relevance of literature within their learning, and on the use of short stories, was obtained.

However, when analyzing the last group, a different process was used. During this analysis, each statement was examined separately, and then, by using cross multiplication, a simple percentage chart was used to obtain information about what category



of short stories students preferred the most. The categories in the survey were: science fiction, romance, history-related, terror, and thriller.

4. 6. Ethical Considerations

All the participants in this study, as previously indicated, are members of the English major at the University of Cuenca. For this reason, before conducting both interviews and surveys, permission from the Career Director was obtained (see appendix A). The permit gave consent to develop the study among the members of the English major. However, beyond this consent, the involvement of the participants was completely voluntary; this means there was no obligation whatsoever from the major, the students or the teachers. Finally, all the instruments used ensured complete anonymity so that the participants could feel comfortable when performing them.

4. 7. Limitations

In this study, as in any other, there were unavoidable limitations during the development of the research. At the outset, there were only 29 students enrolled in Reading and Writing II. This means that the sample size was not broad enough to give the best outcomes. On top of that, the number of teachers was also small; the reason is that there were not many teachers who had taught those subjects before.



Chapter V

Results

In this chapter the results obtained from the study are presented. The objectives of this research were to analyze the relevance of literature in the EFL / ESL classes, accompanying it with a short story compilation with activities based on the opinions and perceptions of the students and professors of the English major. After having collected and analyzed the information, both qualitatively and quantitatively, these are the results obtained followed by the literary compilation.

5.1 Qualitative Methods

Semi-Structured Interview



The information obtained through the interviews (I) conducted with teachers was subjected to content analysis. Thanks to this analysis, seven important themes were found among the responses of teachers (T): relevance of literature, importance of literary knowledge, link between literature and reading comprehension, reliability of short stories, criteria for selecting short stories, and activities that accompany short stories. Also, some extra but significant information about the current reality of the University of Cuenca English major was identified and added within the results.

Relevance of Literature

According to the majority of the participants, literature in the process of teaching / learning English is essential because it provides students with output that is difficult to achieve in the classroom, as explained by the following participant:

I think that literature is like life. I think it's like a compendium of life, and its different aspects. So if you give literature to your students, they can, they can interact with the characters. They can be like inside the situations, especially in a place like here, where English is a foreign language. So they don't have many opportunities to practice the language. (I.T2)

Furthermore, one of the teachers expressed that literature provides students with a broader perspective, considering the different social and cultural features that exist in all literary texts. In her words:

I think through literature you can get to see a lot of situations, difficult situations of human beings, social issues that teach you, you know, somehow different perspectives, somehow give you elements to become a better teacher. You know I'm talking about social justice; I'm talking about respect for human life, things like that. (I.T3)

Importance of Literary Knowledge



The literary aspect was considered to be important by all participants, since all of them expressed that this type of knowledge is necessary for students who are in the English major, since one day they will be teachers. One of the participants stated |

The importance of the literary aspect of the English language is great and it relies on how well acquainted you wanna be as a teacher with the language you're gonna be teaching. (I.T4)

Likewise, participants also acknowledged that the cultural aspect of any language should be considered when teaching, since it is a vital and inseparable aspect that cannot be taken out when studying a language, as the following teacher stated:

I think any cultural knowledge is important for any English teacher. We are teaching a language, so you get across with all sort of topics when you're teaching literature, it could be a great resource in fact for teaching English. So, besides general facts as books and authors and years, which are sort of historical and all, they of course include cultural knowledge. (I.T3)

Link between Literature and Reading Comprehension

One of the objectives of this study is to identify how literature can improve students' general performance, while emphasizing reading comprehension ability. Fortunately, most of the participants agreed that the link between literature and reading comprehension exists, and that they are interconnected with each other. In other words, when students read, their reading strategies improve, and when they improve, their reading comprehension gets better. As one of the participants expressed:

Well yes, there's definitely a link between developing reading skills and literature. I mean, if you read you develop your literature, your literacy skills and your comprehension increases. (I.T3)



Beyond this, some participants clarified that the link is not only about understanding the language, but that students through literature can understand what the language wants to represent, as the following professor stated:

Well, the link is there for sure. It's not something we cannot say that it doesn't exist. The thing that every time we read we learn something new if we read literature and we read different pieces of literature, will allow our students to have a clear idea of how life is portrayed in a certain piece of literature. Because we tend to, everything that is written and what is important about literature is that literature brings what human life is. So it's a very clear way to relate to what we are as humans and how we can become better as humans. (I.T5)

Reliability of Short Stories

As previously explained, short stories have certain characteristics that make them more suitable than other literary genres when using them in the English classes. Within the survey, teachers were asked their opinion on the implementation of short stories compared to any other literary genre. The first thing that all participants mentioned was that thanks to the length of each short story, it is as easy for students to engage with the text when reading as it is for the teachers to use them in the class. As explained by these two participants:

It is easier, they are easier to use in the class for me because they are shorter and you know we don't have much time to read a long story. (I.T2)

Sometimes, the students, you know it's just a practical thing I've seen they do, the first thing, they look at the book like 'how many pages does it have?' So if it's not that long, they will be more enthusiastic to read, more motivated maybe. (I.T3)



Moreover, the participants also referred to the simplicity that short stories have; this means that they have clear plot development, few characters and uncomplicated situations.

One of the participants summarized this idea by stating:

They're not complicated. They don't have that many characters, and there's usually a beginning, a middle, and an end. (I.T1)

Criteria for selecting Short Stories

The information analyzed in this theme has great relevance, since it will help the selection of short stories that form part of the literary compilation. This theme has two subcategories: selection based on authors, or based on the plot or theme of the short story.

Surprisingly, only one of the five participants talked about the importance of using representative authors when deciding which short story would be presented to the students. In his words:

You have to return the classics. They have shaped the background of the medium, they have in many ways also shaped language, and shaped the modern stories as well [...] if you ask me I would choose Edgar Allen Poe because of his work and his prominence. (I.T4)

The rest of the participants based their responses on the themes that each short story presents in its plot. For them, it is more important to base the selection on what the story tries to convey rather than focusing on who the writer is, regardless if the author is famous or not.

As the following educator stated:

I think for anyone who wants to teach this should include as many themes as possible. Where they just introduce love, loss, life, power, money... through short stories you can provide all these themes in different ways, in different perspective. So I don't think there is only one author or only one type of story but I think that the combination of the short stories should give student a wider perspective of what life really is. (I.T5)



Activities for Short Stories

The last theme found in this content analysis is the different activities that accompany reading, in order to review the students' knowledge and comprehension. The answers of the teachers were the guide to create the activities in the compilation. Additionally, the activities would also be based on My Van's approach (2009), specifically the Reader-Response and Language-Based methods, as mentioned in the theoretical framework.

The first subject mentioned by all the participants was the importance of pre-reading activities, since these give students a clear context and background about what they will read and hopefully engage them with the story. As one of the teachers stated:

Well, in my case, 'cause I'm talking with university students, so we have to place the text in its original background, kind of also way of motivating students to read it, addressing the topics they're gonna be facing with not, you know, without any spoilers I guess, to damage the adventure they're gonna have with the text. (I. T4)

Although all teachers agreed about the use of pre-reading activities, the type of activities mentioned were different. For instance, oral presentations, discussions, and guessing from the title were some of the many activities that fit in the pre-reading section, according to teachers. One teacher explained his personal experience with a pre-reading activity when introducing a short story related to *punk*.

