

# English Literature and the English Language Classroom in Croatia: an Alternative Approach to Language Teaching in Accordance with the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform 2016

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**  
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**UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA**

**M.A. in English Language and Literature and Italian Language and Literature**

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**English Literature and the English Language Classroom in Croatia: an  
alternative approach to language teaching in accordance with the Comprehensive  
Curriculum Reform 2016**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to provide Croatian teachers with the necessary theoretical framework for incorporating English literature into English language classes, paired with two practical examples of EFL lesson plans.

The lesson plans have been developed conforming to the guidelines of Croatia's Comprehensive Curriculum Reform, which is presently awaiting to be implemented into several schools on an experimental basis.

Both lesson plans closely relate to the Croatian literature and language subject because they develop either a thematic or contextual aspect of a specific literary work, pertaining to the proposed list of Anglo-Saxon literary works. However, the second relates also to a content-teaching subject, History.

These might serve as a guideline in devising integrated language, literature and content lessons, whose main objectives are to develop students' critical thinking, stimulate personal growth, and reinforce their language skills.

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## Introduction

*We all know that art is not truth. Art is a lie that makes us realize truth, at least the truth that is given us to understand. The artist must know the manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies.*

*Pablo Picasso*

Undeniably literature is a form of art, and as such it inhabits that limited space in the juxtaposition between truth and lie, fiction and reality. Doubtlessly, literature is an art of fiction, because any kind of story becomes real in the way it is told and experienced through the author's eyes, transcending race, gender, time and space.

By pursuing the development of a story, nevertheless its length or form, the reader is transferred right in the middle of that special and magic place which Coleridge refers to as the "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith". No matter how strange or unrealistic a story sounds, it still bears some resemblance to the truth, while through the supreme act of reading the reader is able to experience it, live it, believe it and let himself get enthralled by it.

This is one of the reasons why people, from all around the world, go to Dublin each 16<sup>th</sup> of June on Bloomsday, and partake in a daylong pilgrimage to retrace the main character Leopold Bloom's route around Dublin, via landmarks mentioned in the novel. It is also why

readers go to London, to visit Baker Street and see Sherlock Holmes's apartment, though 221B is just a number painted on a building which never actually had that address.

This stands to demonstrate that although a reader is constantly aware that the characters and the plot are illusory, one still establishes an emotional connection with them, and on a more abstract level, yearns to cross into the literary world and experience it in person.

In the chapters that follow I have attempted to explore in detail literature's twofold purpose, i.e. literature as a moral, spiritual and aesthetic experience, and literature as a means to further develop one's current language skills.

I have addressed these two approaches as two disaffiliated processes of experiencing and exploiting literary texts in practice; however, in the EFL classrooms, teachers should attempt to find a balance between the two in order to maximize their students benefit from both.

Furthermore, I have focused on the ELT practice in Croatia, providing a historical overview of the preeminent endeavours of our government, and their underlying aspiration, to remodel the English subject curriculum towards becoming more student-centred and efficient.

I wish that this thesis would, first and foremost, serve as a reminder of the need to educate future English teachers in alternative and more interesting methods of teaching.

A Methodology Course on the Teaching of English Literature in Primary and Secondary Education would provide future teachers with a basic knowledge on how to exploit literary texts in order to develop interesting, creative and integrative lessons, in conformance to the theoretical principles, a renewed teachers' autonomy, and all fundamental values that the new Comprehensive Curriculum Reform has conceptualized.

## 1. The scope of literature

Although many scholars have ventured on the journey to discuss various aspects of literature and its integration in language teaching classes, they are still not unanimous to a clear and unambiguous definition of literature itself, and indeed, it remains yet to be formulated. There are however different interpretations and at this stage the decision to align with one, or the other, is still individual and depending on one's needs and interests.

Even though McCarthy and Carter state that “literature is not defined in an exclusive sense”, they nevertheless suggest a distinction between literature with a capital “L”, i.e. literary works which are considered canonical, worthy and appropriate to make up the body of texts of any respectable literary curriculum, and literature with a small “l”, i.e. all texts that use language for communicative purposes, albeit being functional as opposed to aesthetic.

Van Peer (in Carter, Stockwell, 2008) addresses the issue in terms of language, text and homiletical forms of communication. Literature is closely connected to language because it communicates through it and, in this context, discourse as opposed to text is another fundamental element to define literature. Discourse is to be intended as an explicit oral exchange between two people or a group of people. He expands this definition by adding that, for a communication to be deemed successful, its participants are required to be historical contemporaries and share the same physical space. The latter is inevitably irrelevant since the advancement of technology has made it possible for people to communicate at great distance.

On the contrary, a text offers more freedom because it overcomes the barriers of time and space to which discourse is subject to. Unlike discourse's spontaneous character, a “textual communication is usually premeditated” (Van Peer, in in Carter, Stockwell, 2008), and its existence fosters the evolution of tradition. Convincingly, literature belongs to the category of written texts rather than oral tradition.



The last consideration addresses homiletical forms of communication. According to the author, the texts that pertain to this category are meant to be delightful, to awaken a sense of belonging to a defined group and incite solidarity among readers, i.e. “a special bond is created between participants in acts of literary communication” (Van Peer, in Carter, Stockwell, 2008), which inevitably leads to a shared need to reflect upon modern society and social structures. Homiletical texts are both written and oral, their common goal being profound human reflection. Dante, Dostoevsky or Pope on one hand, and fairy-tales, anecdotes or legends on the other, have the same reflective impact since they provoke the same emphatic feeling and delight in readers. Even though Van Peer has been very detailed in his deconstruction of literature in order to fully explain its character, he is aware that it is still not enough to formulate an objective definition of literature apart from saying that it is “a body of symbolic objects expressed in human language, possessing textual qualities of a non-institutional, homiletical kind”.

Widdowson’s rationale (in Carter, Stockwell, 2008) spawns from an academic need to interpret sentences which he calls “deviant”, i.e. those sentence which digress from grammatical universals’, but are still decipherable “in spite of the fact that they do not correspond with the well-formed strings generated by a grammar which is meant to represent the speaker’s knowledge of his language”.

The lifelong struggle to define literatures’ real purpose in language teaching has not been a struggle for foreign language teaching alone. Literature should not be regarded as a process which comes to term at the end of the year’s textbook (Carlsen, 1952), but rather as a kaleidoscope of multidimensional purposes. In this perspective, according to Widdowson (in Carter, Stockwell, 2008), literature can be seen as twofold in its purpose and goals because it can be analysed from two different points of view.

The first one is more inclined towards literary lawfulness, i.e. a perspective where a written text is accepted as literary contingent upon evidence of aesthetic value and on account of conveying a “unique message” (Widdowson, in Carter, Stockwell, 2008). On the contrary, the second leans towards a linguistic perspective and the literary text is considered through its inherent grammatical structures and its suitability to further develop language skills.

Both currents are to be treated as two equitable standpoints towards literary texts in general, with neither dominating over the other but rather as coexisting and having the same goal, i.e. to educate the reader in the features of language but also to foster the reader’s awareness of literature as “a supremely valuable experience” (Levi, 1976), for its overall understanding.

## 2. The literary perspective

Understanding a literary text requires a dual approach. Considerations regarding the linguistic structure of any given text, and its suitability to foster language learning, will be the focus of the next section. On the contrary, in this segment I will attempt to briefly illustrate the essence of approaching literature from a wider perspective, i.e. the literary interpretation of texts which concerns itself with meaning and universal truth (Pease, 1952).

There are many viable ways to read and interpret a literary work, but when approaching a text from a literary view, as opposed to a linguistic one, the boundaries are less clear and definable. Since reading is primarily an individual act which yields different outcomes for different people, a discussion analysing the appropriateness of different interpretative outcomes, would be unproductive. An interpretation cannot undergo scrutiny as good or bad, correct or incorrect. As an individual product, it has to be respected even though not necessarily agreed upon. Otherwise, the equivalent would be like going to the department store and bullying your friend into buying leopard-print trousers to pair with a glittery pink t-shirt and red sneakers. The combination might work for you, but essentially not for others.

A good teacher will offer his or her students different interpretative approaches in order to help them reach their own understandings and verbalize their thoughts and feelings, thus avoiding ludicrous and barren conclusions which stem from the teacher's personal viewpoints and perceptions.

According to Carlsen (1952), overall literary texts have some fundamental features that are paramount for developing a desirable body of books to read, and give students an outset upon which develop their interpretative skills and reinforce personal growth. Carlsen's assessment of these features is still legitimate nowadays, even though he does not address the issue of which texts are to be considered canonical. He might forewarn the selection of certain works of "great literature", opposed to the complete disdain of other works of imagination,

but his criticism is not influenced by contemporary dilemmas and debates concerning “the canon” and “non-literary” texts for study (Cook, in Carter, Stockwell, 2008).

Since this passage analyses literature as a conveyor of meanings and universal truths, it is acceptable to disregard modern literary currents, advancing theories of “mixing literary, non-literary and the sub-literary” texts with technological advancements (Cook, in Carter, Stockwell, 2008).

Carlsen’s “dimensions” of literature include a much more detailed division than mere form and content and are considered in terms of their aesthetic value. According to the author, there are some fundamental prerequisites which grant validity to a literary text.

## **2.1. Literary merit**

When speaking about merit, it is obvious that some literary work is to be considered more important than other. As an example he compares comic books and juvenile literature on the one hand, and the works of William Shakespeare on the other. He does not ridicule the influence of comic books and juvenile series, and the subsequent increase of the reading culture, but simply argues their inferiority compared to quintessential authors like Shakespeare.

### **a) Humanity**

Each and any literary work portrays a fictional world of imagination but, nevertheless, holds features of reality. Since it depicts humans and their personalities, literary humanity “offers ways of organizing and interpreting experience” (Levi, 1976), allowing the reader to connect with the text by identifying himself with characters. A good literary work conveys

countless human experiences, from a search of one's identity, through the demands of living as individuals in a society, but always by means of portraying a concrete "intellectual, emotional or physical experience" (Carlsen, 1952)

## **b) Stereotypes**

When evaluating a literary work, teachers should be aware of implicit clichés that are conveyed to the reader. For example, that virtue is a trait of those who have been brought up in the countryside. These men and women make sound decisions because of values gained through hard work and dedication. On the contrary, life in the city corrupts the individual to the point that he or she is unable to lead a virtuous life, but rather overindulges in all the commodities of modern society.

Another misconception, which is still ongoing in juvenile series to this day, is that "the adolescent usually outwits the adult by performing difficult tasks that the adult has failed at" (Carlsen, 1952). This is undeniably true of series like J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter Literary Series*, Veronica Roth's *The Divergent Trilogy* and Stephenie Meyer's *The Twilight Saga*.

## **c) Relevance**

A good literary work is both enjoyable and reflective, and a perceptive reader will learn how to "explore behind the story" (Pease, 1952). Obviously this feature will appeal to seasoned readers alone, i.e. those who are able to comprehend the underlying complexities because he or she has experienced a similar moment in life. Unfortunately, since usually the reading syllabus is selected by adults for students, it is presumptuous to assume that it will be possible to share the same conclusions. A more flexible approach to the selection of texts is needed in order to guide students towards the discovery of concealed and true meanings.

## **d) Language**

Adolescent and adult literature are undeniably not written using the same language. Adolescent literature does not use complex language, so it is our duty as teachers to gradually guide our students towards new aesthetic expressions, to interact and interpret new linguistic designs. This also means that students should be confronted with many different types of literature, i.e. drama, short story, poem, novel, essay, and supervised until they master the conventions of language, structure and style. Once the student has reached the expected objective, he should be confronted with another literary level in order to develop out of the initial hardship of tasks like expressing one's feelings and ideas, which have developed as a result of reading. Talking about literature is difficult "for when we talk about what a poem, a story, a drama have meant to us, we realize that our ordinary use of words is inadequate and that we distort if not destroy the reaction we originally had" (Carlsen, 1952). So to teach students' the ability to express, in their own words, the beauty of a literary work, is of utmost importance.

