LITERATURE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING: TEACHER VERSUS STUDENT OPINIONS

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Abstract. Literary texts are returning to school curricula, albeit in a different format: digital and multimodal, in the form of audiobooks and films. Although the theoreticians like Ghosn (2002) and Khatib, Rezaei and Derakhshan (2011) have reminded us about the value of literary text in a language learning curriculum of advanced levels, the views in the classrooms differ as we can see in Ghazali, Setia, Muthusamy and Jusoff, (2009) research on the student and teacher reaction to the use of literature in language learning. Since Latvia is also undergoing curriculum reform, which introduces literary texts in language learning, this research aims at comparing the views of teachers and students on the use of literary texts. The content analysis of the teacher response suggests that their opinions on the benefits of reading literary texts are closer than they realise. The students, just like the teachers, do see the value of literary texts in studying language, learning about culture and developing thinking skills.

Key words: fiction, intercultural context, curriculum reform, language levels, content analysis, language learning

INTRODUCTION

Having been at the centre of traditional language learning for hundreds of years and having experienced almost absolute oblivion in the previous century, the literary text returns to foreign language classes. The return of fiction, however, exposes a controversy among the foreign language teaching specialists: see, for example, Ghosn’s (2002: 173) list of reasons for including fiction versus Khatib, Rezaei and Derakhshan’s (2011: 203-205) list of difficulties caused by using literary texts in language teaching in Table 1 below:
Table 1  Reasons for including literature in language learning syllabus versus challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for using literary texts in language teaching (Ghosn, 2002: 173)</th>
<th>Difficulties caused by literary texts in language learning (Khatib et al., 2011: 204)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literature provides motivating and meaningful context for language learning.</td>
<td>Literary concepts and notions: unfamiliarity with literary genres and conventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature enhances language learning; that is, via literature the learners find an opportunity to see the best uses of language thus leading to an improvement in their language.</td>
<td>Syntax: difficult syntactic structures.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lexis: difficult or outdated vocabulary.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Phonetics and Phonology: deviation from normal phonetic and phonological systems.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semantics: variety in meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature enhances academic literacy and thinking skills.</td>
<td>Literature and Academic English: place of literature in specialised fields such as biology and zoology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature develops the child emotionally and helps children promote interpersonal and intercultural attitudes.</td>
<td>Selection of Materials: many factors to take into consideration such as age and gender of the learners. Cultural Barriers: different cultural concepts.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

As it can be seen from Table 1, while a literary text provides context for language structures by introducing a plot and characters who go through conflicts and solutions, the literary genre itself and its conventions can be unfamiliar to the students, thus creating difficulties at the beginning of learning. Another aspect that Ghosn (2002: 173) sees as a positive one is the richness of language in a literary text, while Khatib et al. (2011: 204) sees the complexity of structures and seldom used words as another barrier for language learning. The academic context can also be seen as an opportunity to develop thinking and literacy skills by Ghosn (2002: 173), while Khatib et al. (2011: 204) see it as a drawback for the teachers and the learners of biology, who are more concerned with practicality than aesthetics of the text. The fourth parameter that both authors comment upon is the emotional and cultural development, and here again both authors see the same object – cultural and emotional content – as an opportunity to learn (Ghosn, 2002: 173) and a barrier of understanding (Khatib et al., 2011).

To resolve this contradiction, between opportunity and challenge we would like to introduce Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory and his zone of proximal development (ZPD) which is defined by Vygotsky (1978: 86) as ‘the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers’.

Ghazali, Setia, Muthusamy and Jusoff (2009) also report on a study of the use of literary texts in language teaching, which they carried out in Malaysia, with 110 Form Five students. Their findings suggest the following: half of the students thought that the literary texts should be used in language learning
because it enhanced their motivation, allowed them to improve their grammar, reading, speaking and vocabulary, exposed them to the authentic material, created a meaningful learning/teaching environment. Ghazali et al. (2009: 54) found that 94 per cent of students preferred to choose texts themselves, 86.4 per cent of the students agreed and strongly agreed with the statement ‘I would enjoy literature more if I’m good in English’. The most popular topics among students were mystery or investigative stories followed by adventure, science-fiction and fantasy because of their setting and storyline which were ‘beyond their imagination’.

Thus, we can see that students in Malaysia consider literature beneficial for their learning if they are allowed to choose the texts to be read, and their language levels are appropriate for the relevant texts. This agrees with the findings of Khatib et al. (2011: 204) and Ghosn (2002: 174) that the language level of students must match the level of the texts to read, so that they can appreciate and enjoy the cultural references and let their imagination play a role.

Hall (2020: 7) proposes that language learners nowadays have multilingual, multicultural digitally mediated identities, and the use of literature can challenge learners to make independent interpretations of languages and cultures. Hall (2020: 9) contrasts the topics discussed by literary texts such as death, love, life, and relationships with the textbooks avoiding PARSNIP (Politics, Alcohol, Religion, Sex, Narcotics, -isms and Pork) developed by Gray in 2010. Literature is used by the teachers of different foreign languages: Piantanida (2020: 24) while discussing the role of literature in the Italian language learning stresses the role of literature in providing transnational perspectives in teaching intercultural competence, Crahay (2020) provides an example of how theatre can be used in French language learning from the earliest stages, Bohm and Magedera-Hofhansl (2020) discuss creative writing approaches to learning of German, showing how the reader gradually becomes the writer.