When we have short stories, we do a presentation on punk. Many of students don't really know what punk is, what punk music or what the genre of punk music is. They just think it's just like heavy metal or something; they have no idea. So what we do with that is that we give them a background of what this genre is, where it came from, why it exists, and why do we continue to use it until today, and why do we continue to listen to it until today. But if the students don't know that and they just are reading



something, an article or any short story on punk they're gonna be like I have no connection with this. I don't understand it. (I.T1)

With regard to while-reading activities, most of the participants did not see them as something important; in fact, they only focused on pre-reading and post-reading activities. Yet, one of the teachers mentioned the importance of monitoring students' progress while reading through different tools, such as journals, with the objective of providing students feedback and aid while they read. In her words:

I have asked them to read like every week, you gotta read a certain number of chapters. Now this week a certain number of chapters. What I've done is I've asked them through a journal about their opinions, about their difficulties, to see how it's going [...] to see if I can give them some feedback during the class. (I.T3)

Finally, the participants mentioned the importance of post-reading activities to ensure students' learning and also to identify their shortcomings. In this aspect, the participants not only mentioned a comprehension test, but also talked about oral presentations, short or long writing assignments, and debates where they applied everything they learned. One teacher summarized this idea:

For me, a post reading activity is not necessary an exam. For me a post-reading activity like I mentioned before could be some sort of presentation. It could be a writing topic, a writing assignment where people just sit down and they you know they basically give their thoughts of what they just read or what they just experienced. And they put it, you know, write it down on a piece of paper, and you know, we go from there. (I.T1)

English Major

Even if there were only seven major themes found when performing the content analysis, the teachers' opinions about the major were also considered as something relevant



to mention in this study. When the participants were asked about the amount of literature given in the major, four out of five believed that having four literature classes is more than enough. According to one participant:

So, two years I would say is almost half of your career, so I think that's fine. If they could extend it more, that would be great. To three years, that would be even better. But I think two years is more than enough. Like, if it was less than that, I would say probably not, but I think two years is more than enough. (I.T1)

Most of the participants mentioned the necessity to engage students in further reading outside the classroom, while also motivating teachers to use literature outside the four literature related classes. The two following quotes summarize this idea:

In my opinion, it's enough, but it all depends in the way you approach it. Is enough for a class, but is not enough for a whole life, so you have to approach literature in such a way that you motivate your students to pursue it outside the classroom. (I.T4)

I mean the most input you get from real English... the better. So if teachers can contribute with reading from different perspectives, different classes, with texts, with articles perhaps, related to the class, they have to be related to the classes. (I.T3)

Sadly, participants mentioned that within the new curriculum, literature classes are being reduced to two, and this therefore creates a bigger challenge for teachers when trying to use literature within their classes.

5.1.1. Interpretation

Inasmuch as there are several studies on the use of literature in the EFL classes, the results obtained and shown above can be compared with the results of previous studies where the perceptions and opinions of the participants, both teachers and students, have been analyzed.



Bakken and Lund (2018) conducted a study on why Norwegian secondary teachers use reading practices in their English classes. The study showed that teachers believe it is beneficial for students to read in order to achieve better overall performance and comprehension, as well as knowledge about the culture linked to the target language. The results of their study were identical to those obtained from a part of the semi-structured interview conducted with the teachers, when they were asked about the importance of literary knowledge.

Likewise, the study conducted by Ceylan (2016) on the students' benefits when using short stories, resembled the answers given by teachers when asked about the link between literature and reading comprehension and the use of short stories. Ceylan's results showed that students unanimously felt that after reading short stories through all the semester, they improved their language skills, as well as their critical thinking. These results can be compared to the ones found in the teachers' interview, since they also acknowledged that by using short stories students develop their overall performance while also gaining a better understanding of the themes within any literary text.

To conclude, the results found in the study conducted by Pourkalhor and Kohan (2013) on the use of literature to improve reading comprehension showed that after utilizing short stories, students managed to significantly improve their reading ability. These results bring to mind the answers given by the teachers when asked about the link between literature and reading ability since they affirmed that the connection exists and that thanks to the literature, both the linguistic understanding and the representation of language can be improved.

5.2 Quantitative Methods

Students' Six Likert Scale Survey



The survey presented to the students was divided into three groups. The first group focused on sentences related to the relevance of literature, the second concentrated on the characteristics of short stories, and the last one gauged the preferences of students when selecting a short story.

First Section

Table 1

Students' answers on the first section of the survey

I.LITERATURE						
	1.SD	2.D	3.DCE	4.ACE	5.A	6.SA
1. Literature plays an important role in English language learning.	0	0	1	3	12	13
2. Literature serves as a great tool to enhance reading comprehension.	0	0	0	3	14	12
3. Literature can help enhance student overall performance.	0	0	2	6	16	5
4. Literature should be more relevant in the English major at University of Cuenca.	0	1	1	3	12	12

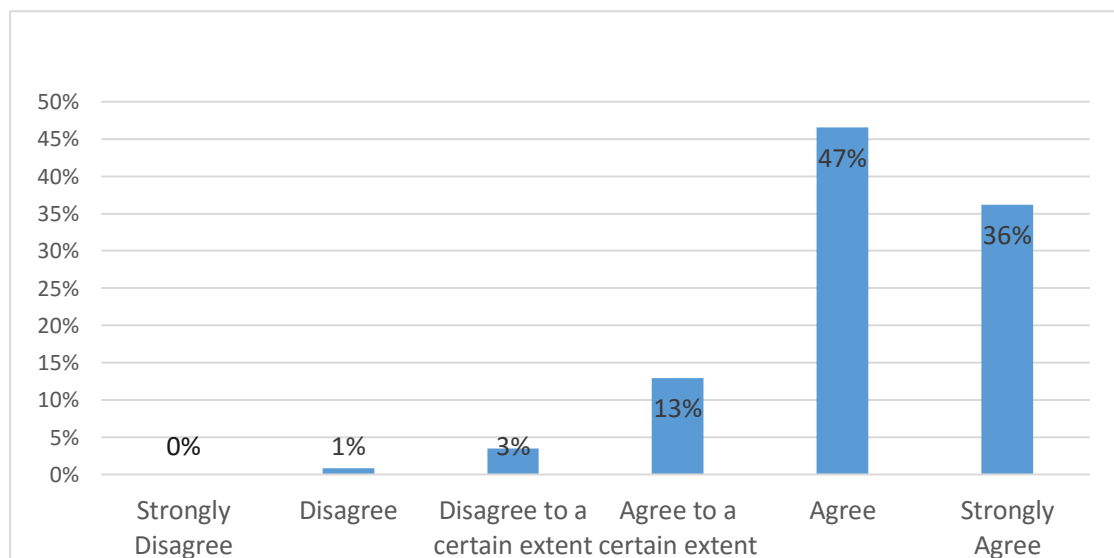




Figure 1. Students' rate of agreement on the relevance of literature.

Table one shows both the statements in the first section of the survey as well as the responses of the students, while figure one shows the results of the aforementioned section. The majority of students either *agreed* (47%) or *strongly agreed* (36%) with the relevance of literature in their preparation as future teachers. Likewise, in figure one, it can be noted that none of the participants responded *disagree* or *strongly disagree* in any of the sentences in this section.

These results indicate that students see literature as a tool to improve not only their reading comprehension, but also their overall performance when learning English. Therefore, its use within the major should be taken into consideration, starting from the lower levels.

Second Group

Table 2

Students' answers on the second section of the survey

	I.SHORT STORIES					
	1.SD	2.D	3.DCE	4.ACE	5.A	6.SA
5. I enjoy reading literary texts that are not too long.	1	0	0	6	13	9



6. I prefer stories with clear themes and plots.	0	0	0	4	11	14
7. I enjoy stories with only a few characters.	2	3	6	7	8	3

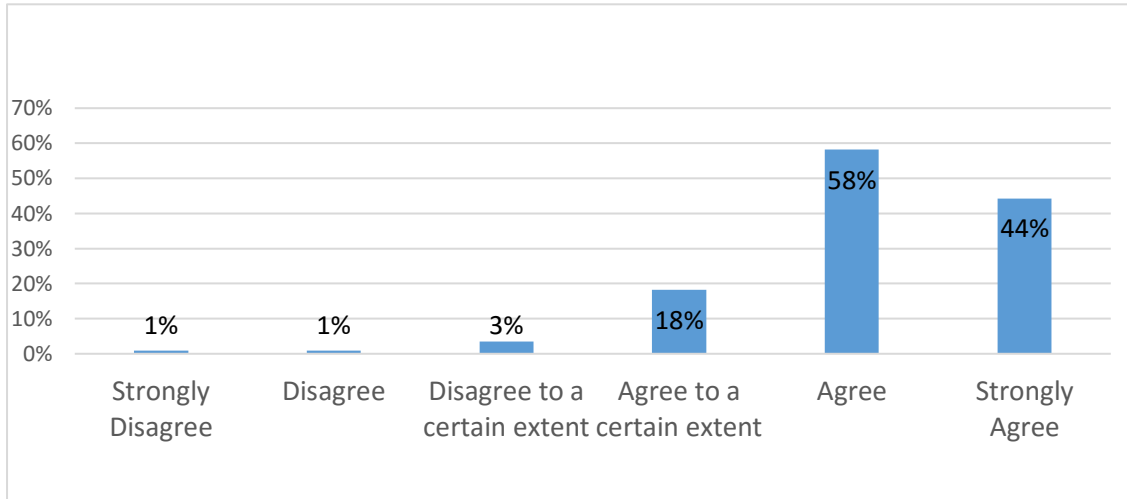


Figure 2. Students' rate of agreement on the use of short stories

The findings of this second section, shown between table two and figure two, indicate whether students like to read literature that has the characteristics of the short story genre or not. According to the findings, a great percentage of students agree (58%) with the idea of reading literature from the short story genre, followed by a high percentage of students who strongly agree (48%). This means that the fact that short stories are not extensive and are full of simplicity, both in their plot and in their characters ends up being appealing to students.