## **2.2. Literary content**

Literature as content is to be intended for its level of importance within the human experience. (Carlsen, 1952). Being created by humans, it is also "the product of philosophy of life and is therefore implicitly or explicitly a work of criticism" (Levi, 1976). Quality content advances social awareness and offers a variety of attitudes and values, while conveying deeper meanings through its under-surface elements. Meanwhile, a valuable reading program will inspire students towards applying them to their personalities in order to grow beneficially.

### **a) Multinational literature**

A strategic reading plan will take the student throughout the world and its inherent cultures. The aim of a geographical variety of literary works is for students to understand that, independent of origin or culture, human beings experience the same emotions and have values which transcend social conditions. In their preface to *Shakespeare's England*, Lee, Raleigh and Onions (1916) say that their purpose is to “describe the habits of the English people during Shakespeare's lifetime”. Their theory was that without a profound understanding of Shakespeare's contemporary society and all its facets, there could be no profound understanding of Shakespeare himself, his works and the message he conveys (Levi, 1976). This is why a “world perspective” (Carlsen, 1952) is imperative. The reader is able to envision himself as part of a greater universal scheme, sharing attitudes and values with people from all around the world.

### **b) Literature and History**

Normally a student strives toward that literature which is chronologically closer to him or her, because it depicts a society that is known for the values it conveys and the extent of difficulties it depicts. Left unguided, students will read the same material over and over again. It is upon the teacher to “suggest books about civilizations in other ages and books written in other periods” (Carlsen, 1952), in order to open a line of communication between the past and the present, expanding students' horizons and helping them achieve a more valuable panorama of understanding and reading content.

### **c) Literature and lifestyle**

Now more than ever, in this age of globalized trade and various economic crises, it is imperative to offer our students literary works which will give them an insight into lives lived at different economic levels. Undeniably, many will be able to identify themselves with those who have struggled through a difficult upbringing, to rise above and lead good, or extremely successful lives. Furthermore, not everyone's family is middle-class or, as a matter of fact, an integral family unit. Apart from doctors, lawyers, or businessmen, nowadays we have many single parents, often lacking good job opportunities and working hard to provide their children with a good education and sound work ethics.

Literature has the power to build a high respect for any vocational field, as well as to teach that money and a successful career are not always the best means to a happy and fulfilled life.



### 3. The linguistic perspective

Reflection on EFL is usually very form-focused leaving the literary component of literary texts often neglected. Indeed the majority of research has focused on the benefits of teaching literature as a means of language development, i.e. literature with a small “l” (Abdullah, Zakaria, Ismail, Wan Mansor, Aziz, 2007).

The perception of Emily Brontë’s, *Wuthering Heights*, or a sonnet by William Shakespeare, will be fundamentally different than that of a newspaper article, an advertisement, or a pamphlet. The former are to be considered literary because they are “likely to be defined as literary by the literary academy for purposes of school and university study of literature” (McCarthy, Carter 1994). The latter, on the other hand, are not to be dismissed lightly since they are examples of language in use, even though they differ in style and purpose.

Literature with a small “l” is nothing but a body of inferior texts which, nevertheless, use language as their prime medium of communication and are thus “central to learning about language and the development of a reflective language learner” (McCarthy, Carter, 1994).

Undeniably, literature is the perfect tool for teaching the most important language skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking and it is the most popular method of teaching a foreign language (Babae, Wan Yahya, 2014). Teaching language through literature focuses on language learning and the development of a triangular connection between students, teachers and literary texts.

Collie and Slater (1990) argued four root reasons for teachers to implement literature into their foreign language classes, which undoubtedly laid the foundation for what scholars today call the Integrated Approach. The value of teaching English literature is of potentially great importance, especially when the context of teaching is non-native. Apart from the usual

suspects like historical, social and cultural differences within the target language context, which can pose more than enough problems for non-native English teachers and students, what emerges as the most important aspect of literature teaching is that all “methods and approaches aim toward the all-around development and welfare of students” (Yimwilai, 2015).

According to Collie and Slater the reasons to make use of target language literary texts are as follows.

### **3.1. Authenticity**

First and foremost, each and any literary text has to be considered authentic. Authenticity means language in use and thus foreign students are confronted with examples of real-life language use. In this context, even excerpts (if not full texts) of literary endeavour can serve the same language teaching purpose.

Confronted with a literary text students inevitably get acquainted with structural forms and communicative functions which can further develop their linguistic skills.

As brilliantly asserted by Sage (1987) “Literature in English is English at its best.”, and indeed the employment of literary texts in the ESL classroom gives students a chance to see all the rules of language, unified into a linguistic continuum at its highest level. Given its authenticity, a regular interaction with the literary text of the target language will soon reveal all (or almost all) forms of formal and informal patterns of communication, pertaining to all styles of social interaction.

Drama and the novel are excellent examples of authenticity because they are a resourceful pool of different types of conversation, displaying the array of possible feelings, phrases and expressions. On the other hand, what abounds in a novel are descriptions and

other indirect means of writing which engage the reader on the imaginative level (Khatib, Rezaei, Derakhshan, 2011).

Another important value of the text *per se* resides in its inherent level of difficulty. As pointed out by Sage (1987) a literary text must “challenge students to attain more knowledge and develop cognitive abilities”. Students will certainly appreciate more a literary text in its original form if the purpose of the text exceeds simple enjoyment, but rather aligns itself with specific goals of learning.

Moreover, Bradford (in Sage, 1987) further clarifies the importance of literary texts to pose a challenge for students, saying that a text that matches the students’ level of proficiency holds nothing new to teach and thus loses value. Students will be able to learn new structures only if they have to overcome and internalize structures which are unfamiliar and require a higher level of engagement.

### **3.2. Cultural advancement**

Secondly, almost every literary text is culturally educative, i.e. it is inherently an expression of a specific socio-cultural environment. Although today we live in a globalized multicultural reality, where the Internet and the television render all aspects of foreign language and culture easily accessible throughout the continents, a direct contact with the target culture is still highly unlikely for the majority of foreign students. Thus varied literary works offer a common cultural framework to observe and compare to one’s own.

This cultural framework undoubtedly hides unknown aspects of itself in its verbal and nonverbal communication. Since physical immersion is often improbable, novels, stories, plays and all work of imagination, serve for readers to “attain cultural insight” (Scott, in Sage 1987).

One of the potential problems within this section is the undeniable shift of power from the traditional education, and by extension literature teaching, to the widespread influence exerted by media such as the television and the Internet. In 2004, Bonnet et.al published the results of their research, conducted between 2002 and 2003, in which they compared secondary school students' achievements in English as a foreign language. A very important part of the research was the ratio of English acquired through traditional education as opposed to media or other sources. The aim of the study was not to undermine the importance of traditional education in language teaching, but rather to attest the increasing importance of other sources.

The ability of these media to broadcast information on a worldwide scale “means that educational institutions have lost their monopoly in providing opportunities to have contact with the foreign language” (De Bot, 2007), and culture.

### **3.3. Linguistic development**

Thirdly, reading works of literature fosters students' language development by “giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage and complex and exact syntax” (Povey, in Sage 1987).

This approach, also known as the language-based approach (Carter and Long, in Babae, Wan Yahya, 2014), makes ESL students work with grammar in a conscious way to reach a profound understanding and interpretation of the literary text. Students familiarize themselves with all aspects of the target language such as idiomatic expressions, linguistic accuracy and fluency, which in turn foster the development of individual creativity in the target language (Obediat, in Babae, Wan Yahya, 2014).

Furthermore, as pointed out by Ciecierski and Bintz (2013), the language of literature serves teachers as a rich source of word forms, prefixes and suffixes, roots, synonyms and antonyms, paraphrases, idioms, collocations and registers.

However, McKay (1982) has made a strong argument pointing out the dichotomy of this approach in terms of passive acquisition, i.e. developing an awareness of linguistic usage, as opposed to active use, i.e. developing linguistic skills for active use.

Nevertheless, apart from expanding the students' vocabulary pool, scholars strongly argue the value of using literature in ESL classrooms to foster the development of the four basic skills, i.e. reading, writing, speaking and listening.

### **a) Literature to foster reading**

When developing reading skills, literature serves as an important element of both extensive and intensive reading practice. According to Khatib, Rezaei and Derakhshan (2011), novels in particular are the best for extensive reading purposes. They suggest setting up a time-frame for reading a novel without frequent use of a dictionary. This should result in an increased reading speed and motivate students to infer vocabulary meaning from context.

Gao (2009) agrees adding that “in the process of reading, a variety of reading skills can be applied”, mostly skimming and scanning. Furthermore, he refers to novels as expressions of cultural values of a given geographical territory, as well as of a specific era and civilization which inevitably work towards the development of a deep cultural awareness and personal involvement.

On the other hand, poetry offers the best medium for intensive reading practice. Since poetic texts “demand(s) a constant search for methods of presenting that will stimulate student interest” (Thomas, 1952), they offer itself to a much more detailed analysis than the novel.

For example, in short poems each stanza can be deconstructed in search for key elements such as allegory and metaphor, and students encouraged to autonomously interpret the text by extracting inherent hidden meanings.

## **b) Literature to foster writing**

Literature and practicing writing skills go well together. Both Khatib, Rezaei and Derakhshan (2011) on one hand, and Shazu (2014) on the other, highly value activities such as completing stories and poems using texts with word omissions (cloze structure), although neither develop the statement in a more detailed manner as to suggest a specific approach.

Also, both agree on creative activities such as the employment of a students' current linguistic skills to rewrite endings, or develop the story from another characters' point of view.

Hişmanoğlu (2005) instead, takes this point further explaining that "literature houses an immense variety of themes to write in terms of guided, free and other types of writing". If literature offers a model to structure students' writing, it is viewed as tripartite.

The development of writing skills in beginner students falls under the *Controlled Writing* approach. It is form-focused and requires students to produce writing tasks which focus on specific grammatical structures. Very often students are given a passage in third person and are asked to rewrite it into a first-person perspective.

Intermediate students are usually given *Guided Writing* assignments, such as answering questions or filling in missing words to complete sentences. Very often they have to demonstrate their comprehension of a given text with activities such as writing short summaries, descriptions, paraphrasing or coming up with topic sentences. The aim of these writing activities is to assess students' overall comprehension and then improve their literal comprehension.

More proficient students are guided towards *Reproducing the Model* by means of summarizing, paraphrasing or adapting. These techniques are also closely connected to specific genres of literary texts.

Thus summarizing is usually employed when retelling a novel, a short story or even a play, because the development of their stories is almost always chronological and dictated by cause & effect.

Furthermore, paraphrasing is the best way to determine the students' understanding of a text, and it is commonly employed with poetry. Usually students are asked to rephrase what has been read using their own words.

Lastly, adaptation requires students to turn a dialogue into a narration or, inversely, a narrative into dialogue, and implies the demonstration a certain level of fluency in both spoken and written English.

The aim of these approaches is to establish literature as a start point for developing writing themes and activities. As for development, it is clear that reading and writing skills are closely interwoven and co-dependant of one another. If varied reading resources offer interesting topics to develop writing activities, writing improves critical analysis, interpretative creativity and independent reasoning.

### **c) Literature to foster listening and speaking**

The two remaining skills are more independent of literature than writing or reading. In fact, listening and speaking seem to develop at a higher speed especially due to widespread multimedia resources that unquestionably serve as primary language resources.

This globalizing input of the English language is closely connected to the evidence that today English appears to have more second or foreign-language speakers than native ones

(Larsen Freeman, Freeman, 2008), and consequently, a strive towards a multimedia approach to learning is reflected in many European curricula at present (Pieper, 2011).

The fundamental question that scholars have been trying to answer is whether literature serves as a valuable resource for developing listening and speaking skills in the modern globalized EFL classroom.