Puig (2020: 19), while discussing the challenges of foreign language learning and teaching reform in the UK, also mentions the use of literature: ‘Literature is interactive and can take account of social context and student profiles, so students react and produce new meaning while also harnessing the tools provided by new technologies to communicate and share. In this case, the teacher becomes more of a facilitator who transmits enthusiasm rather than imparts information’. Thus Puig (2020) stresses the role of the teacher as a facilitator next to the student the interaction between which will be examined in this research.

**RESEARCH CONTEXT**

Just like our colleagues from Malaysia and the UK, the teachers and students of Latvia have been going through a curriculum reform, and one of the elements that has been introduced into foreign language learning classrooms is the use of literary texts and films in addition to the traditional textbooks. Our research used
a teacher training course as our research context. The aim of the teacher training course, organised by the Ministry of Education of Latvia, is to prepare foreign language teachers for the new advanced language course aiming at enabling secondary school students of Latvia to reach level C1 (CEFR, *Common European Framework for Language learning and assessment, Companion volume*, 2020: 116), where one of the descriptors addresses literature and film use:

- Can describe in detail his/her personal interpretation of a work, outlining his/her reactions to certain features and explaining their significance.
- Can outline his/her interpretation of a character in a work: their psychological/emotional state, the motives for their actions and the consequences of these actions.
- Can give his/her personal interpretation of the development of a plot, the characters and the themes in a story, novel, film, or play.

The new in-service teacher training course is built like a research project during which learners start by choosing a literary work to read and study together, while working on their language skills, studying the structures of the language through translation activities, work on multimodal texts (in particular the screening of the novel or play studied), exploring one of the themes identified in the book and carrying out research by exploring other documents related to the theme and to present their research during a conference. To find out what the teachers and their students think about the new curriculum, our research intends to answer the following questions: (1) How do Latvian teachers react to using literature in a foreign language class in high school? (2) How do students react to including literary texts in their curriculum? (3) Do the opinions of teachers coincide with those of high school students?

**RESEARCH METHOD**

Our research data was collected using Moodle platform during online teacher training course needs analysis stage. The teacher trainers provided 13 quotes from English, German and French sources in the online forum discussions. There were 183 teachers and 127 students, who were asked to choose a quote which best depicted their attitude to reading in general and fiction in particular and explain their choice. Here are the most popular quotes as chosen by the teachers:

1) ‘A book is a version of the world. If you do not like it, ignore it; or offer your own version in return’ (Rushdie 1990) – commented 46 times.
2) ‘It is not all books that are as dull as their readers’ (Thoreau 1854) – commented 42 times.
The teachers of the course were also invited to distribute the quotes in a Google form among their students and collect the student answers too. Most of the students commented the following quotes:

1) ‘Literature is the most enjoyable way to ignore life’ (Pessoa, 1991: 323) – 31 times.
2) ‘You open a book; the book opens you’ (Chinese proverb from Sealed book project) – 30 times.

Altogether we received 183 responses from the teachers (26182 words in English, Latvian and Russian) and 127 responses from the secondary school students (9467 words in English and Latvian). As we can see in our corpus the teachers wrote nearly 3 times more than their students.

Out of 183 teachers who participated in the online teacher training course, 162 reacted to the quotes chosen and explained their reasons for choosing the particular quote, 131 teachers wrote about their students, their lack of interest in reading and their lack of motivation and the fact that the majority of students do not think that reading is crucial for language learning. The teacher comments suggested that their students prefer short texts or videos, maybe due to the new social platforms like Twitter, Tik Tok, Instagram.

Most of the teachers have had experience in using literary texts in their language teaching classes, 126 out of 183, or 68 per cent of the teachers described their experiences using mostly fragments of literary works. Fifty seven per cent of the teachers wrote about their own relationship with literature, and their own love for reading, how it has changed, and how it helps them in teaching:

I have always liked reading, but there have been times in my life when I do not read a lot and also right now, I would like to spend more time on reading. The type of books I prefer have changed during my lifetime, but I am sure we can learn something from every book and every author. There have been books, which inspired me to travel and see the countries I have read so much about and ones which made me cry and feel miserable for people spending their lives in poverty and without any basic human rights.

**ANALYSIS OF TEACHER AND STUDENT COMMENTS**

Once we had extracted the text from the discussion fora and Google forms, we carried out content analysis. Stemler (2001) defines content analysis as ‘a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding’ (Stemler, 2001: 1). The teacher and student comments in this research will be analysed using the 4 categories established in the theoretical section of this article, as a result of comparison of

1 THE ROLE OF LITERARY CONTEXT

As we saw before, Ghosn (2002: 173) stressed the potential of the literary context in providing a motivating and meaningful context for language learning which should provide positive effect on learning, while Khatib et al. (2011: 204) suggested that the literary context will add to the difficulties of language learners. If we examine the comments of the teachers and learners in Table 2 below (here and in the following tables the original language and spelling has been preserved), we can see that both the teachers and the students are aware of the role of plot, characters in creating the literary context and its potential in providing new experiences (Comment 1), bringing joy (Comment 2) and created interest for students to go on reading, comparing it to film adaptations and discussions (Comment 3).