Third Section

Table 3

Students' answers on the third section of the survey

III. PREFERENCES

	1.SD	2.D	3.DCE	4.ACE	5.A	6.SA
8. Thrill	3	2	1	5	12	6
9. Romantic	3	1	5	6	8	6
10. Terror	2	1	2	7	7	10
11. Science fiction	2	2	4	7	6	8
12. History-related	0	1	3	5	12	8

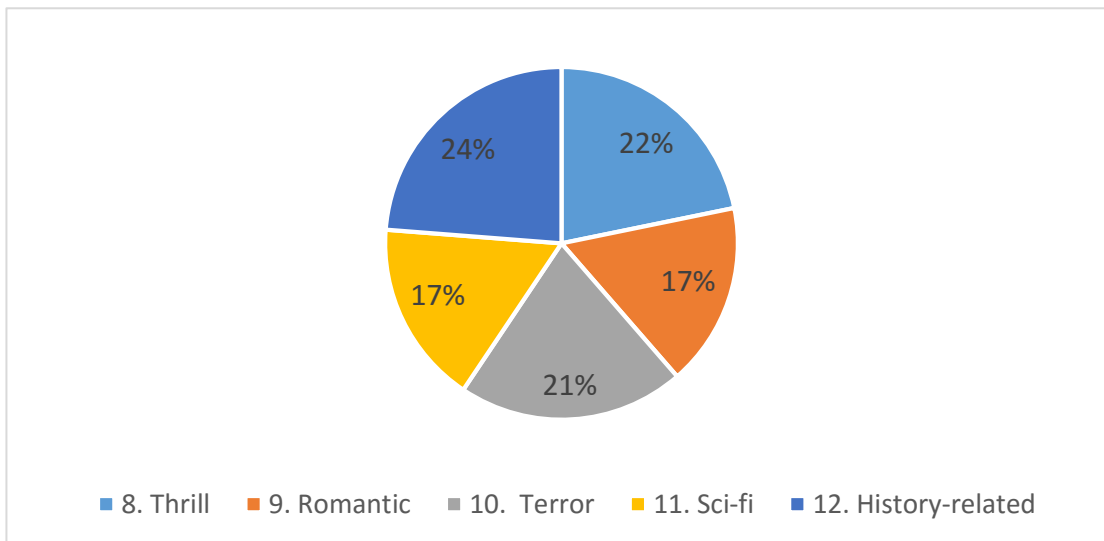


Figure 3.
Students' preferences on the type

of short stories they would rather read.

As explained in the previous chapter, the last section of the survey was analyzed differently. The reason for this difference is based on the fact that, in this section, it was not required to have an analysis as a whole as in the previous sections, but an individual analysis of each statement in order to know which of the five types of short stories students preferred reading. After obtaining answers from students, as shown in table three, they were analyzed in such a way that it was possible to categorize which options were the most selected and which were not. Figure three indicates the following percentages: history-related (24%),



thriller (22%), terror (21%), science fiction (17%), and romantic (17%). The results of this last section have an additional relevance distinct from the others, since these were used when choosing the short stories to be part of the literary compilation.

5.2.2 Discussion

As with the qualitative results, the quantitative results of this study can also be compared with previously conducted studies on the use of literature in English. Once again, many of these studies have had teachers and students from different academic institutions as participants.

Bloemert et al. (2017) directed a study of students' perceptions when using literature in their English classes in the Netherlands. Among one of the most relevant results, it was shown that most students consider literature an advantageous tool, as it can help improve several aspects of their performance. This result parallels what was found within the first section of the survey carried out in this report, which showed that the majority of students either agreed (47%) or strongly agreed (36%) with the relevance of literature when learning English.

Likewise, Romero's (2016) study on the role of literature in Santiago de Chile also showed a great similarity with the first section of the students' survey. In both of the studies, the students were aware of the role that literature has, not only for the benefits it has in their learning and in their skills, but the importance that it has for them as future English teachers.

Lastly, Pardede (2010) conducted a research study on the perceived needs and attitudes of English major students when using short stories in their classes. About 80 percent of the students indicated agreement with the idea of using short stories within their classes, given the different benefits they have. These results are almost identical with those found



within the second part of this study's survey, where most of the students either agreed or strongly agreed with the use of short stories in their classes based on the characteristics that this literary genre possesses.

5.3 Literary Compilation

As described above, this compilation is based on both teacher and student perceptions and opinions. After analyzing the answers given by the students, it was established that two history-related short stories, two thriller short stories, and one terror short story would be chosen. Additionally, only one of the short stories was selected based on the author while the others were based on their plot themes, since the majority of teachers considered themes rather than authors more relevant.

History Related Stories: *An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge* by Ambrose Bierce and *Superman and me* by Sherman Alexie.

Thriller Stories: *The Monkey's Paws* by W. W. Jacobs and *The Life You Save May Be Your Own* by Flannery O'Connor.

Horror Story: *The Black Cat* by Edgar Allan Poe.

The activities that accompany the aforementioned stories seek to involve the criteria and opinions of the students on each part of the reading to achieve a deep understanding and help them through the entire process. Likewise, the activities seek to encourage the development of target language within each skill.

Chapter VI

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion



Based on the results of this study, there are certain implications for the use of literature in the class that deserve to be mentioned and highlighted. First, the findings of this study clearly reflect the importance of the benefits that literature has in the classroom, for both students and teachers in the English major at the University of Cuenca. This outcome clearly agrees with Collie and Slater's (1987) theory in their book *Literature in The Language Classroom*.

Likewise, the results also showed that there is a connection between literature and reading comprehension. This outcome concurs with the ideas expressed by Kintsch and Horowitz about how this connection helps to understand not only the structures of the language but also critical comprehension as well. (1998; 2014)

Lastly, it is important to mention that thanks to short stories' characteristics, such as short length, simplicity, etc., teachers saw them as an authentic and reliable literary tool to be used in English classes (as was reflected on the semi-structured interview). Furthermore, students were also interested in reading literary texts within the genre of short stories due to the characteristics previously mentioned (as was reflected on the six likert scale survey).

6. 2 Recommendations

After finishing this research paper, I have developed some recommendations that could be useful in the future of the field of literature and teaching English. First, I would like to emphasize the importance of taking into account the students' opinions and perceptions when deciding on their learning. This study showed that they are able to make decisions about what they believe can help them to improve their performance in the target language. Thus, when participating and performing in the class, they can feel heard and valued by teachers.

Moreover, this study recapitulates research and theories that prove how beneficial the use of literature is, due to the great number of advantages for students. Based



on this idea, I think that teachers could take these opinions into account and implement literature from the lower levels of the major, since this study showed that second semester students are interested in reading more literary texts, such as short stories.

One of the objectives of this study was the creation of a literary compilation with short stories, which was made based on the answers given by students and teachers in order to be used in Reading and Writing II classes. Along with the short stories, activities that encourage students' critical comprehension were added. As a recommendation, I would like to invite teachers or students to use it so as to enjoy the benefits that accompany it.

As a final recommendation, I would like to refer to the redesign of the English major, since unfortunately the literature classes are reduced to only two, as one of the teachers explained in the interview. For this reason, I would like to invite teachers in this major to incorporate short stories or other literary texts in any classes that involve English teaching. I hope that after having read this project, teachers will consider literature as a great tool to be used in the near future.

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Appendix A

Permission



Aprobado
17 mayo 2018
[Signature]

Cuenca, 17 mayo de 2018

Magíster
Esteban Heras U.
DIRECTOR DE LA CARRERA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA
Presente.

De mi consideración:

Luego de expresarle un cordial saludo solicito a usted, muy comedidamente, el respectivo permiso para que la estudiante MARISOL ESTEFANÍA TORRES PALACIOS con número de cédula 03022163910 alumna del noveno ciclo de la carrera de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa de la Facultad de Filosofía de la Universidad de Cuenca, pueda aplicar su propuesta de titulación: "**Modern Literature in Reading and Writing II Classes at the University of Cuenca**", en la carrera que acertadamente dirige.