Khatib, Rezaei and Derakhshan (2011) point out that one of the arguments against using literature in the EFL classroom concerns phonetic and phonology. The authors report that certain practitioners have pointed out that some literary texts present older forms of words that have undergone linguistic changes and might thus lead to misunderstandings. But then add that a more pragmatic approach to linguistic change could be intriguing for students, resulting in a more explicit awareness of the language itself.

Following Stern's Integrated Approach (1991), Hişmanoğlu (2005) lists different techniques and group activities which help develop listening and speaking.

First and foremost, teachers should use all forms of audio-media available to them, i.e. recordings, videos, cinematographic adaptations, or interact with the literary text themselves, reading it aloud. Being pronunciation the goal of this technique, it is also advisable to make students read as much as possible. Apart from some feasible individual impairments, such as extreme shyness, Glossophobia or stutter, reading aloud improves listening and speaking overall.

Secondly, both Hişmanoğlu (2005), and Babaei, Wan Yahya (2014) agree on the importance of dramatization as extremely valuable for students. Employing drama in the classroom gives students a clear example of language use, as well as key elements of the target culture.

Dramatization stimulates creativity, interpretation and empathy, and it is an excellent tool to improve self-respect while building deeper bonds among students. The main goal is to



foster cooperation among students and the exercise of communicative and productive skills in order to achieve verbal and non-verbal linguistic exchange.

Nevertheless, in a strictly literary context, listening and speaking can hardly be addressed as independent of reading and writing. It is possible to treat reading and writing in isolation as skills to be taught, because neither require an active employment of listening or speaking to exchange thoughts. On the contrary, both listening and speaking cannot be improved in absence of reading and writing as resources for the development of what Pieper (2011) refers to as cognitive and linguistic and semiotic skills.

According to the Pieper (2001), to partake in a discussion regarding any specific literary work, a student will have to exhibit a number of cognitive skills like reading the content of discussion beforehand and isolating all relevant aspects of the text; forming an opinion regarding characters, story-line and style, as a consequence of interacting with the text; prove familiarity with the text by means of quoting, in order to support one's ideas, interpretations and overall impressions, and finally, respect the opinion of others and accommodate one's own accordingly should the peer discussion yield a more adequate interpretation.

As for linguistic and semiotic skills, Pieper (2001) emphasises as follows:

- ✓ a command of the ability to verbalize and outline past reading experiences sharing one's preferences or otherwise
- ✓ construct and argument by means of quoting and isolating relevant points
- ✓ consider one's own peer standpoints and successfully use the to construct an argument
- ✓ ask questions to clarify ideas and construct opinions in reference to the text and the developments of the current discussion

- ✓ show an ability to rephrase one's own standpoints to avoid misinterpretation and misunderstanding
- ✓ provide pros and cons and adopt them for closure purposes.

### **3.4. Personal betterment**

One of the most important traits of literature is that it is extremely stimulating on an intellectual level (Zynger, in Shazu 2014). In a literary text, language and culture merge into a temporal continuum which develops a story readers can slowly establish a connection with.

Brown's (1980) philosophical approach to modern story-telling, or narrative in general, equals the alienation of the individual from society because reading means entering a solitary world of privacy. According to the scholar, modern literature negates the traditionally socializing aspect of narrative, constructing an "illusory world" in which the constructed reality becomes the only trustworthy, a mirror of the readers' world and only there "do things appear as what they are and what they can be" (Brown, 1980).

On the other hand, Lewis (1976) says that a literary text must "be made as relevant as possible to today's social, political, and economic problems, as well as to the students' personal problems, as he seeks to establish himself in a structured world".

And indeed, literature can be used to help students during a transitional period and/or through a hard time in their personal lives. The role of the teacher in this context is to suggest books which will help students struggle through their current situation.

Language difficulty should be second to students' needs and interests, i.e. if a literary text is appealing to the student, he or she will make the effort to read through it, thus it is safe to state that each and any literary text provides a meaningful context for the reader.

Personal growth does not equal the numeric amount of books a student has read (Carlsen, 1952), but rather the catharsis of critical thinking he or she has achieved throughout the act of reading. Carlsen points out that a students' growth coincides with the corpus of books he or she has engaged with.

All the most important factors for personal enrichment are to be gained through the extrinsic and intrinsic value of the text, the variety of forms, the depiction of different kinds of characters and life experiences, the portrayal of different historical periods and geographical locations and finally, the delineation of characters of different economic status and occupation.

This line of thought has been elucidated by Maley in 1989, when he listed the reasons for “regarding literature as a potent resource in the language classroom (Hişmanoğlu, 2005), which all strive towards the cultural, intellectual, social and individual growth of the human being:

- a) it is universal because its themes are cross-cultural. All human beings experience love, death and separation, they formulate ideas, experience emotions and partake in everyday life existence which are fundamental aspects of literary texts
- b) it is relevant because the reader recognizes them as one's own making the literary text important to one's existence
- c) it is by implication non-trivial because it is the product of an author's rendition of “things which mattered when he wrote them” (Hişmanoğlu, 2005).
- d) it is an enormous source of varied genres and subject matters which can respond to general, i.e. entertaining, or specific needs, i.e. the language of almost any topic.

- e) it can spawn any number of discussions due to its suggestive power and it is also highly ambiguous because the experience of reading will pollute different interpretations among students.
- f) it offers a number of different topics which boost the readers' interest because designed to captivate his or her undivided attention.

#### **4. Literature in the EFL classroom**

Teaching English Literature and teaching English Literature in a FL classroom clearly differ in terms of styles of teaching, adopted methods and the body of texts used. Nevertheless, both seek the same objective, i.e. to convey the underlying human experience and guide students toward a profound understanding of the significance of the literary text in terms of personal growth.

Since literature is many-sided, there is not a homogeneous approach to teaching. According to Divsar and Tahiri (2009), teaching literature in the EFL classroom is a very demanding task due to its inherent complexity, its linguistic structure and figurative meaning, which often elude the unprepared reader. Furthermore, the overall meaning of a literary text is hard to grasp since it requires a certain level of knowledge of the foreign cultural context.

Literature is nevertheless “a powerful tool (that) helps students develop their linguistic and communicative skills as well as their knowledge of language across all discourse types” (Divsar, Tahiri, 2009). The common objectives of teaching literature are thus oriented at helping students improve their current linguistic knowledge in order to be able to infer on stylistic devices and, provided with a sound cultural background, advance their communicative abilities.

In order to achieve this, a teacher must plan and structure his or her literary lessons to be interesting, innovative and motivating, avoiding the approach of what Hook (1948) defines as a “one-arrow teacher”, i.e. a teacher who is monotonous, predictable and tiresome.

In 1948 Hook argued six basic approaches towards analysing literary texts. Moreover, he insists that audio-visual aids, games or other devices must be intended as mere vehicles towards the achievement of an overall “literary experience”.

### **a) The Historical Approach**

This approach is based on a detailed outline of the author's biography, affiliated historical events as well as the subsequent literary context. It guides students to consider their place within the grand scheme of human literature even though the actual text is often second to a historical account of the development of literature.

### **b) The Socio-psychological Approach**

The aim of this approach is to compare the past to the present in order to demonstrate to students that the characters depicted in the literary text, carry the same values and morals, or long and fear the same things as them, contemporary readers. The goal is to increase the students' knowledge of people in general, perceive the specifics of the time it was composed in, and apply this newfound knowledge to develop a sensible present-day social criticism.

### **c) The Emotive Approach**

A twofold approach whose aim is to make students appreciate literature for its aesthetic value. A good teacher will undoubtedly select texts which will expose literature as extremely engaging because it requires power of imagination, unlike more pleasing and less intellectually challenging on-screen productions.

### **d) The Didactic Approach**

The aim of this approach is to discover the underlying morals and values of the literary text while contributing to students' moulding exceptional personalities within the boundaries of the society they live in.

### **e) The Paraphrastic Approach**

This is an excellent approach for those texts which, at first sight, present themselves as incomprehensible. Paraphrasing makes it possible for students to use their background knowledge and test their communicative, as well as expressive skills, in order to reach total comprehension.

### **f) The Analytical Approach**

In order to perceive the text as a whole, students need first be aware of all its underlying features like the main idea, the symbolism or the general tone. “The goal of the analytical approach is synthesis through analysis” (Hook, 1948).

Students will learn to appreciate the overall outcome only after seeing every little piece fall into place, and through a careful planning, reach true aesthetic value as a whole.

This does not mean that a literary text should undergo all six approaches in one session, because this would lack in practicality and depth, but rather that a teacher should change them with each text and “in light of the objectives of the study, the characteristics of the literature, and the knowledge, ability, and interests of the class” (Hook, 1948).

## **5. English Language Teaching in Croatia**

The importance of English as a foreign language in Croatia has grown exponentially post World War II, when it was first introduced into the school curriculum (Vilke, 2007).

Although English co-existed with foreign languages such as German and Russian, taught either due to their historical or political reasons, those teachers who taught English did so observing their most contemporary linguistic currents.

Indeed, Alexandar Lochmer was the first to teach ESP at the Nautical School in Bakar, to publish a book of English phonetics, English grammar and to develop an English-Croatian dictionary in 1906, while his female counterpart, Natalija Wickerhauser, who taught at the Women's High School in Zagreb, adhered to the principles of the Direct Method and helped introduce English periods into women's schools (Filipović, 1972).

In the 1950's, under the influence of the American structuralism, Rudolf Filipović ascertained that ELT was "conducted according to the most recent teaching methods based on Bloomfield's structuralism" (Vilke, 2007). Consequently, the ASTP had a major influence on teaching English in general and called for a joint effort of educationists and politicians to reform the country's ELT program and incorporate the newest theoretical standpoints of applied linguistics, psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics.

### **5.1. The 1970's**

The break from structuralism and the adoption of a more efficient and diverse approach to language teaching was the guideline of the reform of the ELT program which took place between 1972 and 1975. The aforementioned theoretical underpinnings encouraged educationists to work towards a student-centred approach, i.e. the revised language



curriculum was intended to “meet the needs of learners of foreign language in Croatian schools” (Early, 1976).

The need for change was especially felt at the secondary-school level, which called for an unbiased distinction between ESP for vocational schools, and the English for General Communicative Purposes of grammar schools.

The reform engaged the Department of English of the University of Zagreb, the Ministry of Education and the British Council. New theories and practical knowledge of ELT methodology were made available to Croatian teachers by means of seminars, given by outstanding international experts, and devoted to areas like Creative Language-Teaching, Communicative Language-Teaching, Applied Linguistics and Textbook-Writing (Early, 1976).

Also included were the new US approaches to ELT such as Curran’s Community Language-Learning which considered students as whole persons, i.e. beings of intellect and emotion, and educated teachers towards understanding all the underlying factors of language-learning in order to avoid negative washback and help students advance their learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2000), and Gattegno’s Silent Way which relied on students to engage their inherent language-learning abilities to integrate new information, and use it as a “stepping stone for further learning” (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

The aforementioned methods had a common goal, i.e. to provide students with grammatical knowledge in order to develop functional skills (Johnson, 1976). However the objective was only partly achieved. The prevailing outcome was that students were able to correctly use the target language within a classroom environment but they were unable to apply their knowledge to successfully communicate outside of it.

The need to develop students’ communicative competences contributed to the development of the Communicative Language-Teaching method between the 1970’s and the

1980's, which was an integral part of the curricular reform. As pointed out by Early (1976) one of the reform's trends was indeed the "recognition of the need for a 'communicative' approach to English teaching in which the functional or rhetorical value of an utterance should be accorded at least an equal place alongside its formal or systematic characteristics". As a consequence, ELT teaching materials were revised and educationists recognized the need for a new secondary-school syllabus.

In 1972 D.A. Wilkins proposed a new approach to language-teaching based on training students in particular communicative functions in order to develop their conversational skills and thus be able to effectively communicate at different levels of competence. Wilkin's functional approach established teaching communicative functions grouped according to the sequence in which they might be used by learners. "Introductions" and "Greetings" were usually followed by "Making requests" (introducing exponents such as *Can I ...?*, *Could you ...?*, and *Is it alright if I ...?*) and "Invitations".