Table 2 Teacher versus student comments on the literary context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher comments on literary context</th>
<th>Student comments on literary context</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. While reading a story one can be taken places where otherwise it would be impossible to go simply because there are too many variations of situations for us to experience (or want to experience) in our personal lives. This is what I have offered my students – analyse the situations, characters, their relationships and choices after reading a story (in reality only excerpts of stories).</td>
<td>5. Reading books, you go into another world, in another reality, and forget about everything that happens around you. Forget your problems and negativity for a moment.</td>
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<td>2. I have used books in my lessons for years now as a home reading assignment that at the end of the term or semester amount to a book review or analysis. As well as constructing a ‘reading lesson’ once a week for the whole year, reading one book in the class together, analysing what happens in each chapter, the characters. Both ways of incorporating books in my lessons have brought joy to me and my students and have taught them a lot. I tend to use youth literature to keep the students interested, if I’m the one choosing the book.</td>
<td>6. I totally agree with this quote. Literature helps you to forget about problems because when you read a book, you completely immerse yourself in another world, imagine yourself in the place of the characters and kind of forget about everything around. Books help you understand yourself, learn something new and just get away from the boring routine.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Literature is truly magical and healing. I am not afraid to say that I love to read and that I have enjoyed every single book I have read. In every book, is it mystery, fantasy or romantic novel, has a true story, even if it’s just a small part of 600 pages, we can find a true fact, a situation that has happened in the past and there is no lie at all.</td>
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</table>
3. I haven’t used literary works in my lessons much. These were mostly extracts from literary works published in the textbooks. Students got acquainted with the author and analysed the plot and the characters of the book. If students got interested, we sometimes also watched a film adaption of the book and had a discussion afterwards. I have also practiced reading aloud in the classroom and discussing the events, characters and giving some background information while reading. I must admit that students almost always got interested and wanted to continue reading and discussing.

4. I love using literary excerpts to teach the English language as well as critical thinking, development of thoughts and ideas, and culture. In the textbooks used in our school, there are always pieces of what is considered good literature and I make sure to explore with my students at least some of them. This has led to good cooperation with teachers of literature, cultural studies and history. Apart from that, students are supposed to read a book of their choice in a semester. It used to be fiction, but now they can choose fiction, biographies, chemistry textbook or a graphic novel, as long as they are interested in what they are reading.

Not only teachers, but also students remark on the potential of literary texts to create imaginary worlds that allow us to escape the reality (Comments 5 and 6). Students also show familiarity with the different types of literary texts (fantasy, romantic novels exploring present day and past events and its effects on readers (Comments 6 and 7). Some students find books inspirational (Comment 8) while another one depressing (Comment 9). Comment 9 stands out not only because of its meaning, but also because of its shortness and grammar, suggesting that Khatib et al. (2011: 204) had his reasons for stressing the role of language level as students cannot enjoy the plot or learn anything if the language is too complex for them, therefore Table 3 will address teacher and student comments about language use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher comments on literary context</th>
<th>Student comments on literary context</th>
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<tr>
<td>3. I haven’t used literary works in my lessons much. These were mostly extracts from literary works published in the textbooks. Students got acquainted with the author and analysed the plot and the characters of the book. If students got interested, we sometimes also watched a film adaption of the book and had a discussion afterwards. I have also practiced reading aloud in the classroom and discussing the events, characters and giving some background information while reading. I must admit that students almost always got interested and wanted to continue reading and discussing.</td>
<td>8. Every story that parents were reading or are reading for their kids, teach them how to divide stories from reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I love using literary excerpts to teach the English language as well as critical thinking, development of thoughts and ideas, and culture. In the textbooks used in our school, there are always pieces of what is considered good literature and I make sure to explore with my students at least some of them. This has led to good cooperation with teachers of literature, cultural studies and history. Apart from that, students are supposed to read a book of their choice in a semester. It used to be fiction, but now they can choose fiction, biographies, chemistry textbook or a graphic novel, as long as they are interested in what they are reading.</td>
<td>9. Personally, books help me fantasize and turn myself into one of the characters in the book to empathize with every adventure they go through.</td>
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| 10. All books is dull. | }
2 LANGUAGE USE IN LITERARY TEXTS

The second category examined here is the role language plays when literary texts are used in language learning; see Table 3 for the comparison of the teacher and student comments on language use in literary texts. Looking through the comments it is easy to see that the primary role of English language classes is to study the language (Comment 1). Teachers are also aware of the different competences (lexical and grammatical) and different language skills that can be developed while teaching literature (Comments 2 and 3). Comment 3 is especially interesting as it suggests the active role students can take not only in the choice of the texts to be read, but also their willingness to take up a linguistic challenge. Comment 4 also suggests how discussing literary symbolism, morals and values depicted in texts not only expand student thinking, but also can be used for teaching vocabulary and developing interaction strategies.

Table 3. Teacher and student comments on language learning in literary context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher comments on language use</th>
<th>Student comments on language use</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. A teacher of a foreign language should always stick to teaching their subject – for example, English, not Literature, even though they both are “made of the same material”- language.</td>
<td>5. Great writers will play with words so when you don’t take them literally, it has a whole new meaning and gives interesting ideas and insights on a certain topic.</td>
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<td>2. We have the practice at school to have home reading lessons for senior students. They are allowed to choose the book themselves. I believe that reading books improves students’ language skills, especially broadens their lexical repertoire, improves understanding of grammar structures and helps to develop their speaking, presentation and public speaking skills.</td>
<td>6. I understand that due to the great job of parents, their personal love towards reading, their desire to explain their younger generation necessity of reading and finding treasures of everything deeply dug in books, only thus we can make our children read and find the beauty of language and knowledge hidden in them.</td>
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<td>3. If I let them choose, then they choose a book that matches their level of language. Sounds risky because at first I thought they would just choose easy to read books, but most of the time when asked about the difficulty of the book they respond with something like ‘I wanted to challenge myself with this book and see if I could understand it.’</td>
<td>7. Lots of people who enjoy reading and are doing it on regular bases says that “Books have strong words which only the chosen ones can understand.” and I fully agree to this saying because when I finished my first book which was “Metro 2033” and after that played videogame based on the book I couldn’t believe that videogame creators cut out so much meaning things that was talked about in book. However, the game was amazing and after reading Metro I was fully interested on reading another book based on favourite movie or videogame but then I realized that there really aren’t that much out there.</td>
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In our school students have to do book review presentations twice a year. During these presentations they introduce others with the book they have read, talk about symbolism, moral, values they have found in the book. Besides, it has to be done in an interactive way – involving the peers in discussion, asking to participate into different quizzes, crosswords, teaching them new vocabulary from the book.