La propuesta consiste en aplicar encuestas y entrevistas tanto a estudiantes como a docentes con el propósito de cumplir con su requisito de graduación

Agradeciéndole por la favorable acogida que dé al presente, suscribo,

Atentamente,

[Signature]
Fabían Redas P.
PROFESOR DE LA CARRERA

Appendix B



Teacher' Interview

Semi – structured Interview

1. Teaching background of each participant.
 - a. Age
 - i. 20-30 _____
 - ii. 30-40_____
 - iii. 40-50_____
 - iv. 50-60_____
 - b. Studies
 - i. Bachelor Degree
 - ii. Master
 - iii. PHD
 - c. Methodology
2. How important do you think literary knowledge is for English teachers?
 - a. Why?/ why not?
3. Do you normally use literature to teach English?
 - a. Methods
 - b. Activities
4. Literature and Reading Comprehension: Explain the link.
5. Do you think short stories are an appropriate tool to teach literature?
 - a. Why?
 - b. Characteristics
 - c. Enhance students' performance



6. What type of short stories have you use or would you use for your English classes?
 - a. Theme
 - b. Author
 - c. Title
 - d. Other

7. Do you think the major offers enough literature to the students?
 - a. Why? / why not?

8. Any other relevant information related to the study.
 - a. Experiences
 - b. Recommendations
 - c. Other



Appendix C

Transcripts

Teacher 1 (09:26 minutes)

Interviewer: so the first questions are regarding your teaching background, like I need your age, your studies, maybe you have a Bachelor's degree, you have a Masters, and some characteristics of your methodology as a teacher, like in general terms.

Teacher 1: OK first of all I'm 42 years old. My first career I studied commercial engineering at the Universidad del Azuay, and then I did my Master's here at the Universidad de Cuenca. A little bit about the methodologies that I usually teach... emm... one of the most important things for me is for the class to be very practical. I'm not that much oriented towards a lot of theory theory theory, especially when it comes to a short story class, or any of my literature classes. I usually like the classes to be very practical, hands-on, where students basically get the experience -sorry- they first understand the story, and then we do usually a writing assignment with it. But most of the writing assignments are very open-ended questions; they're not questions where you can basically find on the internet.

Interviewer: Like it depend on each student

Teacher 1: Yeah it's like you know it's a lot about critical thinking, and especially on my exams too I usually do that. Apart from that, I like also doing, I like students to get involved in the stories, if we can we do an oral presentation or sometimes just a role-play. It depends on the topic that we're, or the story that we have at hand.

Interviewer: OK now the first question is how important do you think literary knowledge is for English teachers? Do you think they regardless the kind of subject that they teach, maybe grammar, maybe phonology, do you think that they need to know about masterpieces, maybe some authors that are relevant in the English language?



Teacher1: I think it's absolutely necessary. You do have to know about authors, you have to know about books or type of books that go especially with the class itself. Because we have different types of masterpieces classes and then we also have a short story class. It's obviously - you can't mix a masterpiece class with a short story class because they're two different genres. But yeah, you definitely have to know.

Interviewer: A teacher must know that.

Teacher1: You must know that, yeah.

Interviewer: And when you teach other stuff, that are not literature oriented, do you use literature as a maybe tool - like, for example, if you're teaching grammar, I don't know, do you normally use it?

Teacher1: I don't usually use literature, but I do use the writing aspect of the literature class that we have. Because, and for me, in any literature class that we have there's a lot of writing. There's always writing writing writing because...

Interviewer: Like they go connected

Teacher1: They go connected, for me. That's the way I do it.

Interviewer: And do you think there's a like a specific link between literature and reading comprehension skills?

Teacher1: Literature and reading yeah of course. You have to know that, they both go connected. For me, all the four skills go connected, so, reading comprehension skills go connected with literature because if you can't read then it's gonna be difficult

Interviewer: Like if you want to improve your strategies of reading you can use literature.

Teacher1: Mmhmm exactly

Interviewer: Well the next questions are about short stories. Do you think short stories are an appropriate tool to teach literature first of all?

Teacher1: Oh yeah



Interviewer: Like to begin with literature?

Teacher1: For me, I think short stories are, here at the university, we see short stories as the final literature class, per se. Usually we begin with masterpieces, and really Old English masterpieces, and then we go into middle English and contemporary English masterpieces. But yeah, short story does provide and does give, you know, it's just a component of what literature is.

Interviewer: And what type, or what kind of characteristics do you think are important that short stories have, for you to think that they are a good tool?

Teacher1: I think most students engage with short stories just because it's easier for them to do it. They're not that long.

Interviewer: Not complicated.

Teacher1: They're not complicated. They don't have that many characters, and there's usually a beginning, a middle, and an end. So most people are usually very happy with that. I've seen, you know, there's short stories of a page, and there's short stories of you know like a couple of pages, but they're not usually like you know 300 pages or 200 pages

Interviewer: So it's easier.

Teacher1: So it's a lot easier for students to get engaged and get involved, and they understand and they're like oh ok now I got it.

Interviewer: I got it.

Teacher1: Yeah

Interviewer: You already talk about a little bit about the activities that you do, but can you be more precise with for example pre-reading activities, while reading activities, post activities – what kind of activities do you do?



Teacher1: I think that one of the most important things is obviously – students have to know about the topic that they’re gonna read about. So a pre-reading activity is absolutely necessary.

Interviewer: Like background of the story.

Teacher1: Yeah background. Not only background of the story but maybe of the topic that they’re gonna see. I usually, like an example, one of the things that we usually do is, for example, we did. When we have short stories, we do a presentation on punk. Many of students don’t really know what punk is, what punk music or what the genre of punk music is. They just think it’s just like heavy metal or something; they have no idea. So what we do with that is that we give them a background of what this genre is, where it came from, why it exists, and why do we continue to use it until today – and uh sorry why do we continue to listen to it until today. But if the students don’t know that and they just are reading something, an article or any short story on punk they’re gonna be like I have no connection with this. I don’t understand it. Yeah, I can see this guy’s like this, or this author’s like that...

Interviewer: But that’s it.

Teacher1: But that’s it. So when you give them a background on it, when they know what punk music what about and what it represented and why people are still connected with this type of music and still like this type of genre. Then once they read the short story, it’s a lot easier for them to interpret it and understand it.

Interviewer: And what about post-reading activities, do you think like maybe exams or what kind of?

Teacher1: For me, a post reading activity is not necessary an exam. For me, a post-reading activity like I mentioned before could be some sort of presentation. It could be a writing topic, a writing assignment where people just sit down and they you know they basically give



their thoughts of what they just read or what they just experienced. And they put it, you know, write it down on a piece of paper, and you know, we go from there.

Interviewer: OK and if you have to select like maybe a specific type of short stories, what kind of short stories would you select? Based on maybe authors? Like for example, do you think that students need to know about important authors of short stories, or you will be focused more on you know the theme and the topics of the stories. What do you think is more important or both of them?

Teacher1: I think, personally, for me, it's like both, but I usually go for short stories that students can relate to.

Interviewer: Regardless the author?

Teacher1: Yeah, regardless of the author. As long as the students understand that this is the short story, and this is the message of the short story. For me, that's what important. They could at least have like a connection to it, and they could understand it. It's gonna be a lot easier for them to do it. So for me, a short story has to be the type of story that they're reading, and not necessarily the author. Authors are important; there are many different authors, but when it comes to the short story itself, I need you (students) to like short stories that people can connect with.

Interviewer: OK, and what do you think about the amount of literature that students get in our major? Do you think they get enough? Do you think that they need to get involved earlier? Or it is ok how?

Teacher1: No, for me, I think it's - you have like two years of literature, which is like four semesters because you begin with masterpieces, and then you continue with masterpieces², and then you continue with contemporary literature and short stories. So, two years I would say is almost half of your career, so I think that's fine. If they could extend it more, that would be great. To three years, that would be even better. But I think two years is more than



enough. Ike, if it was less than that, I would say probably not, but I think two years is more than enough.

Interviewer: But you know that in the new *maya* that we're gonna have, we're gonna have only two literature classes because they're cutting it.

Teacher 1: Yeah I know. Cutting out. Because the thing is with that situation there, is the degree is not in literature anymore.

Interviewer: Yeah, is not anymore.

Teacher1: And that's the difference

Interviewer: and there's any other relevant information you would like to add, maybe about a recommendation of this topic or maybe an experience of your own?

Teacher1: I think my experiences with students and short story, for me, on a personal level, have always been very very good. Why? Because, like I was telling you, people can relate to them. Students relate to the story, students understand, and I'm pretty sure if I asked any of the students to give me an idea of what this short story that we read was about, even until today, like a year or two years after, they'd be like oh yeah I remember that, this was about that.

Interviewer: So it's like a meaningful...