Following Wilkin's Council of Europe publications, a set of proposals was drawn and submitted to the Croatian Education Department. In 1976 Keith Johnson closely considered these proposals in an article dedicated to the production of functional materials. Their main purpose was to alter student's current language learning by focusing on "learning how the language is used" instead of "learning how the language operates" (Johnson, 1976). Johnson's conclusions were in line with a widespread criticism of the functional approach in general.

First and foremost, the inherent structural incoherence of communicative functions, posed a major problem for a dynamic teaching progression in order of complexity. A functional approach would entail disregarding a practical grammatical grading, which ensures the acquisition of simpler structures to be followed by more complex ones.

Secondly, a clear distinction of functional categories is not always possible. A question like *Can you come with me to the cinema tonight?*, could pertain to different

categories like “Invitation”, “Suggestion” or “Possibility” (Johnson, 1976), and an explicit classification of communicative functions would obstruct formulating functional generalisations which are expected to guide learners towards using them in consequent communicative acts.

Lastly, it is unlikely to avoid bias when drawing up a selection of suitable functional exponents for each category. However, once they are selected these items have to be carefully distinguished within the same category in order of frequency.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings of this approach and the inherent complexities of the production of viable functional materials, Johnson favoured the integration of the functional component within the existing syllabus to “ensure that due emphasis was given to communicative considerations” (Johnson, 1976).

The functional approach has had a major impact on ELT in general and gave a strong input in the improvement of teaching materials. It broke through the ranks of dated teaching methods by introducing a variety of examples of useful communicative expressions which were paired to more traditional grammar and vocabulary approaches.

In the aftermath of the reform in Croatia, the common-core syllabus has been redesigned, while textbooks have been rewritten in order to integrate the functional component. Although the contents of ELT textbooks have undergone many revisions to the present day, they still retain the same overall organisation, i.e. the development of theme units such as “The generation gap”, or “A holiday in London”, followed by language-practice and functional materials designed to fully exploit the subject.

Since the reform was based on a multi-media approach, parallel experimental ELT materials were produced for Radio-Television Zagreb, aimed at further developing those theme units dedicated to England which “included problem-solving exercises, role-playing,

project work, authentic listening comprehension material, pop songs, poetry and material intended for intensive and extensive reading” (Early, 1976).

In addition, numerous longitudinal and cross-sectional research studies have been conducted in order to test the resulting theoretical concerns. Among these, the Yugoslav Serbo-Croatian English Project (YSCECP) was a pioneering international project actualized by Rudolf Filipović. The contrastive analysis of Croatian and English grammar categories aimed at revealing troublesome areas for Croatian English learners. Also, it was designed to be twofold, i.e. general linguistic and pedagogical.

Results were obtained conducting a contrastive analysis concurrent with an error analysis. Members of the project produced a large number of studies, isolating those linguistic items which hindered acquisition. On the basis of these results, new teaching techniques were advanced alongside the development of more efficient teaching materials.

The project was coordinated throughout all the countries of former Yugoslavia and sponsored by USA’s Ford Foundation.

## **5.2. The 1990’s**

Following a research on early English learning, in 1991 four languages, English, Italian, German and French were introduced on experimental basis into the first grade of primary education. Albeit an initial support by the Ministry of Education, unfortunately the project stood against adverse political circumstances throughout its unfolding.

Though internationally acknowledged, the validity of its results had been disregarded even when English was being introduced, on a compulsory basis, into the first grade of primary school in 2003. Its perseverance was guaranteed exclusively by the outstanding enthusiasm of its teachers and researchers.

Nevertheless, the study yielded four theoretical books (Vilke & Vrhovac, 1993; Vilke & Vrhovac, 1995, Vrhovac et.al., 1999, Vrhovac, 2001), various textbooks and other teaching materials, and the Croatian National Educational Standard had agreed on the importance of foreign language learning from a young age.

As a result, it was ascertained that foreign language learning fostered students' intellectual development by increasing their understanding of cultural diversity, overall improving critical thinking and advancing their linguistic skills in a communicative context.

Consequently, English became the primary foreign language students learn throughout their education.

Croatia is among those European countries which have a separate foreign language curriculum. The FLT practice aims at allowing students to improve their receptive skills, i.e. to understand and read language contents written in different styles, as well as to apply their knowledge to enhance their productive skills, i.e. the ability to convey a certain communicational message in the TL, and to acquire the norms of writing in order to express coherent content in the context of written communication.

In accordance with the current foreign language curriculum, teaching aims at developing both receptive and productive skills, as well as students' translation skills, while the main objective is for students to reach a B2 level of proficiency on completing secondary education. Although this goal is conform to CEFR guidelines, many descriptors still remain exceedingly inconclusive, blurring the lines between proficiency expectations as students' progress from lower to higher levels of education (Prpić, 2009).

Due to Europe's multilingualism, and the consequential need to create a functional community, the Council of Europe recognized the need for a Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR).

The CEFR has thus become an indispensable tool for creating detailed outlines for FLT goals and expected levels of acquisition. Although the inherent descriptors might appear as overly generic, and thus open to differing interpretations, they are nevertheless to be taken at face value due to their level of standardization and uniformity in regards to obtainable communicative competences and conventional outcomes.

The curriculum that was developed in Croatia in 1994, and is still in use, has been in line with the aims of the European language teaching policy whose objective is to foster a “competent language user (who) does not possess only knowledge about language but also the ability to activate this knowledge in a communication act” (Prpić, 2009), however it currently does not adhere to it entirely since its publishing antedates that of the CEFR (2001).

### **5.3. The 2000’s**

Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to the present day, there have been numerous projects to attest the unceasing efforts of our country’s Government to improve the overall quality of education and meet the standards set by the European Union.

The first steps towards change were made as early as 2004, when the creators of Croatia’s educational guidelines initiated a project titled The Compendium of Knowledge<sup>1</sup> for primary education. The Compendium was expected to set clear limits to the content of taught subjects and avoid unnecessary repetitions and overlaps. Furthermore, it was intended to serve as a framework for the preparation of subject-based curricula, the development of textbooks and other teaching and educational material.

The Ministry of Science, Education and Sports asserted that one of the main reasons for the formulation of the Compendium was an underlying concern regarding the extent of

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<sup>1</sup> Katalog znanja

students' workload, however this decision was not grounded on authentic research or any previous attempts towards moderation.

As a result, the Compendium could not guarantee a successful resolution of established objectives, among which the decrease of current students' workload, and by the end of 2004 it became obvious that the document would not yield the expected outcomes.

In 2005, the Government approved the Education Sector Development Plan 2005-2010, in addition to a school reform project known as the Croatian National Education Standard (CNES). The aim of CNES was to create a system based on students' needs, i.e. to decrease the inherent workload and eliminate the unnecessary redundancy of educational programs by implementing modern teaching methods such as research-based instruction, individual and group work. This implied a reduction of encyclopaedic content, in favour of developing students' entrepreneurship and competences for lifelong learning, thus emphasizing the instructional role of Compulsory and Secondary Education (Nacionalni program, 2007).

The aforementioned projects have created essential circumstances for the devising of the Strategy for the Preparation and Development of the National Curriculum for Pre-School Education, General Compulsory and Secondary Education in 2007 (AZOO, 2016).

The purpose of the document was as follows (MZOS, 2016):

- a) to define which fundamental instructional objectives and implicit values were expected to be reached and obtained during pre-school, compulsory and secondary education
- b) to improve the overall quality of teaching and education in our schools
- c) to maintain equivalent pedagogical standards in every school, i.e. ensure the essential requirements for valuable teaching and grant equal rights to education

- d) to provide the conditions for a steady development of the National Curriculum Framework
- e) to appoint a competent authority to supervise possible revisions of the document and suggest their level of priority
- f) to present any possible change explicitly and transparently, following a calendar for their implementation and a detailed financial plan
- g) to compare our education system with other countries and strive towards reaching the goals set by European standards

The Strategy established the groundwork for the drafting of the Proposal of the National Curriculum for Pre-School Education, General Compulsory and Secondary Education in 2008. The document defined the goals, values, principles and purpose of education, i.e. expectations regarding students' acquired knowledge and competences, as well as suggest learning processes and outcomes assessment.

The Proposal was grounded on a holistic approach to the selection and organization of instructional content, and focused on seven educational areas

- a) language and communication
- b) social science and humanities
- c) mathematical and natural science
- d) technical and computer science
- e) physical and health
- f) artistic education, practical work and design



In addition, cross-curricular topics were added in order to grant students an insight into contrasting perspectives and encourage them to further explore the content through different subject fields.

The Proposal considered other important issues, such as the extension of compulsory education. Even though all experts agreed that an undertaking in this direction would be more than beneficial for students, because it would allow them to acquire essential skills and abilities needed for pursuing more fulfilling employments, the matter remained somewhat ambiguous.

### **5.3.1. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF)**

In 2010 the National Curriculum Framework for Pre-School Education and General Compulsory and Secondary Education was published. The National Curriculum retains many key elements presented within the Proposal in 2008, among which the extension of General Education to nine years, and Compulsory Education to the first and second year of high school.

Indeed, the document explicitly asserts that secondary schooling is to be considered part of Compulsory Education, meaning that each student is required to progress from General Compulsory to Secondary Education (NCF, 2010).

The NCF introduces principles which are essential for a quality pre-school, general compulsory and secondary education system

- a) goals, values, educational principles and contents of specific educational areas
- b) an assessment system of students' achievements
- c) evaluation of the appropriateness of various educational areas

- d) self-evaluation of accomplishments in regards to the purposes and objectives set by the Curriculum

Moreover, it also addresses the instruction of children with special educational needs.

The document defines the expected accomplishments within established educational areas, consistent with a specific education cycle and objectives derived from cross-curricular themes, aimed at developing students' key competences.

The NCF is the primary element for the elaboration of the country's educational structure. It regulates the articulation of the core curriculum, specifying which subjects are compulsory, contrary to elective subjects, and determines the overall students' workload. In addition, it serves as a reference for the development of subject curricula as well as any other educational document, i.e. instructions for its implementation, teachers and parents' manuals, guidelines for writing textbooks or other supplementary teaching materials, and assessment principles to monitor the quality of acquired knowledge and competences.

In accordance with the European Competence Framework and curriculum policy, the Curriculum is designed to develop students' competences for lifelong learning

- a) communication in one's mother tongue
- b) communication in (a) foreign language/s
- c) mathematical, scientific and technological competences
- d) digital competence
- e) learning competence
- f) social and civic competence
- g) cultural awareness and expression (NCF, 2010)

Apart from a student-centred approach to education, the NCF has formally acknowledged that eight years of general compulsory education are insufficient to develop the aforementioned competences. As a result, the document implements a conjoint general education core for secondary vocational and art schools, as well as a common core for secondary grammar schools (NCF, 2010).

Additionally, students are to obtain the expected key competences throughout five educational cycles, divided in agreement with their developmental phases:

- a) the first cycle, i.e. the first four years of primary school
- b) the second cycle, i.e. grades 5 and 6 of primary school
- c) the third cycle, i.e. grades 7 and 8 of primary school
- d) the fourth and fifth cycle, i.e. the first two years of secondary vocational and art schools and grades 1 through 4 of secondary grammar schools

During the fourth cycle students obtain the first (lowest) level of qualification, at the age of 16 on average (NCF, 2010).

### **5.3.2. The Comprehensive Curriculum Reform**

At present the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform is under way in Croatia, developed by hundreds of experts, school teachers and university professors. The new national curricula should be divided into five levels and types of education

- a) early and pre-school education
- b) primary education (with a proposed duration of nine years)
- c) secondary grammar education

- d) vocational education and training (VET)
- e) art education

The Reform focuses on the development of subject curricula drafts whose fundamental aim is to bridge different levels and types of instruction and set unambiguous objectives and expectations.

English language and literature pertains to the linguistic and communicational section of the new Curriculum and is taught as a foreign language throughout all educational cycles and levels of education, either as a compulsory or elective subject. The number of allotted hours per week varies according to the cycle and type of secondary education (MZOS, 2016).