When a couple of years ago, I was trying to find my first literature piece that wouldn’t feel like a waste of time while reading it, I found it in Japanese manga. There is a lot to discuss regarding books and my experience with them, for example comparing different genres and mediums, comparing movies/tv-shows to literature, but I guess there is only space here for one thing, so I chose what in my experience was the biggest issue with reading.

In contrast to teacher comments, which contain 15 comments on the role of literature in vocabulary learning alone, students mention vocabulary only 2 times, neither do they write much about grammar or words in general. The only exception is Comment 5, which clearly references the role of literature in learning the idiomatic use of vocabulary. Instead of discussing vocabulary and grammar, students write about reading in general, as it is mentioned 48 times in the whole corpus. Thus, we can say that literary texts are mostly seen by students as a tool for developing reading skills. It is interesting that secondary school students have not forgotten about the role of their parents in their reading skill development (Comment 6). They are also aware of the differences of language use in different modes of communication, see Comment 7 on the adaptation of a literary text into a video game. Another reference to visual texts and multimodality can be found in Comment 8, where the student compares reading a linear text to visual and animated text processing, thus demonstrating their familiarity with different types of texts and different ways of processing. The overall comparison between the teacher and the student views of language learning suggests that the teachers see language learning as acquisition of lexical and syntactic structures, while the students see it as acquiring skills and strategies while interacting with different kinds and modes of texts. Multimodality was not mentioned in either Ghosn’s (2002: 173) or Khatib et al.’s (2011: 204) frameworks but was part of language learning framework in the CEFR Companion volume (2020: 51) where language use includes also

‘multimodal activity typical of web use, including just checking or exchanging responses, spoken interaction and longer production in live link-ups, using at (written spoken language), longer blogging or written contributions to discussion, and embedding other media’.
These days multimodal texts are not only part of entertainment, but also professional and academic discourse and all the skills students have obtained while playing games can come in handy also in their academic studies, therefore they have to be kept in mind not only when discussing language competence in general, but also academic skills development, discussed in the next section.

3 ACADEMIC INTERESTS IN LITERARY TEXTS

Use of literary texts and fiction as a language learning medium for academic and thinking skill development was raised in Ghosn’s (2002: 173) research and is also remarked upon by both teachers and students. Teachers mention different types of knowledge and skills that can be acquired while studying literary texts: art, drama, critical thinking, understanding human nature in general and satisfying one’s own academic and future career interests in particular, see Table 4 below.

Table 4 Teacher and student comments on the use of literary texts in learning academic skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher comments on academic skills</th>
<th>Student comments on academic skills development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) The students who enjoy reading, mostly are interested in contemporary literature, young adult fiction and self-help books. Plainly speaking, they only read something, if it is connected with their interests or needs.</td>
<td>4) I have experienced that a book is like a psychologist. Every time I read a book, I start thinking about the meaning of life or just the meaning of the book. Books have this habit of diving in places that are a taboo place in an everyday life. They make you think.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) I believe that literature should be taught. Literary taste, perception of different art forms, deeper understanding of human nature and life in general can only be supported by early reading sessions encouraged by parents and teacher.</td>
<td>5) Reading books opens up my outlook on the world and its vision. The books I read greatly influence my thinking and they reveal me as a person, as an educated person. Books make me who I want to be, because my consciousness opens up and I see the world brighter, in all its colours. I see the benefits of reading for myself because it is not so much a pastime, but also self-development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) A couple of years ago I had an eTwinning project on drama, which appeared to be interesting for my Grade 8 students. Inability to take criticism, often drawn in response to expressions critical of something themselves, also demonstrates that the person could be lacking individual growth, as the statement is both hypocritical and immature. Factoring in power dynamics however, it is in most situations irrelevant what response the criticism provokes, as setting the score intends to prove a point and cause the person suffering,</td>
<td>6) When I start to read a book, I always move to different world, I imagine that I am in the story and see the story from different perspective. It opens me up because I read each character’s thoughts and understand their way of thinking. Also, it helps my to deal with the real life situations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher comments on academic skills</td>
<td>Student comments on academic skills development</td>
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<tr>
<td>their voice not important enough to be heard. I think Salman Rushdie ought to be grateful both for being a person of consequence whose voice is very audible and the work attracting criticism (some of which is, no doubt, tragically exaggerated). It seems to create a space of openness, where individuals and their ideas matter. I think this quote is very thought-provoking for our own students, both in the context of literary studies and the proper critical thinking we are supposed to instil as we implement the new school programme. I will see to it that my students are exposed to this idea and have a chance to evaluate it critically.</td>
<td>later. In conclusion, book is not just like some way of entertainment it is so much more. Reading opens up a mindset to new possibilities and that is the best thing about it. 7) When you are reading a book, it is just you and the book, so it is easier to concentrate only on the story of the book. Not only do you ignore your life, but you also build your experience, develop thinking skills and it also shows us the art of living, but most importantly, it inspires, motivates, and energizes us to work and achieve our dreams.</td>
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The students, however, do not associate literary texts with their academic interests, but rather see the role of literary texts in the development of their thinking skills (Table 4, Comments 7 and 8), as well as a means of expanding their understanding of the world in general (Comment 6). Comment 5 proposes to look at reading books as a therapeutic experience that uncover unknown thoughts and even taboo topics, avoided by other means of communication. Thus, we can see that although students do not see the potential of literary texts in promoting their academic interests, they do see them as a tool of personal development, which could indirectly help in choosing their future academic studies and expand their personalities in general.