Teacher1: Yeah it's something meaningful. So for me, it's like, that's important. Because you know, people could sit down and memorize stuff, and while memorizing something, they'll just forget possibly like the following week or the following month, it's gone. But with a short story, with any topic like this, people will remember and they'll be like oh I remember that and yeah it was like that and you kinda have an idea what the story was about, so that's what's awesome.

Interviewer: OK well that was it. Thank you very much

Teacher1: No problem



Teacher2 Interview (7:41 minutes)

Interviewer: The first questions are regard your teaching background. So I want to know your age, your studies and maybe some characteristics of your methodology as a teacher.

Teacher2: I am sixty now... I have a Masters in English language and specialization in university teaching by the UDA. And the masters was got here.

Interviewer: And can you tell me some characteristics of your methodology, like general things that you normally follow in each of your classes.

Teacher2: I like to use communicative approach because...

Interviewer: To talk with your students

Teacher2: In general English yes. And when I have taught other subjects, I like to have students do the ...

Interviewer: The work

Teacher2: Yes.. the work, more than me teaching because that way they can practice the language

Interviewer: OK now the following questions are regarding the topic of literature and short stories. The first one is how important do you think literary knowledge is for English teachers? Do you think that they should know about important books, important authors, like masterpieces of the English language, for them to be English teacher, regardless what they would teach, even if it is grammar – do you think that's important?

Teacher2: Yes I think it is important. It is not always necessary for teaching; depends what level you teach, but it is always important, because if you know that, you can use it for your classes, and that can help your students.

Interviewer: And have you used literature in your English classes – any type of literature, any kind of genre?



Teacher2: Yes, yes I have used short excerpts taken from different authors... I think that literature is like life. I think it's like a compendium of life, and its different aspects. So if you give literature to your students, they can, they can interact with the characters. They can be like inside the situations, especially in a place like here, where English is a foreign language. So they don't have many opportunities to practice the language. And if they read, they can be exposed to different situations and different kinds of languages, different aspects of life. Then they can learn.

Interviewer: And when you use literature, do you normally use like pre-reading activities, while reading activities, or post-reading activities?

Teacher2: Yes

Interviewer: And what kind of activities do you use?

Teacher2: Sometimes guessing, vocabulary related to the topic, guessing, for example through the title -what they think the content is going to be. Guessing the end of the story.

Interviewer: And for post-reading activities?

Teacher2: Apply, for example, the vocabulary that they learn, learned – apply to other situations to analyze contexts.

Interviewer: And do you think there is a specific link between literature and reading comprehension skills? And if you think so, what kind of link?

Teacher2: Well yes... because if you read, whenever you read, you need to understand.... So it is good to have good comprehension skills in order to understand the texts.

Interviewer: And do you think literature can help students to improve their comprehension skills?

Teacher2: Yes, yeah because it goes both ways

Interviewer: Yeah both ways, interconnected

Teacher2: Yes



Interviewer: OK now about short stories – do you think short stories are an appropriate tool to teach literature?

Teacher2: Yes

Interviewer: What kind of characteristics do you think they have that make them appropriate?

Teacher2: It is easier, they are easier to use in the class for me because they are shorter and you know we don't have much time to read a long story. And also if you give them short stories you can have different topics and different situations than just one long story...

Interviewer: That has just one... OK, now if you had to choose short stories for your English classes –would you concentrate more on the, for example the author – consider that they have to read important authors of the genre - or you will concentrate more maybe on the theme of the short story – what do you think is more important? Or both are important?

Teacher2: I think both are important, depending on what you want to use I mean to teach. For example, if I see that a good author can help them with certain structures that he uses more than others, maybe that would be – or if I think that you said the content, the content, is more appropriate to what I am teach in terms of vocabulary or things that I want them to learn.

Interviewer: And what do you think about the amount or yeah the amount of literature that we get here in the major. Do you think it's enough, or not?

Teacher2: Well, I don't know exactly right now, because I retired like three years ago. But when I used to be here, I think for the level it was ok. Maybe in our time, maybe the methodology was a little different, because at that time we didn't have all the opportunities that we have now to get the books and everything. So we couldn't find books to read on our own, so the teacher had to do almost every – we had a very good teacher. But it was mostly like reading and summarizing but not like analyzing or anything – that's important



Interviewer: - to understand what they're reading.

Teacher2: Yes, and also to foster critical thinking. But we didn't use to do that. Maybe the level of the students at that time also was not as it is now, because now you have opportunities of listening the language, practicing with so many technological tools that we didn't have at that time. So maybe, I think that now it should be easier to teach literature in a better....

Interviewer: - classes. Now do you have any relevant information related to this topic that you would like to share? Maybe experience of yourself or some recommendation about the use of literature? Something else that you want to add?

Teacher2: I think it is important to try to help students to be more creative, imaginative, give them tasks that they can create something – write. I think we should give more emphasis also to writing, ok and well but everything is based on reading. Because the more you read, the more ideas

Interviewer: the better you write

Teacher2: better you have for writing. So I think both together.

Interviewer: Thank you very much teacher, that was it.



Teacher3 Interview (16:32)

Interviewer: so good morning teacher, the first things that we would like to know is your teaching background, so first we would like to know your age, your studies, and maybe some features of your methodology as a teacher. What can you tell us about your characteristics when you teach?

Teacher3: Alright let's start with the personal information, the thing that we usually women don't like to talk about – age. I am 50 years old and I have a Bachelor's degree in teaching English here from the University of Cuenca, and a master's degree of research projects *Proyectos Educativo y Sociales...Gerencia de Proyectos Educativos y Sociales específicamente* and another master program in arts, in applied linguistics.

Interviewer: And about your methodology – can you tell us something that characterizes you as a teacher?

Teacher3: Well, I try to be as patient as possible with my students, and also as respectable, no respectful as possible as well. I feel my students are – I enjoy teaching very much, so I like to get along well with my students – get close with them. And so because I consider them as the main part of the learning process – I think I try to make them work as much as possible. Of course we as teachers we need to explain things, and need to teach things, but I think many things come from our students.

And whenever I talk too much and I feel tired of talking, I go back and think hey you talked too much today – you gotta make your students work. So that's what I try to do – making my students be in the center and making them think about the things that we're covering.

And since I teach writing, they do have to work a lot of you know on their papers. Well, reading also is a sort of individual mental activity, but still that's what I try to do.

Interviewer: OK now let's go with the questions that are related to my project. The first one is how important do you think literary knowledge is for English teachers? Do you think we as



future English teachers need to know literary knowledge, even if we are not teaching literature? Even if we are teaching any kind of element of English, do you think it's important to have that literary knowledge of masterpieces, of authors, of important books for example?

Teacher3: Yes I think any cultural knowledge is important for any English teacher. We are teaching a language, so you get across with all sort of topics when you're teaching literature, it could be a great resource in fact for teaching English. So, besides general facts as books and authors and years, which are sort of historical and all, they of course include cultural knowledge. Stories and books and novels you know I think are great resources for teaching. In fact, I'm deviating from the question but now the students that I teach now in second level of reading and writing, they are reading a book which is called I am Malala. You probably have heard of it. Although it's a bit difficult for them, I was trying to push them to get to know – challenge them to get to know other cultures and other situations, and other difficult circumstances, so they are aware of you know people different cultures. And I think through literature you can do that, you can teach that somehow.

Interviewer: So you do use literature when you teach English?

Teacher3: Well, I always make my students read something - any kind of literature text. Usually since these are lower levels and they are not able actually to read original pieces of novels, things like that, I usually use adapted versions of books, but that's still some sort of somehow literature. This is actually my first time I'm pushing them a little bit – I'm trying to see how it works. It won't be a too difficult a experience for them because the idea is, the purpose is, that while they are reading they are learning something also about the world.

Interviewer: When you use literature, what kind of activities do you normally accompany with them? Like for example, if you make them read one chapter and then some activities about it? Or you let them read everything – so what kind of activities do you normally use?



Teacher3: Usually, because this is a long book – I’m thinking of this specific moment, I have asked them to read like every week you gotta read a certain number of chapters. Now this week a certain number of chapters. What I’ve done is I’ve asked them through a journal about their opinions, about their difficulties, to see how it’s going.

Interviewer: And you read that journal every once in a while?

Teacher3: Yes, well this journal that I used this semester, hasn’t been, is not very, it doesn’t have a period of time, like every three weeks I will put up a journal in the platform, things like that and write it, you know, I will ask them something about the book they’re reading – related to the book – so to see their opinions, and to see how they’re going, to see if I can give them some feedback during the class. And of course when they finish the book, I will have a test, a reading comprehension test, among other things related to it, but there is not like specific activities like every week. That’s more or less what I’ve done this semester.