The common goal of all subjects within this section of the Curriculum is to encourage students to use the target language consciously, to foster the acquisition and transfer of knowledge, to develop unbiased attitudes and values and to stimulate abstract critical thinking as a prerequisite for a successful education.

Notwithstanding its intrinsic distinctiveness as a subject to be taught and a means to teach, the English language is closely connected to all educational areas, cross-cultural topics and all other subject curricula. This congruity is primarily attained with linguistic, social, human and artistic areas due to the nature of its instructional content which encompasses linguistic content, cultural and personal heritage, history and art.

At the subject curriculum level English language teaching is closely associated to Croatian language teaching and other foreign languages. By integrating content with language teaching, the process of learning a language becomes purposeful for lifelong learning.

As students' progress through the next educational cycle this approach to language teaching conforms to their needs, i.e. their educational or professional objectives. Moreover, the importance of English as a foreign language grows gradually due to its importance as a

communicational tool on a global scale. As a result, it is an inevitable element of numerous projects, integrative programs and students' independent activities to cultivate a continuous education (MZOS, 2016).

### **5.3.3. The English subject curriculum draft (2016)**

The English subject curriculum draft (2016) is formulated in accordance with modern approaches to teaching foreign languages. The document supplements many new features, which are a direct result of the totality of concepts, opinions and suggestions that have been elaborated within all preceding documents.

The subject draft encompasses both primary and secondary education, i.e. it addresses the entire educational structure throughout the four educational cycles.

Insofar, the most important change is a clear detachment from previous syllabi and teaching curriculums. The proposal draft does not focus on content, but instead constructs the curriculum throughout three educational areas which are paramount for FL acquisition:

- 1) linguistic competence
- 2) intercultural competence
- 3) learning autonomy

These areas are the result of principles established by the National Curriculum Framework, i.e. the development of students' core competences, such as communicative skills, as the main objective of FL teaching.

The aforementioned domains allow for clearly defined goals which are in complete accordance to students' developmental phases. Moreover, they provide the subject curriculum

with an overall structural balance and are the basis for all education outcomes delivered throughout the educational cycles.

The new subject curriculum also focuses on achieving specific outcomes by fostering a student-centred approach to learning and teaching (MZOS, 2016):

- a) linguistic competence objectives aim at the acquisition of basic knowledge regarding foreign languages in general, and the consequent mastering of all necessary skills to apply said knowledge in everyday communication
- b) intercultural objectives aim at providing students with an insight into cultural similarities and divergences, in order to help them construct an appropriate cultural context which will allow for a successful intercultural communication
- c) learning autonomy objectives aim at motivating students to further explore and employ more effective learning strategies, as a necessary tool for lifelong learning

The elaborated outcomes allege the expected level of knowledge, as well as developed attitudes based on the current year of learning. Each outcome is divided into various levels of accomplishment to allow teachers to accurately ascertain their students' level conforming to set expectation, they are inherently cumulative, i.e. outcomes for subsequent grades include those elaborated previously, and they are not exhaustive in a sense that teachers are free to supplement and adapt them to adjust their teaching according to fit students' needs, abilities and interests.

This approach should ensure students' an unquestionable continuity in their academic advancement, resulting in a more balanced transition to ensuing years or between cycles (MZOS, 2016).

The new curriculum would thus guarantee educators a high level of autonomy to organize the teaching process. Teachers would be able to regulate the quality of

implementation of the new curriculum by determining the content and methods of teaching, and independently manage the time allotted to the realization of specific educational outcomes. Therefore language teaching should result in an authentic and stimulating learning environment built on collaborative, experience-based learning and integrative language and content teaching, aimed at fostering creativity and the overall reinforcement of students' critical thinking.

## 6. The State Graduation Exam

Since 2009, students who have completed their secondary education are required to take the State Graduation Exam in order to enrol at one of the universities in the Republic of Croatia.

The Exam consists of two parts:

- a) mandatory subjects, i.e. Croatian Language and Literature, Mathematics and Foreign Language
- b) elective subjects, appointed by the National Centre for Evaluation of Education (NCEE) each academic year.

Furthermore, each student can undertake mandatory subjects at two different levels of difficulty: advanced level (A), or basic level (B).

As an instrument, the Exam is of paramount importance to rank all candidates applying for the available study programs because it is conceived as an objective evaluation of students' academic achievements, i.e. of all skills and knowledge acquired during their education.

The main goal is to establish a dependable frame of reference for external evaluation, aimed at assessing and improving the overall quality of instruction and learning outcomes.

Overall, the State Graduation Exam has had a significant impact on the quality of both secondary and high education. Setting unequivocal requirements and expectations has better prepared students for future endeavours and added a layer of fairness and transparency when selecting successful candidates (MZOS, 2016).



## **6.1. Towards an integrative approach**

As literature teachers our goal should be to educate our students to appreciate literature for its overall social importance and guide them towards perceiving it as a means to ascertain solutions to their personal problems while they “seek to establish themselves in a structured world” (Lewis, 1976). As language teachers, we should exploit literature to demonstrate to our students the value and beauty of language learning.

Reading is a cathartic experience for anyone. It widens our perception of the world, it makes us reflect upon our moral values, our society and our peers. Reading literary texts is an essential aspect of any literature teaching. It fosters literacy and the ability to understand and employ cultural values to enhance personal growth.

The education system in Croatia encourages the cultivation of a universal literary awareness, by means of guiding students, throughout their education, towards the most outstanding exponents of the nation’s literary tradition and of World’s Literature by extension.

Our students are educated to approach literary texts through a cognitive, pragmatic, emotional and aesthetic prism, which allows for a more comprehensive reception, interpretation, evaluation and a successful development of critical thinking and ingenuity.

As the new Comprehensive Curriculum Reform emphasises the need for a more integrative approach in teaching, subjects such as Croatian Literature and Language and content subjects on the one hand, and English Language teaching on the other, could potentially become even more interwoven. Indeed, the new Curriculum recognizes the importance of a well-structured correlation between subjects, which would result in students reaching a better comprehension of taught content.

The latter is not to be understood as pertinent to ELT classes exclusively, given how nowadays the Internet dominates the foreign language field. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I am responsible to constrain my argument to the former liaison.

The implementation of integrative literary lesson plans in ELT classes benefits both teachers and students because it allows to add another layer of authenticity to the language classroom. Students are encouraged to express themselves in the target language and teachers can create numerous opportunities for students to use their background knowledge, or previous experience, when interacting in a classroom environment.

In addition, by providing varied activities to foster both receptive and productive skills, i.e. speaking, reading, listening and writing, teacher may address all the different ability levels within their classroom.

## **6.2. English Literature and the Croatian Literature subject curriculum**

Ever since the 1990's, several exponents of the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition have established themselves in the Croatian Literature and Language subject curriculum, within a mandatory section of World Literature. In the current curriculum these texts are as follows:

1. *Beowulf*
2. Faulkner, W., *The Sound And The Fury*
3. Harolds, C., *Pilgrimage*
4. Hemingway, E., , *For Whom The Bell Tolls, The Old Man And The Sea*
5. Poe, E. A., *The Black Cat, The Raven*
6. Salinger, J. D., *The Catcher In The Rye*
7. Shakespeare, W., *Hamlet, A Midsummer's Night Dream, Sonnets XVIII, CXVI, CXXX*

In 2016, The Croatian subject draft proposal has revised the original list, Appendix A, adding numerous other literary works as a suggestion for complementary reading. All texts are in conformance with students' expected cognitive abilities and receptive skills.

The list is not to be regarded as categorical, but rather as a resourceful guide for teachers and students. In addition, teachers are free to appoint alternatives should they find them better fitting their students' needs and interests.

The suggested works adhere to few important principles:

- a) they are universally accepted for their literary value
- b) they enable students to read unassisted
- c) they are suitable for the students' age group, culture and life experience in complete accordance with their needs and interests
- d) the proposed texts represent different literary periods and genres and result in varied cultural and reading experiences

Above all, the lists inherent flexibility allows teachers to focus on students, helping them fashion their literary journey individually and guaranteeing a high level of independence within the taught content.

As I have elaborated in the previous section, at the end of secondary education Croatian students are required to pass the State Graduation Exam. Both Croatian Literature and Language and English Language are among the mandatory subjects.

In the academic year 2013/2014, the NCEE has issued the first number of the State Examination Guide, a brief catalogue for each mandatory and elective subject. The main idea behind the bulletin is to help students to better manage their time and energies, in order to

successfully prepare themselves for the exam. The catalogue is divided into two sections, one for each level of difficulty, i.e. advanced (A) and basic (B).

The Croatian subject exam comprises of two parts: a written essay, and exercises with close-ended questions to test students' literary knowledge and linguistic abilities. After a detailed review of the bulletins, it is possible to highlight those works of the English Literature which are repeatedly on the list of required texts for each of the two sections of the examination.

The table below reproduces data as follows:

1. **column 1** → the academic year of the examination for which the catalogue is valid
2. **column 2** → a list of required authors and respective works for the advanced level of examination (A)
3. **column 3** → the purpose of preparation (PP) for each listed literary text, i.e. to prepare students for the written task or answering close-ended questions for the advanced level of examination (A)
4. **column 4** → a list of required authors and respective works for the basic level of examination (B)
5. **column 5** → the purpose of preparation (PP) for each listed literary text, i.e. to prepare students for the written task or answering close-ended questions for the basic level of examination (B)

year	Advanced level (A)	PP (A)	Basic level (B)	PP (B)
2013/2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Poe, E.A., <i>The Black Cat</i></li> <li>✓ Salinger, J.D., <i>The Catcher In The Rye</i></li> <li>✓ Shakespeare, W., <i>Hamlet</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ essay, comprehension and analysis</li> <li>✓ essay</li> <li>✓ comprehension and analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> <li>-</li> <li>✓ Shakespeare, W., <i>Hamlet</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> <li>-</li> <li>✓ comprehension and analysis</li> </ul>
2014/2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Poe, E.A., <i>The Black Cat</i></li> <li>✓ Salinger, J.D., <i>The Catcher In The Rye</i></li> <li>✓ Shakespeare, W., <i>Hamlet</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ essay</li> <li>✓ essay</li> <li>✓ comprehension and analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> <li>-</li> <li>✓ Shakespeare, W., <i>Hamlet</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> <li>-</li> <li>✓ comprehension and analysis</li> </ul>
2015/2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Salinger, J.D., <i>The Catcher In The Rye</i></li> <li>✓ Shakespeare, W., <i>Hamlet</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ essay</li> <li>✓ essay, comprehension and analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> <li>✓ Shakespeare, W., <i>Hamlet</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> <li>✓ essay, comprehension and analysis</li> </ul>
2016/2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Poe, E.A., <i>The Black Cat</i></li> <li>✓ Salinger, J.D., <i>The Catcher In The Rye</i></li> <li>✓ Shakespeare, W., <i>Hamlet</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ essay</li> <li>✓ essay</li> <li>✓ essay, comprehension and analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> <li>-</li> <li>Shakespeare, W., <i>Hamlet</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> <li>-</li> <li>✓ essay, comprehension and analysis</li> </ul>

One of the leading queries, in regards to exploiting literature in the ELT, EFL or ESL classroom, concerns not so much its long-term effectiveness, but rather the “how, when, where and why it should be used” (Sage, 1987).

According to the guidelines of the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform, teachers are encouraged to cultivate an improved correlation between subjects in order to help students nurture their creativity, advance their critical thinking abilities and broaden their overall intellectual capacity.

Therefore, in the next section I have designed two lesson plans which are to be observed as complementary to the Croatian Literature and Language subject. The underlying intent is to increase students’ interest and guide them towards a better understanding of the subject matter.

As a result, students are motivated to learn, they internalize the acquired information effortlessly and are able to recall it more easily in the future.