### 4 LITERARY TEXTS AND CULTURE

The last category of analysis here is the use of literary texts in acquiring cultural and intercultural knowledge and skills. If we examine the teacher comments, we can see the appreciation of the value of literary texts in learning about different countries, different cultures and traditions, see Table 5 below. The teachers also remark that fiction provides an opportunity not only to learn languages, but also promotes cooperation across subjects, as teachers of history and art can also be involved to develop a better understanding of the cultural context of the texts read (Comment 2). Comment 3 suggests the cultural possibilities provided by literary texts, but also comments on challenges, thus sharing the point of view that Khatib et al. (2011: 204) proposed, saying that unknown cultural contexts will add to the difficulty of understanding the texts read.
Table 5. Teacher and student comments on the value of literary texts in learning about cultures and traditions

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Teacher comments on learning about culture</th>
<th>Student comments on learning about different cultures</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I think learning English through literature is great! Thus, students not only improve their language, but also learn human values and gain knowledge about different countries, their history and culture.</td>
<td>5. I really think that the people that read books have an advantage on those who doesn’t because they can see things better from different standpoint and they can understand people in all kinds of situations. I believe that from reading books you can discover about new cultures different types of people and overall know more than those who don’t read books.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I love using literary excerpts to teach the English language as well as critical thinking, development of thoughts and ideas, and culture. In the textbooks used in our school, there are always pieces of what is considered good literature and I make sure to explore with my students at least some of them. This has led to good cooperation with teachers of literature, cultural studies and history.</td>
<td>6. A good book may open parts of your brain that you never even knew existed and unlock emotions you thought you never had.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Even acknowledging the fact that literature, by focusing on human experience and encouraging self-expression, develops students’ communication skills, also providing a better understanding of English and American culture, mostly teachers, me in particular, find it difficult to develop classroom techniques for its use.</td>
<td>7. I truly believe if people read a lot of books, they can communication with more minds and souls. Books are truly the entrance to another world, as well as a great way to increase your own personal development and re-lived many lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I am convinced that in every book it’s possible to find different aspects and patterns of the countries, the people, their culture and traditions you are reading about.</td>
<td>8. Books help us break out, let us think about things and actions that we don’t think about or don’t want to think about at all on a daily basis. They teach us about other cultures, people and many different things. I think books are important and I would recommend someone to read them from time to time.</td>
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</table>

Just like their teachers, students see the opportunities provided by literary texts in studying unknown cultures (Comment 8), but they talk more about their emotional response, see Comments 6 and 7, as well as seeing fiction as a means of creating new cultures in Comment 5.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Thus, the analysis of the teacher and student comments in Latvian education reform setting suggests that both the teachers and the students see the opportunities provided by the literary texts in studying language in literary context created by the plot and its characters, its specific stylistic means in mystery
and fantasy novels as well as romance. Both the students and the teachers see the specific literary context as a positive feature which creates interest and motivation for further reading and language study. The most interesting finding is the difference of language competence perception in the student and the teacher comments: if the teachers see the literary text as a means for expanding student vocabulary and syntax, the students see literary texts as a link to films and video games. Both these views are cumulative as language use depends on our lexical, syntactical as well as multimodal discourse competence, as suggested by the CEFR Companion volume (2020), but for a successful language acquisition process one would suppose that students and teachers should share the same language learning vision.

We can see that the opportunities proposed by Ghosn (2002: 174) in his research on the use of literary texts in language learning and teaching have been supported by the teachers and the students in Latvia, while the concerns expressed by Khatib et al. (2011: 204) were present less often than the opportunities provided by studying different literary texts, different cultures as well as exploring their particular academic interests.

We also found out that many teachers were avid readers themselves and therefore could share their passion with their students, although they were aware of the difficulties students might face because of the unfamiliarity of historical and cultural contexts, new vocabulary, and complex syntax. The role of parents was also stressed by both the teachers and the students: the comments in our research suggest that children appreciate their parent involvement in their literary exploits, but that could be a topic for another research.

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**LITERARY SOURCES USED**


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LATVIAN-ENGLISH CODE-SWITCHING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract. People draw on the languages in their linguistic repertoire, depending on the speech participants’ needs and the conversational setting. The English language has gained salience replacing the Russian language as the foreign language most often studied at schools after Latvia regained independence in 1990. Since then, it has been used widely as a lingua franca in various fields, for instance, international diplomacy, science, and education. This has been a fruitful environment for code-switching, as it is claimed that many young people alternate effortlessly between the Latvian language and the English language, which they often use as a means of communication, especially on social media. In order to ascertain the linguistic manifestation of code-switching, a study was conducted by using a qualitative descriptive research design. Extra-sentential, inter-sentential, and intra-sentential code-switching was explored on social media. Extra-sentential switching or inserting tag elements from English into Latvian, inter-sentential switching characterized by a switch from Latvian to English outside the sentence or the clause level, and intra-sentential switching or switching from Latvian to English at the clause, phrase, or word level were observed. It was found out that the most frequent linguistic manifestation of code-switching was the insertion of single words. It may be assumed that code switching between the Latvian language and the English language may point at the social status of English among young people in Latvia.