Interviewer: As an English teacher, can you explain the link that there is between literature and reading comprehension? Do you think that is a specific link? If we compare literature with other skills, do you think it is more connected to reading comprehension, or what do you think about it?

Teacher3: Yeah it is indeed connected with reading comprehension, literature. Is much more. I would think that it’s connected with extensive reading perhaps, you know, when they read it for enjoyment.

Interviewer: And what do you think about critical thinking? Do you think reading, once they develop a better skill about comprehending things, they can have better critical thinking?

Teacher3: I think so too, because there are some pieces it depends on the authors that you pick. Depends on the author that students are reading. Some authors might use certain elements to let the reader think about or imagine what will happen, or why a certain character



did a certain thing, or sometimes about the surprising ending. That would make them think also – think a little bit more.

Interviewer: In my project, I am aiming to use short stories as the genre for my compilation. Do you think short stories are an appropriate tool to teach literature? And if you do, why do you think it is, or why do you think it is not?

Teacher3: Well I think they are in fact very suitable for students in our major. First of all, since they are not very long...the shortness.... I'm thinking of practical aspects, you can manage you know to do more activities with them. Whereas when you give a novel, for example, you will have to wait a long time. So also, another advantage is that it can provide different themes. By different short stories, different themes will be exposed to students. They will get to read more, so I think that's also another advantage. And then sometimes, the students, you know it's just a practical thing I've seen they do, the first thing, they look at the book like 'how many pages does it have?'. So if it's not that long, they will be more enthusiastic to read, more motivated maybe. Which you know you shouldn't be that way, but that's the way it is. We have to face how (reality). It depends, but that's what I think. And of course that's a normal human tendency, since you guys have a lot of things to do. And perhaps now in the new *diseño*, the new curriculum *MAYA* they have practicum, more hours of practicum. They start doing their practicum even first semester, second semester. So they are basically full students; none of them work because there's just no time.

Interviewer: so the shortness would be like a great characteristic for students to be motivated to read.

Teacher3: I think it would be a practical one.

Interviewer: Have you used short stories in your classes anytime?

Teacher3: Yes sometimes. Not specifically this semester. I made them read two novels, for example. The first one was *Walkabout*, which is an adapted version, and then I am *Malala*.



They are reading this book I am Malala, which is pretty long, it's pretty long. So since I've chosen that this semester, I decided not to do...

Interviewer: and in any other semesters?

Teacher3: But in other semesters, I've used short stories yeah. I think I've used them, but the things that I've used the most, actually, I've used adapted versions, you know for ESL or EFL students, for books, like complete books. That's – now, thinking about it, that's what I use the most. Very few times actually I've used short stories, very few times.

Interviewer: And if you had to recommend some short stories, what would it be? And you can recommend any kind – like for example, authors, titles, or maybe themes that you would like your students to read in a short story. What would be the best characteristics that your short stories would need to have for you to use it?

Teacher3: Well I would think of themes more, because and of course all sort of authors would provide you with them, a lot of themes, because since you guys are going to become English teachers, I think you need to – I think through literature you can get to see a lot of situations, difficult situations of human beings, social issues that teach you, you know, somehow different perspectives, somehow give you elements to become a better teacher. You know I'm talking about social justice; I'm talking about respect for human life, things like that. Or cultural aspects...

Interviewer: So more than authors, you would choose first the themes, regardless the author?

Teacher3: The themes, regardless the authors. Yeah, because I'm sure, there's so many authors. Well, you begin the short story genre. So many authors that would provide you with all those sort of things. And of course I suppose certain authors specialize in one theme perhaps. I'm not very acquainted with many authors to short stories.

Interviewer: And now about our major. Do you think overall our major offers enough literature for our students, like in our training process? Do you think they offer enough? Or



do you think they should offer less? Do you think they should offer more? What do you think about the literature in our major?

Teacher3: I think through all the classes perhaps, I think we can contribute for reading.

Reading is a main skill. It doesn't have to be reading classes, exactly. All teachers from, well that depends of the class I should say, for example I'm thinking phonetics or phonology maybe that would be kind of awkward to make them read something – so not all classes, but some classes could contribute to make students read and literature. I'm not sure about in the *rediseño*, I'm not acquainted yet with all the classes, so I'm not sure how much literature they actually have. It would be difficult for me to tell you.

Interviewer: But for the one that you have been working on all of this year, what do you think?

Teacher3: I think you guys have three literatures right?

Interviewer: Yeah, we had masterpieces, contemporary lit, and short stories.

Teacher3: I think that would sound enough for me, for a training process yeah. But as I said, I mean the most input you get from real English... the better. So if teachers can contribute with reading from different perspectives, different classes, with texts, with articles perhaps, related to the class, they have to be related to the classes. Reading short stories could be a first start for lower levels, and increase the difficulty in the higher levels, and then eventually they would be able to read articles, you know, more complicated things, more academic things, because of the thesis project they have to do at the end. So literature could be one of the main contributions in the beginning, yes.

Interviewer: Before we finish, do you think that there's any other relevant information that you can add related to this topic? Maybe could be a recommendation, an experience, anything that you would like to add? Or do you think that you have said it all?



Teacher3: Well, I think that students learn more when they enjoy things. So if we as teachers could get them to enjoy reading, I think we would be accomplishing a great goal.

Interviewer: Like maybe knowing what kind of stories they would like to read.

Teacher3: Right could be. Asking them... The thing is that they enjoy, because you learn more when you enjoy things. And of course I've seen, the first thing I ask with my students is like "Do you like to read?" I see different responses in their faces. They don't say it out loud – some of them do. But so, I think, because, a problem we have these days is that perhaps people don't read. They don't like to read, and if we just get to make them like to read, I think that would be a great accomplish. Because somehow we if we can transmit that, and thereafter they will be transmitting that to their students when they become professionals.

Interviewer: Do you think once they start reading here in our major, they would like to read outside, like in their houses?

Teacher3: In their houses, by themselves, hopefully. I've seen many students do that, many students do like to read. But some don't, and because they're gonna be teachers, there should be this characteristic of motivating others to read. I think that's our obligation somehow.

Interviewer: OK well thank you very much teacher; your answers were very helpful.

Teacher3: I hope everything will be fine and success with your thesis.

Interviewer: Thank you teacher



Teacher 4 interview (17:13)

Interviewer: so the first questions are related to yourself, so I would like to know your age, your studies, and as well some characteristics or your methodology as a teacher.

Teacher4: OK I'm 29 years old. I've been working as a teacher for 6 years, 1 as a high school teacher and 5 as a university teacher. And I have a master's degree in teaching English as a foreign language.

Interviewer: And what kind of characteristics can you tell me about your methodology when you teach English? Like generally?

Teacher4: It's different because I teach at university, so it's teaching content in English but I have been in charge of EFL classes but they are for teacher trainees, so it's different from the ones using in high school, so there's a lot of teacher-student interaction but when you teach EFL you try to make it as communicative as possible and meaningful as possible for students.

Interviewer: Now the other questions are more related to the project, which is the importance of literature. So the first question is how important do you think literary knowledge is for English teachers? Do you think that students should know about important masterpieces, about important authors, or do you think that's not very relevant for an English teacher?

Teacher4: Well I think it's relevant for an English teacher. Sadly now there's the idea that if you know English, you know how to communicate in English, you can teach it. But to be an English teacher you need much more than that. I believe the importance of the literary aspect of the English language is great and it relies on how well acquainted you wanna be as a teacher with the language you're gonna be teaching. I mean it's gonna be for the rest of your life, the job for the rest of your life, so you have to have knowledge on all the aspects of the language including culture, and of course the dialogical relationship between culture, language, and literature as well.



Interviewer: Do you normally use any type literature to teach any kind of aspect of English? If it is not specifically reading or writing, but for any kind of purpose, do you think literature serves for that?

Teacher4: Well I've used literature a lot. I always, in my classes, I always ask my students to read an original book, not an adapted version. This semester I'm teaching a masterpieces class. There was a decision some years ago, some other teachers to use some adapted versions, some summaries of Shakespeare's work for example, but in my personal case we're analyzing the original texts. And also I have had my student written poems, so they have written poems, sonnets and haikus.

Interviewer: So do you think it's better to use real books rather than adaptations?

Teacher4: Yeah, in my opinion yeah, we use authentic material, but you have to be careful on how you select the level and how you approach. It could be challenging; it has to be suitable for the level. For example, you have children you can use nursery rhymes, with the repetitions, easy words, and even phonics. But as you evolve, you can pick different texts. And this all depends on the way you approach the text and how you analyze it. What's the purpose of it?