### **6.3. Lesson plan 1: *O that this too too sullied flesh would melt*, soliloquy**

For obvious reasons, Shakespeare is not a casual choice. As it is discernible from the table above, *Hamlet* has been recommended each academic year for both levels of the State Graduation Exam. It thus offers numerous collaborative opportunities for Croatian and English teachers.

After establishing a common educational goal, the English teacher has the opportunity to analyse a modest selection of the play's scenes in the authentic language through a communicative and task-based approach to language teaching.

Apart from fostering overall comprehension and improving student's receptive and productive skills, the fundamental objective is to help students relate to the literary work. The goal is to motivate them to read the play not as a task, but out of interest.

Reading becomes an experience that allows them to grow: it teaches them to sympathise with the main character and gives them the means to plunge into the social and psychological analysis without much effort. The end result should be to have our students express their personal opinion, to have the ability to rationally infer on the cause and effects of particular actions, point out similarities and differences and associate them to their own personal experience (Bužan, 2002).

The importance of a play like *Hamlet* is unparalleled because it successfully blends a powerful story-line with an exhaustive insight into the many facets of the human mind, transforming itself into a unique contemplative text.

Hamlet's tragedy resides not in his final demise as a culmination of his retribution, but rather in the burden to carry out a revenge in the first place. As he is not naturally suited to it, it defines him by inaction.

Through powerful monologues thus Shakespeare shows all of Hamlet's psychological complexity and all the intrinsic reasons which have resulted in such overwhelming reactions.

### 6.3.1. Lesson plan

#### 1) BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- ✓ **thematic unit:** *Act I scene II*, Hamlet's soliloquy
- ✓ **Institution:** 2<sup>nd</sup> year of grammar school. The LP could be re-used once again during the final months of 4<sup>th</sup> grade, before the State Exam
- ✓ **level:** Intermediate (B1)/ Upper-Intermediate (B2)
- ✓ **number of class/week:** 3
- ✓ **activities leading up to this lesson:** The life and works of William Shakespeare, Introduction to Hamlet.

#### 2) LESSON LEARNING OBJECTIVES CONFORMING TO THE ENGLISH SUBJECT DRAFT (2016)

##### a) LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

- ✓ determine the main idea of the text, deduce any specific information or implied underlying nuances, successfully employ reading and listening strategies
- ✓ develop reading literacy and foster reading for pleasure
- ✓ express one's opinion, ideas and attitudes and justify them
- ✓ present the results of individual or group work in front of one's peers

- ✓ employ appropriate strategies to begin, sustain, end a conversation and assume one's right to retort
- ✓ employ appropriate strategies to organize a written composition (division into sections, cohesive devices and linguistic structures that show a higher level of complexity)
- ✓ administer spelling rules, correct and edit one's written composition

**b) INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE**

- ✓ justify one's opinion and support it with examples

**c) LEARNING AUTONOMY**

- ✓ determine and interpret the problem, assess the reliability of resources and the accurateness and coherence of expressed attitudes and opinions
- ✓ develop the ability to interpret and discriminate information and meanings, discern among different types of resources and objectively comprehend given information in order to report to others

**3) LESSON LEARNING SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- ✓ Students will be able to reproduce the text orally
- ✓ Students will be able to give a definition of soliloquy and discuss its relevance within the play
- ✓ Students will be able to identify common and relevant themes
- ✓ Students will be able to describe Hamlet's character
- ✓ Students will be able to use previous knowledge to infer on vocabulary



- ✓ Students will be able to produce a guided written task using Reported Speech (past)
- ✓ Students will be able to discuss ideas and express opinions

#### **4) LESSON (LANGUAGE) FOCUS**

- ✓ Reading & Comprehension (inferring unknown vocabulary)
- ✓ Skimming
- ✓ Scanning
- ✓ Interaction (eliciting speaking, overall spoken interaction & general linguistic range)
- ✓ Schemata (brainstorming ideas, working in small groups, personal opinions)
- ✓ Authenticity (T-Ss interaction, Ss-Ss interaction in TL)
- ✓ Grammar: Present perfect continuous, Conditional II, Reported speech (past)

#### **5) SEQUENCE AND STAGE OF LESSON ACTIVITIES**

##### **1) Pre-activity: Communication activity in three steps.**

##### **✓ Step 1, estimated duration 5 minutes**

Inquire after your students' possible familiarity with any Shakespearean quotations. Tell them to work in pairs, and jot down as many as they can remember, without consulting their notebooks or textbooks. Since students are required to read Shakespeare in Croatian, they will most likely not carry out the task in English, with possible exceptions.

Instruct your students to brainstorm for ideas and make notes in the process, then discuss them with their partner and agree on a passage they both like. It is not important that students write the exact words: for those who have not mastered chunks of the play it is enough to be able to describe the desired reference in English.

The nature of this introduction aims at eliciting your students' active participation: by associating with their previous knowledge you allow them to construct a contextual frame. The goal is to motivate them and, by means of establishing a meaningful background, teach them to consciously engage and enjoy a Shakespearean text.

✓ **Step 2, estimated duration 3 minutes**

Start a class discussion by asking your students to ponder upon a possible disappointment, grievance or plain annoyance, they might have experienced sometime in their distant or recent past. The goal is to elicit active language use by encouraging them to share ideas and emotions.

This step allows them to positively channel any existent frustration and gives them a chance to bond on a personal level with their peers.

On the other hand, it sets them in an appropriate mind-frame to better appreciate and comprehend the monologue.

✓ **Step 3, estimated duration 5 minutes**

Distribute Handout 1, Appendix B, which lists a short summary of what has happened in the play so far. In my handout I have written a short title

sentence to each excerpt of the text, but teachers could opt to assign it as additional task during this step.

Instruct your students to read through the handout, point out that some expressions have been underlined and ask them to write down a short explanation, i.e. interpretation for each one.

Students work in pairs or small groups and the goal is to contextualize the plot leading to this moment, which helps them better understand Hamlet's character and his current state of mind.

As a result, students should be able to detect the profound undertone to the monologue and employ critical thinking and writing skills, in order to articulate their thoughts.

## **2) Main activity:**

### **✓ Listening, estimated duration 5 minutes**

Instruct your students to close their eyes and listen to the audio excerpt. They will listen to Kenneth Branagh interpreting Hamlet's first soliloquy, Act I scene II, in own cinematographic adaptation (1996).

This task will establish a relaxed and student-friendly environment which will motivate them to actively participate. The audio allows them to perceive the text in an authentic context and at the same time exercise their listening skills.

Thus the text reaches your students entirely and more profoundly, as opposed to having to read it by themselves.

Furthermore, it gives students modern means to connect with the text and gets them better acquainted with the Shakespearean language and inherent pronunciation.

✓ **Reading and underlining unknown vocabulary, inferring meaning, comprehension, estimated duration 12 minutes**

Distribute Handout 2, Appendix C, which portrays the monologue and instruct the class to skim through it and underline unknown words. Tell them to think about possible meanings and encourage an active use of a monolingual dictionary.

Help your students infer on unknown vocabulary from context. Ask them open-ended WH-questions to evaluate how much of the text they have actually understood.

Use the whiteboard to appoint their next task, i.e. to find and underline within the text those lines which provide an example for the following features:

1. poor self-esteem
2. outpour of disgust, anger, sorrow and grief
3. use of contrast, e.g. body vs. soul, honour and virtue vs. lust and excess
4. insincere grief and an apparent wish to satisfy one's lust and greed

With this approach, students learn to negotiate meaning through questioning and answering techniques and develop listening skills for main idea, specific information and/or overall comprehension.

### 3) Post-activity:

#### ✓ Writing, estimated duration 10 minutes

Distribute Handout 3, Appendix D, and instruct your students to either work in pairs or in small groups. By working in pairs students advance their social skills and learn mutual appreciation in order to reach a satisfying agreement.

The handout proposes two possible exercises, depending on how much time you have at your disposal. Hamlet's soliloquy has been re-written in Modern English and the lines have been jumbled.

The first task is to re-order them by means of writing the appropriate number in the left column. It is an excellent way to assess the overall comprehension of the text and single out those, if any, areas that need further attention.

As a teacher you should oversee your students and offer to help them if needed but avoid excessive corrections, since they might be counterproductive. The best approach is to guide your students towards finding the best solution independently.

The second task consists into transforming the monologue into Reported speech, to practice relevant grammatical structures.

## 6) POSSIBLE PROBLEMS

Students might not be on the same level of proficiency, i.e. the level of English will most likely vary from student to student, and thus some might experience difficulties understanding the meaning of the text, or simply infer unknown vocabulary.

Furthermore, group work might be focused around the most proficient student, allowing those that are less competent to sit back and avoid participation.

To counter these problems, teachers should attempt to assess the general level of English beforehand, and form pairs and groups accordingly, in order to reach a homogeneous outcome.

### 6.4. Lesson plan 2: *The Catcher In The Rye*

J.D. Salinger's book has also been on the list of recommended reads for the State Graduation Exam and will thus be the focus of the following chapter.

A great cooperation between teachers can assume many different forms and involve more than two subjects, and this has greatly motivated my attempt to coordinate the integration of the English subject with Croatian literature and language and a content teaching subject like History, to develop this lesson plan.

The lesson plan focuses on the historical contextualization of Salinger's novel within the post-World War II America. One of the main goals is to bring together students' language skills, their background knowledge and content instruction in order to develop both receptive and productive skills, amid the framework of a specific topic area, which gives them the means and necessary knowledge to employ in their literature classes.

Even though the novel is an excellent example of a first-person narrator, and Holden Caulfield is undoubtedly an intelligent, if emotionally depressed, cynical leading voice, he is, nevertheless, the pure expression of a time of great wealth and prosperity and a disoriented society on a breach from traditional norms and values. Indeed, the 1950's are usually perceived as an abundant and peaceful period, but they are essentially an adjustment to political, cultural and private alterations within different layers of society.

An awareness of a common historical past is fundamental for every society and its advancement. It facilitates an understanding of current events and possible repercussions in the future, and it fosters and overall increase of students' critical abilities.

Learning about history helps students organize and critically analyse information based on relevance, scrutinize the context of given historical events from various perspectives, and encourages the development of individual interpretations and argumentative standpoints, which are imperative for a productive discourse.

Constructing a meaningful historical context around the novel would undoubtedly promote the transfer of learning and improve the retention of information. Furthermore, it builds students' intrinsic motivation because the task is perceived as enjoyable and useful and, as a result of this, students will be more engaged in the learning process.

In order to attain this end result, I have decided to use the Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Technique (JCLT). The underlying teaching strategy of this learning technique is straightforward. Each student is appointed a seat into two heterogeneous cooperative groups. The first one, named home group, is where students share their gathered knowledge on a specific topic after they have ascertained all the relevant information. The second one, named expert group, is where students address and learn a particular content.

The JCLT puts a great emphasis on the employment of explicit literacy strategies such as monitoring one's comprehension, generating additional questions and summarizing, while fostering student autonomy, teamwork and communicative skills.