Key words: Latvian-English code-switching, extra-sentential, inter-sentential, intra-sentential code-switching, qualitative descriptive design

INTRODUCTION

Code-switching (CS) is a linguistic manifestation of language contact observed in the linguistic behaviour of bilinguals or multilinguals. Druviete, a Latvian socio-linguist, contends that code-switching results from language contacts (2021: 88). English has become the main contact language of Latvians (Veisbergs, 2012: 148), and it has occurred in the absence of any direct geographical proximity. Regaining of Latvia’s independence in 1991, its accession to the European Union in 2004 and NATO in 2004, subsequent migration and remigration processes, and the Internet having become the predominantly used medium worldwide have led to a sustained indirect English language contact in Latvia, with English taking the place of Russian as a means of communication. Another factor contributing
to the use of English is the dramatic increase of social media for communication, as English is by far the most frequently employed language online, used by about six million of the top 10 million websites (Online 1). Besides, English has become the most commonly studied foreign language in Latvia. In 2019, approximately 81 per cent of students at the general upper secondary education level in Latvia learnt English (Online 2). Therefore, it is not surprising that many young people alternate effortlessly between the Latvian language and the English language, which they often use as a means of communication, especially on social media.

It is not uncommon that speakers in Latvia command a repertoire of languages available for various uses, selectively drawing on one or another and speaking exclusively in one language in certain domains (e.g., at home, with friends) while shifting to another in other contexts (e.g., university, work). Thus, young people, for instance, may switch between Latvian (at home, with parents and grandparents) and informal English (with friends) or formal English (at university), depending on the speech participant needs and the setting. This provides a fruitful environment for code-switching, which implies that bilinguals or multilinguals use linguistic elements of both or several languages in the same discourse.

In the world, code-switching has been studied since the 1970s (in Stell and Yakpo, 2015: 2) and received ‘serious scholarly attention in the last few decades’ (Poplack, 2001: 2062). However, while there is abundant theoretical literature and empirical studies on code-switching involving various language pairs, as noted by Lazdiņa, a Latvian linguist, the Latvian-English code-switching remains relatively unexplored (Online 3).

Since code-switching is typical of informal communication (Baltins, Druviete, 2017: 173), the goal of the present study was to ascertain the linguistic behaviour of Latvian language speakers on social media sites. Spoken and written language is used on TikTok and YouTube, where written language is similar to spoken language in its informality, yet it is written and, therefore, at least to some extent planned.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Despite numerous studies on code-switching, there is little consensus over the various language contact-related terms. Therefore, it is important to first delineate the core term used in this study. Poplack and Meechan define CS as ‘the juxtaposition of sentences or sentence fragments from two languages, each of which is internally consistent with the morphological and syntactic (and optionally, phonological) rules of its lexifier language’ (1995: 200). Thus, according to the scholars, CS is an ‘utterance-internal juxtaposition’ of linguistic elements from two languages. Poplack (2001: 2062) adds that CS often takes place with no change of interlocutor or topic. Bullock and Toribio (2009: 8) emphasize that CS is an additional communication resource since many bilinguals
switch from one language to another in order to communicate their message in an unchanged setting (ibid.: 1). The present study uses Gumperz’s (1982) definition of CS: ‘the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems’ (cited in Hamers and Blanc, 2000: 258). Thus, code switching refers to the overt use of single words or strings of words from two or more languages within the same utterance/interaction.

Although early code-switching studies claimed that CS was evidence of bilingual speakers’ deficiency in one or both language(s), nowadays, researchers have recognized that the assumption is incorrect. Today, CS is often viewed as a resource that bilinguals utilize to achieve various communicative effects (e.g., Gardner-Chloros, 2009), to mark social roles and identities (Myers-Scotton, 1993), and to manage talk (e.g., Gafaranga, 2009).

Code-switching can be studied from structural/linguistic, psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives (Bullock and Toribio, 2009: 14). The linguistic perspective deals with language form at lexical, phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic levels; the sociolinguistic perspective focuses on the social factors such as the interpersonal relations between the interlocutors, their motivation for CS, the prestige of CS in a speech community, social functions of CS, for instance, inclusiveness in a group or showing solidarity to a group. The psycholinguistic perspective is concerned with the cognitive mechanisms in language production, perception, and acquisition (ibid.).

In inter-group interactions, speakers often adjust their speech to the interlocutors’ speech. Since code-switching ‘is under the conscious control of the speaker, not all bilinguals are observed to engage in CS’ (Gafaranga, 2009: 7). Thus, it has been argued (e.g., de Bot, 1992) that bilingual speakers are able to control their output and produce monolingual utterances, separating their languages. As a result, different patterns of bilingual language use can be expected. For instance, they may differ according to the role that each language may have played among different generations. The older, more balanced bilinguals may display the ability to use sustained sequences of Latvian in their discourse, whereas younger speakers may speak Latvian with English lexical insertions.