Interviewer: Now that you have said that you've used literature what kind of activities do you do with it? Like after they read, before they read, while they read, what kind of activities do you make them perform for you to see that they are actually understanding?

Teacher4: if you're reading a text, yeah you need a lot of pre-reading activities –

Interviewer: Like what?

Teacher4: Well, in my case, 'cause I'm talking with university students, so we have to place the text in its original background, kind of also way of motivating students to read it, addressing the topics they're gonna be facing with not, you know, without any spoilers I guess, to damage the adventure they're gonna have with the text. So there's a lot of creating a



lot of expectation and placing the text in the right time period for students to understand. And it's important for them also to realize why the text that you've selected is important. I mean why you have selected the text. If you read Shakespeare, why, why are you reading Shakespeare, who is Shakespeare and how is he important. And also what's the purpose of the reading, what they're gonna be learning, and how you expect them to evolve or to develop their communicative competences through the text.

Interviewer: Do you think there is a link between literature and reading comprehension? And if you do think, what kind of link?

Teacher4: Well yes, there's definitely a link between developing reading skills and literature. I mean, if you read you develop your literature, your literacy skills and the link is, well literature has been addressed in many ways, and one of the aspects of it is the universality of its topics. So it's difficult. Well, there's an author called Hanover and he says that currently language classrooms have become dehumanized. There's an emphasis on the structure of the language, and underdevelopment of several skills such as reading, but the way to approach that is meaningless to students. Students read text... because, really they.... They don't matter to them and I think that the connection is arousing that interest, that motivation, and literature has a powerful way of doing that. It's intimidating of course, but students at the end they feel that it's rewarding. Another author called Asar mentions that performing, maybe not perfectly, but performing well in a meeting that is socially deemed as difficult, I mean society considers literature to be difficult, considers literature to be complex, so students in a second language, in a foreign language performing that medium, even if it's not perfect performance, they're gonna have a greater sense of achievement than performing with texts and material that is too artificial. I mean, no real communication there.

Interviewer: Like for example the books that we use here, the articles that they show in the reading comprehension books?



Teacher4: Yeah well you have to be careful, because also they have been worked by prestigious authors, but yes there's a risk that those texts are artificial. They won't, I mean, sometimes it's difficult to arouse students' interest. But at the same time, you have another problem. Because if you know the youth of today are not really interested in literature, so it's a difficult balance to find I guess.

Interviewer: Now the other questions are short stories, because that's the genre that I'm choosing in my project. So the first question is, do you think short stories are an appropriate tool to teach literature? If you think so, what kind of characteristics make them appropriate?

Teacher4: To teach literature or to teach English as a foreign language?

Interviewer: Both somehow, like to use it for English learning.

Teacher4: Well short stories have a characteristic, well several characteristics. Well they are very American, kind of an American invention, an American innovation to English. They have the advantage that you can finish them in one sitting. And they are very condensed meaning, but at the same time they are very contextualized. But then you have one problem that is called the iceberg theory. There's a whole bunch going around the short story that you don't see it. So the way a teacher works that has to be careful, placing it in the right context. And the good characteristics about teaching literature, because short stories usually respond, to a specific time, specific style and you can group them and they are more accessible to students because they are not as – I don't know - students can get, can be overwhelmed when they get a big text, and then you can present them a short story I mean just by seeing that it's short sometimes they feel less threatened I guess. So that advantage would help you a lot. And also depending on the author that you choose the language is more contemporary, because short stories are contemporary, so that also presents itself as an advantage for students. And language is meaningfully contextualized but you have to be careful how to



place it. And also they serve in a variety of interpretations, so they are reader centered, so that also motivates students a lot.

Interviewer: And have you used short stories in your classes?

Teacher4: Personally yes we have analyzed some of them, but because of the nature of my classes, and the nature as I told you, of the dehumanized language classroom, you have to kind of do it kind of on the sides. So yeah we've analyzed some short stories, especially from Edgar Allen Poe. And the way we have approached them again is by placing them in the right context. Just reading them and then having a discussion, but we haven't had a deep analysis of it. There are some authors, Leow in 2002, she analyzes the responses and the perspectives of students towards five American short stories, using a reader-centered approach. As you know, there are different approaches; so the basic ones that I usually recommended that the language base of the reader-centered. So this author used the reader-centered approach, and she finds that the enjoyment of the piece is not necessarily linked to the background knowledge of students, or even comprehension. So they can enjoy the piece even without fully understanding what is going on. So yes I have used them, but not as much as I would like to have them.

Interviewer: Now that you mentioned Edgar Allen Poe, do you think it's important if you're using short stories. Do you think it's more important for students to read short stories that are from like famous authors, or short stories that are very relevant rather than focus on the theme of the short story?

Teacher4: It all depends on the nature of your class. As a teacher you have to get to know your students, and you have to be very careful because the selection of material should be based on your students needs, but not in your own reading likes and dislikes. Of course if you ask me I would choose Edgar Allen Poe because of his work and his prominence, but maybe it wouldn't be that appealing to students. Now there is another aspect, that is the students may



not know that they don't like it if they don't read it, so you have to try. To at least try and then see their reactions, and choose from different authors. And as I told you, short stories are, a lot of them are available; a lot of them are there, so you have a big pool from which to choose. In my opinion yes, you have to return the classics. It has shaped the background of the medium, they have in many ways also shaped language, and shaped the modern stories as well.

Interviewer: And do you think, the context, our reality here in the major, what kind of themes do you think short stories should be about? Like do you think specific themes, based on our reality, or ...?

Teacher4: The reality of our major, the specific topics, well as I told you it depends on the class, it would all depend on the class and how they react towards literature. As a tradition we have always approached literature in the way of analyzing the classics. So well the good thing about literature is the themes are universal, so you have a big pool from which to choose. And students won't get tired, and if you motivate them in the right way, in the right direction. So it's very difficult to pinpoint a specific theme that we can approach 'cause they're universal – well I don't know, Mary Wilkins writes about feminism a lot, so that is in vogue – but at the same time the dark side of I don't know Lovecraft or even Poe, still appealing for students. You have to know your students to pick.

Interviewer: And now about our major again. Do you think the amount of literature that we get here is good enough for our English training? Yes or not?

Teacher4: In my opinion, it's enough, but it all depends in the way you approach it. Is enough for a class, but is not enough for a whole life, so you have to approach literature in such a way that you motivate your students to pursue it outside the classroom. And yes in comparison with other majors, I don't know, maybe a Latin American context, our major is very good. I mean, we have four semesters of literature so I think it's more than enough; it all



depends on the way you approach it. Sadly nowadays we're moving away from that perspective and we have been forced to reduce our literature classes to two instead of four, but it's still, we are still the only major in the country that will keep literature classes.

Interviewer: And do you think we can, well teachers can, use literature in other subjects?

Like not only in the reading subjects, but for example in other subjects, that literature could serve only as a tool ?

Teacher4: Yeah obviously like EFL, culture classes, yeah literature can be used in there.

And that's actually the way, especially in EFL, how you are supposed to do it now, through the famous CLIL, right. The sad thing about CLIL is that a lot of people just focus on the hard sciences, I mean teaching math, teaching science, teaching history through English. But then few of them approach literature or even humanities as a whole through English. But the national curriculum asks now language through the arts, so yes there's a big window on them.

Interviewer: And well the last question is if you want to share any relevant information that to this topic, maybe an experience of yourself, or maybe some recommendations for the future, like anything that you feel is relevant for this topic.

Teacher4: Well we have to it's imperative that teachers respond to the dehumanized language classroom by humanizing it. Well, I specialize a lot in poetry. It says that one of the biggest obstacles to overcome, when you want to include poetry in the classroom, is just overcoming, even if it's redundant, overcoming the teacher's own fears and bad experience about the medium. And the same has to be done with literature. You and I, we might enjoy reading, but sadly there are a lot of teachers out there who don't like reading. Even in our major, they say, well I don't like literature class because we read too much. But if you don't read, you can't really be a teacher. So we have to, as a teacher, as teachers, it's our responsibility to vindicate the importance of the humanities in the language classroom. We have a huge way of doing that. We are afraid; we think that our students won't respond to it,



because probably we haven't responded to it before. We shouldn't make those decisions based on our experience or just predictions, what's gonna happen. But at the same time, there is that, the fight that you have with meeting deadlines, and figuring out how to plan, applying the correct descriptor to the right indicator. But in English, in EFL classroom, we have the advantage that those things haven't been done for us yet. In math, in science, they already have the descriptor, the indicator, and they have everything. And in English, most of them, most schools they don't have that; our national curriculum isn't as strict as rigid as other subjects, so we have to take advantage of that. And I think the main thing is overcoming the teachers' own fear about literature and just presenting itself to the students. I mean, if they don't like it, you've lost one or two classes, but if they like it maybe you have created a reader or something wonderful can spring from that.