### 6.4.1. Lesson plan

#### 1) BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- ✓ **thematic unit:** *Post-World War II America*
- ✓ **Institution:** 1<sup>st</sup> year of grammar school
- ✓ **level:** Intermediate (B1)
- ✓ **number of class/week:** 3
- ✓ **activities leading up to this lesson:** The 2<sup>nd</sup> WW, a historical introduction to J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher In The Rye*

#### 2) LESSON LEARNING OBJECTIVES CONFORMING TO THE ENGLISH SUBJECT DRAFT (2016)

##### a) LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE

- ✓ discriminate relevant from irrelevant information
- ✓ employ reading and listening strategies
- ✓ comprehend spoken language which employs common expressions of the standard target language
- ✓ plan and carry out a successful discourse
- ✓ express one's opinion ideas and attitudes and endorse them with evidence and examples



- ✓ plan and arrange an oral exposition
- ✓ plan, structure content and organize a written composition into paragraphs

**b) INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE**

- ✓ increase the extent of knowledge concerning other cultures
- ✓ determine and evaluate analogies and divergences with one's culture and another
- ✓ assess the with reference to society and/or culture of those countries of the target language and another

**c) LEARNING AUTONOMY**

- ✓ evaluate and employ all necessary processes to successfully complete a task
- ✓ parse unknown terms and structures into familiar components in order to comprehend and apply them correctly
- ✓ acknowledge separate tasks showing a clear understanding of their purpose
- ✓ nurture cooperative learning in favour of mutual support and encouragement
- ✓ attentive, effective and systematic reading to determine and accept the value of information, attitudes and opinions
- ✓ select and adjust information from various resources and present it

**3) LESSON LEARNING SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- ✓ Students will be able to label change as common to all human societies
- ✓ Students will be able to perceive the social, psychological and economic consequence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War
- ✓ Students will be able to interpret the 1950's under a new perspective

- ✓ Students will be able to classify technological advances as a leading force in changing the scale of power on one nation over another
- ✓ Students will be able to examine the influence of varied segments of the society on a government's power and stability
- ✓ Students will be able to deduct that one's government international credibility depends of its technological supremacy, wealth and size
- ✓ Students will be able to suppose that people pertaining to a specific nation share traditions, ideology and political views and that these have had a great influence on the course of history

#### **4) LESSON (LANGUAGE) FOCUS**

- ✓ Reading & Comprehension (reading for gist, reading for specific information)
- ✓ interactive reading (main idea, expression in context, vocabulary in context)
- ✓ bottom-up vocabulary and inferring
- ✓ integrating information
- ✓ intensive reading (reading for complete and detailed comprehension)
- ✓ Skimming
- ✓ Scanning
- ✓ Interaction (eliciting speaking, overall spoken interaction & general linguistic range, monitor one's oral production through pauses, fillers, self-corrections and backtracking)
- ✓ negotiate meaning
- ✓ exchange ideas and arguments and foster further discussion
- ✓ Schemata

- ✓ active use of writing strategies, drafting, paraphrasing
- ✓ Authenticity (T-Ss interaction, Ss-Ss interaction in TL)

## **5) SEQUENCE AND STAGE OF LESSON ACTIVITIES**

As will be illustrated below, this lesson has been conceived for a class of 20 students. Normally, the number of students varies, and teachers should conform the lesson plan to their specific needs, by adding or removing the amount of teaching topics.

This lesson plan is effective only after your students have already read the novel and had had an introduction and basic analysis of the plot and its main character.

Before class you should prepare two envelopes: one with coloured papers, four paper slips per one colour (4 colours tot.), and another with numbers, four paper slips per four numbers 1-4. The coloured paper slips will randomly assign your students to their home groups, while paper slips with numbers will assign them to an expert group.

Arrange the classroom to have four working stations, i.e. join tables and place four chairs around them. You should also assign a number 1-4 to each station.

### **1. Pre-activity: group assignment and introduction to the lesson**

#### **✓ Step 1, estimated duration 2 minutes**

Instruct each student to pick one coloured paper slip and stand next to those students with whom they share colours. After they have formed groups, appoint a working station to every group. You can have your students pick a name for their group or call them by their colour.

Briefly explain the underlying concept and expectations for this lesson, i.e. at the end of your lesson each group will have to have written a short

summary of what they have learned today and present it in front of their peers. Warn your students that the goal is not to compete with each other, but rather to cooperate among themselves by being the best individual asset of each group.

Teamwork is vital in every classroom and it should be used as often as possible. It helps students develop competences such as compromise and collaboration, as well as conversational skills. In addition, it teaches the importance of a collective effort in order to reach a common goal.

✓ **Step 2, estimated duration 5 minutes**

Instruct your students to pick a numbered slip from the envelope on the table and group around the table exhibiting the equivalent number. Explain that they have now formed their expert groups.

Tell them they will be given a handout containing information about specific aspects of life in America during the 1950's. Instruct them to read their information carefully and reflect upon the following concerns:

1. Can I paraphrase what I have read and include all relevant information?
2. Is there anything I already know on this topic that hasn't been mentioned in the text?
3. How does this topic relate to J.D. Salinger's character Holden Caulfield?
4. How can I best store information to later on refer it in my home group?

These open-ended questions will guide students towards a purposeful reading and give them the means to distinguish relevant information and improve overall retention.

Teachers should always attempt to structure their activities in a way to achieve previously established outcomes. In the previous example, apart from intensive reading, the main goal is to activate your students' background knowledge in order to support the association between different subject matters.

✓ **Step 3, estimated duration 3 minutes**

Give each expert group their handout, Appendix E, F, G, H, and instruct them to skim through it and establish, through a group discussion, what is the main topic of their texts.

In addition, each group should appoint a group reader, who will be responsible for reading the text aloud.

**2. Main activity:**

✓ **Reading and underlining unknown vocabulary, inferring meaning, comprehension, exchanging ideas and discussion, estimated duration 7 minutes**

Instruct your students to take notes while the group readers read through their texts. Advise them to reconstruct the information they hear into their own words.

When you encourage paraphrasing you stimulate your students to pay attention to both the main idea and all the details. Paraphrasing will ensure a

high level of interaction with the text because it involves mental processes and physical movements.

In addition, it improves the quality and quantity of retained information and fosters overall comprehension. Inevitably, to be able to paraphrase, students will have to have fully understood what has been read.

After they have read instruct them to exchange notes and ideas. Reflect on the text will help your students clarify any possible area of the text that they didn't completely understand.

✓ **Writing, estimated duration 5 minutes**

Instruct your students to write a group summary of what they have read.

Summarizing is another crucial learning strategy because students are required to focus on important information and eliminate all unnecessary details. As a technique it encourages them to pay attention to key words, it builds comprehension and reduces confusion.

Furthermore, summarizing relies on background knowledge and vocabulary, and it strengthens writing skills.

Remind your students that everyone is expected to write the summary because in the next section they will be going back to their home teams and will have to report on the topic of their expert groups.

By insisting on a group summary, teachers will avoid the “slow student” problem, i.e. the student who might be under-proficient in the target language will not present and inferior report to his home group, and thus any further problem will be avoided.

✓ **Speaking, estimated duration 13 minutes**

Instruct your students to return to their home groups and appoint one student of each group to be the discussion leader. The student in charge should encourage an active participation from his colleagues, allow each of them to have enough time to present his topic before a Q & A session, and closely monitor the allotted time.

A guided discussion develops important oral skills and fosters an active use of vocabulary. Your students will learn how to participate in a group discussion, how to present their information, how to ask questions and argue their standpoints. Overall, it will enhance their communication skills.

**3. Post-activity:**

✓ **Writing, estimated duration 10 minutes**

Each home group should now write a short report on life in America during the 1950's. Instruct your students to work as a team and develop a short written composition which they will present to the other home groups.

They should structure their writing as follows:

1. INTRODUCTION – In the introduction students should state the purpose of their paper and the desired aim. Furthermore, they should clearly point out the order of their discussion points.
2. DEVELOPMENT – Instruct your students to write no less than one, and no more than three sentences for each topic they have learned from their colleagues.

3. **CONCLUSION** – Instruct your students to state their views in an argumentative manner. They should reflect on points such as life quality, safety, excitement, possibilities etc., when confronting the present to the past.

## **6) POSSIBLE PROBLEMS**

One of the most common problems in any classroom is boredom. In a Jigsaw classroom, boredom should quickly be replaced with an exciting change and an interesting learning experience. However, there might be that one, or even two, students who are usually at the top of the class and require less time to finish their tasks.

Another possible problem is a concealed competition among groups. If cooperative learning has been a part of the students' education since the earliest stages, it will most likely disappear before high school. On the other hand, it might pose an initial problem and result in impaired learning.



## 7. Concluding remarks

At present, the Comprehensive Curriculum Reform offers now, more than ever, to all levels of education an opportunity to implement its fundamental guidelines, i.e. to strive towards a better cooperation among teachers and an improved interconnection between mandatory and elective subjects.

The importance of English as an international language has also extended to its literature, as is evident from the updated list of the proposed World Literature, Appendix A.

If in the past the Curriculum has limited its exploit of the Anglo-Saxon literature to its essential, but largely canonical works. Today, it focuses on the literary value of more contemporary works.

Although a revision was overdue, as a future teacher I am yet partially hesitant towards some of the listed works and their possible implementation in my classes. But, what is to be remembered is that the list should mainly serve as a valuable resource for teachers to encourage reading for pleasure and personal growth, and for students as an outset for future reference.

Even so, teaching literature, especially as a foreign language teacher, remains undeniably a very complicated venture. It comes with tremendous expectations, a perpetual apprehension in regards to one's level of expertise, and the adequacy of one's preparation.

Indeed, Esler and Bolinger point out how limited attention has been given to appropriately prepare novice teachers towards teaching literature while, in contrast, the employment of literature as a means to teach language has many pedagogical approaches and preparation materials (Muyskens, 1983).

As a consequence, there is widespread negligence of the fact that English teachers are language *and* literature teachers. Foreign language programs offer very little instruction on the

teaching of literature and teachers' manuals for teaching literary texts are non-existent. Notwithstanding some scattering singular efforts, our careers whirl around teaching language.

Nevertheless, a great collaboration between teachers can assume many different forms, and involve more than two subjects, and this has greatly motivated my attempt to coordinate the integration of ELT with Croatian literature and language, and content teaching subjects like History, to develop my lesson plans.

Literature does not rigorously belong to books, or poems, or plays. First and foremost, it belongs to the reader, and whatever he might perceive as carrying literary and aesthetic value. Sometimes it is found in the most unlikely source:

Hear the rime of the Ancient Mariner  
See his eye as he stops one of three  
Mesmerizes one of the wedding guests  
Stay here and listen to the nightmares of the sea.

And the music plays on, as the bride passes by  
Caught by his spell and the Mariner tells his tale.

Driven south to the land of the snow and ice  
To a place where nobody's been.  
Through the snow fog flies on the albatross  
Hailed in God's name, hoping good luck it brings.

And the ship sails on, back to the north  
Through the fog and ice and the albatross follows on.

The Mariner kills the bird of good omen  
His shipmates cry against what he's done  
But when the fog clears, they justify him  
And make themselves a part of the crime.

Sailing on and on and north across the sea  
Sailing on and on and north 'til all is calm.

The albatross begins with its vengeance  
A terrible curse a thirst has begun  
His shipmates blame bad luck on the Mariner  
About his neck, the dead bird is hung.

And the curse goes on and on at sea  
And the curse goes on and on for them and me.

Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck nor breath nor motion  
As idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean  
Water, water everywhere and all the boards did shrink  
Water, water everywhere nor any drop to drink.”

There calls the Mariner  
There comes a ship over the line  
But how can she sail with no wind in her sails and no tide?

See, onward she comes  
Onward she nears out of the sun  
See, she has no crew  
She has no life, wait but here’s two.

Death and the life in death  
They throw their dice for the crew  
She wins the Mariner and he belongs to her now.

Then, crew one by one  
They drop down dead, two hundred men  
She, she, life in death.  
She lets him live, her chosen one.

“One after one by the star dogged moon,  
Too quick for groan or sigh  
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang  
And cursed me with his eye  
Four times fifty living men  
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)  
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,  
They dropped down one by one.”

The curse it lives on in their eyes  
The Mariner wished he’d die  
Along with the sea creatures  
But they lived on, so did he.

And by the light of the moon  
He prays for their beauty not doom  
With heart he blesses them  
God’s creatures all of them too.

Then the spell starts to break  
The albatross falls from his neck  
Sinks down like lead into the sea  
Then down in falls comes the rain.

Hear the groans of the long dead seamen  
See them stir and they start to rise  
Bodies lifted by good spirits  
None of them speak and they’re lifeless in their eyes  
And revenge is still sought, penance starts again  
Cast into a trance and the nightmare carries on.

Now the curse is finally lifted  
And the Mariner sights his home  
Spirits go from the long dead bodies  
Form their own light and the Mariner's left alone.

And then a boat came sailing towards him  
It was a joy he could not believe  
The pilot's boat, his son and the hermit  
Penance of life will fall onto him.