Although it is argued that to gain a comprehensive understanding of code-switching it is essential to integrate findings from all three perspectives (e.g., Bullock and Toribio, 2009: 14), the present study deals with selected aspects of the linguistic approach to the CS phenomenon and comments on the social aspects arising from the observations made by the authors of this paper and by the informant. The findings from code-switching studies on the relation between socio-interactive and lexical/structural effects on code-switching demonstrate that lexical and structural aspects are discourse context dependent, and discourse context can modify ‘the extent to which these lexical and structural factors influence linguistic choices and code-switching patterns’ (Kootstra, 2015: 50).
CS can occur at any level of linguistic structure. Poplack’s model (1980: 613-615) classifies code-switching into tag-switching, inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching. Inter-sentential (or inter-utterance) code-switching refers to switches between sentences (or utterances) and occurs within sentence (or utterance) boundaries, when a complete sentence or clause is in either one language or the other. Intra-sentential (or intra-utterance) code-switching is the term for switches within a single sentence (or utterance), a constituent or even a word, which some linguists call code-mixing. Intra-sentential switching occurs when words or phrases from another language are inserted into a sentence of the first language. Poplack (2001: 2062) emphasizes that intra-sentential CS has been studied most extensively. Tag-switching or extra-sentential switching concerns the use of a tag/a discourse marker, such as I mean, you know, like in a different language than the rest of the sentence (or utterance) (Romaine, 1995: 122). The insertion of discourse markers functions as a means of attracting the listener’s or reader’s attention or giving pragmatic force to an utterance in the speaker’s or writer’s native language (Sharp, 2007). It is pointed out (Romaine, 1995: 112) that tag-switching can occur at a number of points in an utterance without violating syntactic rules, in contrast with intra-sentential code-switching which involves the greatest syntactic risk.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to ascertain the linguistic manifestation of code-switching, a study was conducted by using a qualitative descriptive design. The corpus comprised code-switches from two types of social media:

1) TikTok, which is a video-focused social networking service, hosting 15-second to 10-minute user videos. Users can interact with the audience via comments and messages. TikTok tends to appeal to young people, as 41.7 per cent of its users are between the ages of 18 and 24, and 31 per cent – between the ages of 25 and 34 (Online 4).

2) YouTube is an online video sharing and social media platform, which allows users to watch and upload videos, as well as it offers an opportunity to interact with the audience by posting comments, likes, dislikes, or replying to other people’s comments on a video. There was an estimate of 2.24 billion YouTube users worldwide in 2021 (Online 5), and it appeals to different target audiences.

Social media platforms are now key public online locations for networking and socialising, holding vast quantities of naturally occurring data on a variety of topics. Lifestyle videos on YouTube produced by popular Latvian vloggers were searched for randomly. An informant, a 20-year-old male, who speaks Latvian as his first language and English as a foreign language provided empirical data from TikTok. The informant was asked to record TikTok content of his own
choice. The purposive sampling technique was selected because it was important to study the TikTok domain with a knowledgeable expert within. The informant acted as a participant observer, so he was able to reflect on his own reasons for CS and gain insights into the likely causes of CS by other members of the speech community.

TikTok and YouTube provided a large text-based and video-based social media data set for this study; instances of code-switches were searched for and extracted manually from a corpus of 50 videos on TikTok and YouTube and related posts. The length of the videos and posts was not considered to have an impact on the likelihood of occurring code-switching since the data – words, phrases and sentences – were analysed using a qualitative descriptive approach.

Since the corpus was primarily used for a linguistic analysis of code-switching, it consists of text and video excerpts, which were manually transcribed. Structural markup provided descriptive information about the texts. General information about a text contained ethnographic information about the participants – the metadata about the language users, for example, their age, gender, first language, the social relationship between the involved parties, as much as it could be assumed from the available information and the context.

Although it was problematic to acquire informed consent from the social media users whose data were used, the content of the postings was not considered to be sensitive. Nevertheless, in order to meet ethical standards, the data were anonymised so that the social media language users could not be identified – instead of a profile name or a username, identification codes were provided to ensure their anonymity.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

For the purposes of this research, the data of actual bilingual interactions situated in the context of the speech community in which they were produced were gathered, and extra-sentential, inter-sentential, and intra-sentential code-switching was explored.

English and Latvian are both Indo-European languages; English belongs to the West Germanic group, while Latvian – to the Baltic group. English and Latvian differ with respect to word order, as English takes the pattern: subject-verb-object, while Latvian exhibits a relatively free word order: ‘Since syntactic relations between word forms in Latvian are usually expressed by means of inflections, word order in a sentence is relatively free’ (Lokmane, 2021: 485).

**Extra-sentential switching or tag-switching** refers to the use of a tag or a discourse marker, which is ‘a type of insert used in conversation. It signals interactively how the speaker plans to steer the dialogue’ (Biber, Conrad, Leech, 2003: 456). The discourse markers well, okay, I mean, you know are independent of sentence structure, as they often precede sentences, and they can be removed
from the initial position of utterances. The tags from the English language *like*, *well*, *you know*, *okay* and *I mean* were inserted freely into utterances in the Latvian language, as it can be seen in the following example:

[1]  *I mean* labi nosvineeti 17 [*I mean* 17 years have been celebrated well] (here and henceforth the translations by the authors of the article).

Tag-switching has occurred at the beginning of utterance [1] without violating syntactic rules. The discourse marker *I mean* is used to connect two discourse segments – in this case the video and the post. It marks the speaker orientating towards the meaning of the utterance by elaborating on the previous thought.

In the corpus, mostly single words from the English language were inserted into a sentence/an utterance. The exclamations *blah* (used to give an example in the context) and *bla bla bla*, modifying the spelling of the English language, *wow* (used to show surprise and pleasure), unassimilated colloquial loans, for example, exclamations: *kamon* (come on), *kūl* (cool), *vau/vow* (wow), *kreizī* (crazy) and the discourse marker *okei* (OK) were identified.

The following examples demonstrate the use of **intra-sentential switching**.


[3]  If you know where this melody is from – *respect*. [*Ja tu zini no kurienes ir šī melodija respect*].

[4]  Maybe I am *broke*, but at least I haven’t been to a charity shop. [*Varbūt esmu broke* bet vismaz nekad neesmu bijis humpalās.].

[5]  We are *really excited*. [*Mēs esam really excited*]. This is simply career *destroyed*. [*Šis ir vienkārši karjeras destroyed*].