Interviewer: Thank you teacher very much.



Teacher5 (12:52)

Interviewer: Good morning teacher, the first questions we are going to cover are about yourself. So I would like you to tell me your age, your studies, what degrees do you have, and also some characteristics of your methodology as an English teacher. Some general things that you normally do in your classes.

Teacher5: Okay, good morning. Well, first, to start, I am 35 years old. I have a master's degree in English. And one of the things I do when I'm teaching is to allow my students to tell me what their problems are. Like, in all the areas they are working on or what they are studying. I think that by doing this, one of the most important things that I can cover is that I can give a significant type of learning in order for them to realize the importance of what they do, what they think, and how they do it.

Interviewer: Okay. So first question: How important do you think literary knowledge is for English teachers? Do you think that an English teacher regardless the subject they are teaching if it is grammar, if it is listening, phonetics, or anything, do you think they need to know some literary knowledge; they need to know about important authors, important books, maybe important masterpieces of the English language?

Teacher5: Okay, I think literature mainly it's for culture. So if you learn English as a foreign language or you're studying English as a 2nd language or you are getting your degree in any area of English, I think literature should be or must be part of that in order for the student or the future professional to have this general knowledge about this. Maybe not have like a very profound kind of understanding about something, about literature, but they must know the important figures and the important ways of writing for example. So I think it's part of culture and if it's part of culture, literature should be included.

Interviewer: Okay. In your classes do you normally use literary texts to teach English? Like, in any kind of subject, do you normally use it, or not that much?



Teacher5: Well, it depends on the subject I have to teach during the process and during the, according to the semester. I would be lying if I say that I use literary pieces every single time, but this semester for example, I'm teaching masterpieces... not masterpieces, the short story... and it has gotten in my way of liking a little bit more. So I enjoy teaching this class, analyzing the texts, looking at how is it written and how through literature, culture is also perceived.

Interviewer: And when you teach with literature, what kind of activities do you normally make your students perform? Like, what kind of things do you do after they read or before they read, do you have any specific ones?

Teacher5: For example, one of the things in this class, the short story during this semester, one of the things we are doing.... (noise) one of the things we are doing is that we want to, for example, I want students to understand not only the context of the story and tell me the summary of the story, but to understand the context of the author, like the historical context that he may have. What situation were they living when that story was written? How is the plot? How is the, how is it, how it evolved during the whole story. So we kind of like do oral presentations before they analyze...eh...the analysis of the story and some after. So we analyze the context, like the author, the context of the story, when was it written and everything, and then we go into analysis of the characters, the themes that they discuss, most of the time they talk about love, they talk about loss, they talk about all these aspects that are all human. So it's kind of like this analysis of everything and how it compares to our real life.

Interviewer: Okay, now, if you have to explain the link that exists between literature and reading comprehension, what would you say?

Teacher5: Well, the link is there for sure. It's not something we cannot say that it doesn't exist. The thing that every time we read we learn something new if we read literature and we read different pieces of literature, will allow our students to have a clear idea of how life is



portrayed in a certain piece of literature. Because we tend to, everything that is written and what is important about literature is that literature brings what human life is. So it's a very clear way to relate to what we are as humans and how we can become better as humans.

Interviewer: And do you think when students read like real literary texts, like not articles but maybe some kind of books, or any kind of literary genre, do you think their reading comprehension gets better?

Teacher5: Well, I don't think... I think it gets better, but I don't think that students see that importance in their acquiring of the knowledge. Because they don't see, like okay it's just a piece of literature, they are not doing anything with this, we are not going to be using this anymore. But at the end it just helps us see how we are going to be dealing in how people deal with different things. For me, as the way I learn literature, was not a good way because I learned it by heart. I had to memorize things, I had to memorize the dialogues, so for me it was useless. For me, it was useless. So, but the things like when you analyze it and you see that, okay this story can be related to my life or to someone I know, it's kind of like you get the understanding of the whole thing and how that, how important that is, and how it makes you grow. Maybe not only in how I'm going to use it as a professional but also how this can work in someone else's life. This happened also. With literature we have so many things now that it's easy to realize that.

Interviewer: Okay, so in my project the main genre I'm using is short stories, so the next question are going to be related to it. Do you think short stories are an appropriate tool to teach literature? If you do, why? What kind of characteristic does, do short stories have? Or if you think they are not, also, what are your reasons?

Teacher5: Well I think it's important for us to teach short stories and it's easier because what happens is like with classic literature, and with old pieces of literature, the students get bored about how to do things and how they can relate to that. But with short stories the fact that first



they can just read it once they are seated. They just sit down and read one and they finish it just that they get engaged to the reading very fast and quickly. It's easy for students to get a better, I don't know, it just, kind of a better relation to this. So I think it's the best way to give short stories based on this. Okay, just...I'm just teaching, I get to find stories about even historical events, I know short stories are fictional, but all of them are based on real events.

Interviewer: On settings.

Teacher5: On settings... so it's important to realize about this because, for example one of the short stories they had in the exam was about the Chernobyl explo...accident. So they get to know what happened, and it's just, ok, I got this story, the short story, this literary piece, and then I just kind of like got into...(laughs)....the process of... okay, what happened, who suffered the most, what years happened everything so.....

Interviewer: Okay now if you had to recommend some sort of short stories for someone to use in their English classes, what would they be? Or you can talk about a specific author if you think there is a specific author the student should know about. Maybe a title, a theme, what do you think? What kind of short stories would you recommend?

Teacher5: I don't think I may have only one think about short stories, because they all talk about so many things that I think for anyone who wants to teach this should include as many themes as possible. Where they just introduce love, loss, life, power, money... through short stories you can provide all these themes in different ways, in different perspective. So I don't think there is only one author or only one type of story but I think that the combination of the short stories should give student a wider perspective of what life really is.

Interviewer: And do you think as an English teacher you should include like maybe famous short story writers? Because they are important or do you think it is more relevant to see the themes and the plots regardless who wrote it?



Teacher5: Well I think it's important to give, to start with important authors as a way to really see what has been done and how is it work now. But I don't think we should only stay with, yeah focus on those authors and then just keep going on different things.

Interviewer: Okay, now about our major, do you think it offers enough literature to the students or it offers too much? Less? Or is okay the amount of literature we get in our training as teachers?

Teacher5: Well, I think it's not too much, but the problem is maybe the system is the one to blame, because for example for the new *MAYA* we needed to change that and we have taken out more classes about short story. But the thing is like if we thing cross curricular organization within an institution or within our university, short stories can be included in everything and they can be for different levels; they exist from different levels. So it's not like we only going to have short stories in the short story class or literature in the literature class because look what happens, we just go into that and remember, okay and learn everything about Shakespeare and everything about, even we go to Beowulf and everything... and then we just came to see that it's not that relevant. But if we start from the beginning with the short stories and with everything that they can relate to, even if it's about education, because there should be short stories....

Interviewer: So you mean like in any kind of subject we can...

Teacher5: yeah, you can introduce that...

Interviewer: Yeah we can introduce any kind of literature. Okay and the last question, do you think there's any other relevant information that you can give us related to this study? It can be experiences of your own or recommendation or anything that you feel is worth mentioning.



Teacher5: Not not not really. I just, I've never taught literature and it was my first time right now teaching short story, so that's why I see how important this can be and how relevant this can be for students so...

Interviewer: Okay, thank you teacher very much.



Appendix D

Students' Survey

6 likert Scale Survey

Class: _____

Age: _____

Female: _____

Male: _____

For each of the following statement check the box corresponding to the degree of your

	1. Strongly Disagree	2. Disagree	3. Disagree to a certain extent	4. Agree to a certain extent	5. Agree	6. Strongly Agree
LITERATURE						
1. Literature plays an important role in English language learning.						
2. Literature serves as a great tool to enhance reading comprehension.						
3. Literature can help to enhance student overall performance.						
4. Literature should be more relevant in the English major at University of Cuenca.						
SHORT STORIES						
5. I enjoy reading literary text that are not too long.						
6. I prefer stories with clear themes and plots.						
7. I enjoy stories with only a few characters.						
PREFERENCES						
8. I prefer reading thrill stories.						
9. I prefer reading romantic stories.						
10. I prefer reading terror stories.						
11. I prefer reading sci-fi stories.						
12. I prefer reading history-related stories.						

agreement or disagreement.