And the ship sinks like lead into the sea  
And the hermit shrives the Mariner of his sins.

The Mariner's bound to tell of his story  
To tell this tale wherever he goes  
To teach God's word by his own example  
That we must love all things that God made.

And the wedding guest's a sad and wiser man  
And the tale goes on and on and on.

Iron Maiden, *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1984)

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## 9. Appendix A

### World Literature proposal

1. Atwood, M., *The Handmaid's Tale*
2. Austen, J., *Pride And Prejudice, Sense And Sensibility*
3. Beckett, S., *Waiting For Godot*
4. Brontë, E., *Wuthering Heights*
5. Capote, T.G., *In Cold Blood*
6. Carter, R., (selection of short stories)
7. Christie, A., *A Murder For Christmas*
8. Conrad, C., *Heart Of Darkness*
9. Doyle, A.C., *The Hound Of Baskervilles*
10. Eliot, T.S., (selection of poems)
11. Frost, R., (selection of poems)
12. Gibson, W., *Neuromancer*
13. Golding, W., *The Lord Of The Flies*
14. Greene, G., *The Quiet American*
15. Harris, T., *The Silence Of The Lambs*
16. Hemingway, E., *The Old Man And The Sea*, selection of short stories
17. Huxley, A., *Brave New World*
18. Joyce, J., *A Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man*
19. Keats, J., (selection of poems)
20. Lodge, D., *Changing Places*
21. McCarthy, C., *The Road*
22. Miller, A., *Death Of A Salesman*
23. Orwell, G., *Animal Farm*
24. Plath, S., (selection of poems)
25. Poe, E.A., (selection of poems and short stories)
26. Rice, A., *Interview With A Vampire*
27. Salinger, J.D., *The Catcher In The Rye, A Perfect Day For Bananafish*
28. Shakespeare, W., *Hamlet, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, A Midsummer's Night Dream*
29. Soucy, G., *The Little Girl Who Was Too Fond Of Matches*
30. Tagore, R., *The Wreck*
31. Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Lord Of The Rings*
32. Tony Parsons, *Man and Boy*
33. Wallace, E., *The Forger*
34. Whitman, W., (selection of poems)
35. Wilde, O., *The Picture Of Dorian Gray*
36. Williams, T., *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof, A Streetcar Named Desire*
37. Woolf, V., *Mrs. Dalloway, The Lighthouse*
38. Wordsworth, W., (selection of poems)

## 9.1. Appendix B

### HANDOUT 1

Read and explain in your own words the underlined expressions.

#### 1. It is midnight on top of the Elsinore castle, the guard changes:

**Barnardo:** 'Tis now struck twelve.  
Get thee to bed Francisco.

**Francisco:** For this relief much thanks. 'Tis bitter cold,  
And I am sick at heart.

#### 2. The ghost of the late king Hamlet appears:

**Barnardo:** Looks a not like the King? Mark it, Horatio.

**Horatio:** Most like. It harrows me with fear and wonder.

#### 3. The ghost does not speak:

**Horatio:** Let us impart what we have seen tonight  
Unto young Hamlet; for upon my life  
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.

#### 4. War is threatening the kingdom. Claudius speaks to the court:

**King:** Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death  
The memory be green, (...)  
(...) our sometime sister, now our queen, (...)  
Have we, (...)  
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,  
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,  
Taken to wife.

**5. Claudius and Gertrude attempt to mitigate Hamlet's poor disposition towards them:**

**King:** But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son –

**Hamlet:** *A little more than kin, and less than kind.*

**King:** How is it that the clouds still hand on you?

**Hamlet:** Not so, my lord. *I am too much in the sun.*

**Queen:** Good Hamlet, *cast thy nighted colour off,*  
And let thine eye *look like a friend on Denmark.*  
Do not for ever with thy veiled lids  
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.  
Thou know'st 'tis common: all that lives must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity.

## 9.2. Appendix C

### HANDOUT 2

Read the soliloquy and underline unknown words.

**Hamlet:** O that this too too sullied flesh would melt,  
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,  
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
His cannon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God! God!  
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable  
Seems to me all the uses of this world!  
Fie on't, ah fie, 'tis and unweeded garden  
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature  
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!  
But two months dead – nay, not so much, not two –  
So excellent a king, that was to this  
Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother  
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven  
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth,  
Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him  
As if increase of appetite had grown  
By what it fed on; and yet within a month –  
Let me not think on't – Frailty, thy name is woman –  
A little month, or ere those shoes were old  
With which she follow'd my poor father's body,  
Like Niobe, all tears – why, she –  
O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason  
Would have mourn'd longer – married with my uncle,  
My father's brother – but no more like my father  
Than I to Hercules. Within a month,  
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears  
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,  
She married – O most wicked speed! To post  
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!  
It is not, nor it cannot come to good.  
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

### 9.3. Appendix D

#### HANDOUT 3

Put the lines in order and turn it into Reported speech.

Nr.	Modern English	Reported speech
	But my heart breaks in silence, as I remain quiet.	
	Don't make me think about it – for weakness bears a woman's name –	
	Such an excellent king, as superior to this one as a god is to a beast,	
	Oh God, God! How tired, stale, and pointless life seems to me.	
	Before she even gave up those shoes she wore to his funeral, crying like crazy—	
	Only nasty weeds grow in it now. I can't believe it's come to this.	
	Ah, how I wish my dirty flesh could melt away into vapour,	
	Who's about as much like my father as I'm like Hercules.	
	My father's been barely dead for two months—no, not even two.	
	The more she wanted to be with him; she couldn't get enough.	
	Or that God had not made a law against suicide.	
	Less than a month after his death,	
	That's not good, and no good can come of it either.	
	So loving to my mother that he would keep the wind from blowing too hard on her face.	
	There she was, marrying my uncle, my father's brother,	
	Damn it! It's like a garden that no one takes care of, growing wild.	
	Oh, so quick was she to jump into a bed of incest!	
	But even so, within a month-	
	Oh God, why do I have to remember this?	
	Even an animal would have mourned its mate longer than she did!—	

## 9.4. Appendix E

### EXPERT GROUP 1 – \_\_\_\_\_

In 1947, although already two years after the war, Western Europe was still in disarray, and recovery was very slow. Cities were devastated by bombs, roads and bridges were still damaged, and consumer production was at its lowest since the beginning of the war. Even France and Britain, former European powers, who were expected to be the first to start reconstruction, were unfortunately severely weakened by the amount of war expenses and after-war turmoil and discontent in their colonies.

On the other hand, the United States had survived the war without suffering any physical damage. The conflict remained far away from their territory, and they had boundless economic resources due to their industrial power. By 1945 the States were the greatest economic power in the whole world, controlling somewhere around 60% of the world's industrial production.

The emergence of Communism in Easter Europe could have only be countered by the power of the United States but, due to its specific geographical position, America was reluctant to focus its powers on too many different fronts, which made her isolationist at heart.

Being a democracy, America was very suspicious towards communist ideals. This sparked a communist witch-hunt within the United States and a dormant military conflict known as the Cold War.

The most devastating consequence of the Cold War was the Korean War. In 1950, communist North Korea invaded South Korea and President Truman mobilized the American military. The war took yet more victims and so soon after the last conflict. It is estimated that the United States suffered 157,530 casualties.

Americans had to finally recognize and adjust to their new role as the leading power within the larger free world.

## 9.5. Appendix F

### EXPERT GROUP 2 – \_\_\_\_\_

After the war, came a great time of growth and opportunities. Advertising agencies hired psychologists to subconsciously influence people into buying certain products. The television advertised sponsor's products and captivated the viewers' attention by portraying a typical American family leading an enjoyable lifestyle which has been greatly improved by all sorts of market products. All this pressured people into buying and real money was soon replaced by credit cards.

Newlyweds were expected to move into the suburbs, away from the rest of their kindred, buy a home and start a family. The suburban boom and the baby boom were thus inevitably linked. Magazine articles and various books compelled young girls to leave to labour force and fully embrace their role as mothers and housewives. Albeit an initial amenability towards social expectations, all of the above greatly contributed to the beginning of the feminist movement.

Even though slavery was against the law, African-Americans were treated poorly. Before the war regular schools did not allow black children, and schools for blacks were dirty and under supplied. In 1954 segregation was outlawed and schools had to diversify their population. However, things did not change much. In 1955, Rosa Parks, a black girl, refused to give her seat on a city bus to a white person. She was arrested and the black community mobilized into a *nonviolent resistance*, boycotting bus companies. This occurrence started what will later on shape into the Civil Rights Movement.

Even attitudes towards sex changed. Instead of birds and bees, pre-marital, extra-marital, homosexual and sex in general became topics of interest after Alfred Kinsey, a professor at the Indiana University, published his two books: *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* (1947) and *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female* (1954). As a consequence, magazines such as Hugh Hefner's *Playboy* emerged and promiscuous sex, divorced from any emotional commitment, became part of the mainstream culture.

As *Playboy* played an important role into bringing sex out in the open, so did the birth control pill. Conceived by Margaret Sanger and John Pincus, the *Pill* made intercourse more desirable and less intimidating for men and women. Both led to the sexual revolution of the 1960's.



## 9.6. Appendix G

### EXPERT GROUP 3 – \_\_\_\_\_

The 1950's offered many means of entertainment. Among the most popular were Western movies, Biblical epics, comedies and quiz shows. People often went to theatre, art museums or symphony orchestra concerts. Overall, life was good and, thanks to the government's G.I. Bill, which encouraged war veterans to get a college degree, the country was increasingly well educated.

What dominated the 1950's was mass culture, and television was its greatest agent. By the end of the decade watching television was the favourite pastime of 90% of families. Instead of going outside of the comforts of one's home to find entertainment, and pay for it, entertainment came to them and free of charge.

Television's target audience were middle class families. Their tastes were traditional, and programs featuring African Americans or the working class folk were rare, almost non-existing. The middle class enjoyed watching shows that portrayed a society they were familiar with, and serious issues were not addressed on television because they lacked an entertaining factor.

This social dullness was rejected by a minority of mainstreamers who more than ever felt a sense of personal alienation and rebelliousness. Movies like *Rebel Without a Cause*, *The Wild One* and *Blackboard Jungle* told stories of young people who were disoriented, misplaced, and generally unhappy with life.

As a consequence, a small group of artists and writers formed an artistic movement called the Beats. The Beats were an expression of a restless generation which could not abide to the dominant culture and what was felt as normal. Life was more than Sunday dinners and evening television shows: they were desperate for raw experiences and would often seek them in opiates such as drugs and alcohol.

In music, black and white sounds blended into a hybrid called rock n' roll and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 1956, Elvis Presley released a single called *Heartbreak Hotel*.

## 9.7. Appendix F

### EXPERT GROUP 4 – \_\_\_\_\_

In the 1950's Americans were encouraged to spend their money on fashion and magazines and television advertised all the desirable outfits. As always, women were more than other groups prone to spend to look and feel good. Men's formal and informal wear was somewhat boring and classic, but women fashion was gorgeous, glamorous and elegant.

The standard was a solemn and elegant look by day, and a captivating and exuberant look by night. Evening gowns were full-skirted and rich with chiffon and satin. The hour-glass shape was achieved by sewing corsets into the dress. Every piece of clothing was accentuated by a belted waist and the shirtwaist dress was an essential piece.

The career woman went for a smart look, usually a suit with a skirt whose length would sometimes change on a daily basis. Every day the newspaper updated their lady readers on the length-of-the-day: mid-calf or just above the ankles, to be paired with pumps and a waist-length jacket.

Fashion for teenagers was stereotyped. The girl next door would wear cashmere sweaters and a poodle skirt while the girl who dated a "rebel-boy" golden pedal pushers and a scarf. The neighbourhood athlete would go for the gym wear, while rebels, a.k.a. "greasers" had rolled-up black or white t-shirts and a black leather jacket with the collar turned up.

Some of the role models were Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, Elvis Presley and Elizabeth Taylor.