The noun phrase *part 2* [2], the verb phrase *respect* [3], and the adjective phrase *to be broke* [4] are code-switches. In utterance [5], the happy and enthusiastic young people in the video were not only *really excited*, but they were also *destroyed*, which is used to exaggerate one’s victory in competition in this context (Online 6).

[6]  *Alise* – *our star, mega star*. [*Alise mūsu star, mega star*].

[7]  Arrived at the office in smart *outfit* and straightened hair. [*Ieradies ofisā smukā outfits un iztaisnotiem matiem*].

[8]  There is a good word in English *judgement*. [*Angļu valodā ir labs vārds judgement*].

[9]  By the way hurry up to use sales days and go ‘*shopping*’ to Reserved, Sinsay, Mohito, House and Cropp! [*Starpcitu steidz izmantot izpārdošanas dienas un dodies ‘shopingā’ uz Reserved, Sinsay, Mohito, House un Cropp!*].
Example [6] demonstrates intra-utterance code-switching with *star* and *mega star* being inserted into the utterance of the Latvian language. *Star* is a borrowing; it uses a semantic meaning of the noun *star* from English. In utterance [7], the noun *office* is also a borrowing. The spelling of the noun *outfit* in English has been retained, but the ending -s has been added due to the influence of the Latvian language grammar system. Utterance [8] demonstrates an example of an intentional use of the word *judgement* in English, which the interlocutors translated afterwards. The verb phrase to go ‘*shopping*’ [9] is used in inverted commas, the user being aware that an English word has been inserted in the sentence in the Latvian language. Although the user attempts to preserve the spelling of the English language norms, the word *shoping* is misspelled if it was written in English. Besides, grammatical adaptation has been applied, indicating the declension of the noun. The length mark of the vowel – macron, which is typical of the Latvian language, is used.

[10] *Please don’t be ugly.*


Utterance [10] in the English language used in a video in Latvian testifies to the fact that linguistic manifestation of code-switching may extend from the insertion of words to larger segments of discourse. Utterances [10] and [11] are cases of **inter-utterance code-switching**, as the complete utterance is in English, the rest of the video being in Latvian. Elliptical utterances, for instance, *Just for fun*, were also observed.

[12] Things in Latvian radio that simply *make sense*. [Lietas Latvijas radio, kas vienkārši *make sense*].

The English expression *make sense* finishes the utterance in Latvian, thus framing the discourse and attracting reader’s attention to this. There is agreement in number between the form of the subject *things* and the predicate *make sense*. The use of English adds more pragmatic force to the Latvian utterance.


[14] My *crazy* birthday. [Mana *crazy dzimšanas diena*].

Utterances [13] and [14] both use the adjective *crazy*. In addition, utterance [13] has the noun *fanīti*, which is used in the meaning of someone who admires and supports a person. The noun has acquired the diminutive suffix -īti, which denotes a female and communicates a friendly attitude. Some other popular words were *cool*, *fake*, and *crazy*. Traditional loans with the usual phonetic and grammatical adaptations were identified: *kūls* (cool), *filings* (feeling), *lūzers* (loser), *feiss* (face), *tops* (top), and *čats* (chat).

[15] I am not a *loser* [lūzers] or a dead loss when I am experiencing fear. [Es neesmu nekāds *lūzers* vai zaudētājs, kad es izjūtu bailes].
In utterance [15], the user has employed the adapted form loser followed by the noun with the same meaning in Latvian zaudētājs, which is likely to be used to make sure that the interlocutor understands the message.

[16] To make cocktails – welcome drinks. [Sataisīt kokteilīšus – welcome drinks].

[17] Wine gums. I know that these are wine gums in English. [Vīna konfektes. Es tik zinu, ka angliski ir wine gums.]. Now we can play Whisper Challenge. [Tagad varam spēlēt whisper challenge].

Code-switches [16] and [17] were used because the words Wine gums and Whisper Challenge do not exist in the Latvian language, or the speaker was not aware of or did not remember the words in Latvian. This may have happened because the concepts these words describe originate from the English culture.

Recurrent findings to emerge from systematic analyses of the tokens of spontaneous bilingual production data on the social media cites TikTok and YouTube are as follows:

1) The majority of all instances of language mixing are single English language items.

2) Nearly all of them are immediately integrated syntactically into the Latvian language.

Based on the observations, it can be assumed that the language users have code-switched due to the following reasons:

a) switched to the English language because it offers words and expressions that do not exist in the Latvian language,
b) did not remember a word or expression in the Latvian language,
c) switched to Latvian because they could not find an appropriate word to express themselves as well,
d) code-switched when they were emotionally affected,
e) code-switched to emphasize the point the speaker was making,
f) code-switched spontaneously,
g) showed personal and group identity,
h) wanted to attract reader’s or listener’s attention.

CONCLUSIONS

The samples extracted from the data collected are consistent representations of speech behavior of bilinguals or multilinguals in Latvia on two social media sites YouTube and TikTok. It has been observed that Latvian-English language users tend to evolve a conversational mode where elements of Latvian and English appear in the same utterance.

Extra-sentential switching or inserting tag elements from English into Latvian, inter-sentential switching characterized by a switch from Latvian to
English outside the sentence or the clause level, and intra-sentential switching or switching from Latvian to English at the clause, phrase, or word level were observed. The most typical linguistic manifestation of code-switching was the insertion of single words.

It may be argued that code switching between the Latvian and the English languages may point at the social status of English among young people, arising from (1) the large number of English speakers in the world; (2) its wide geographical spread; (3) its importance in the fields of culture, international diplomacy, economics and business, science, technology, and politics; (4) its linguistic prestige as English is used by powerful social groups globally in the countries which currently dominate world affairs economically, politically and culturally; (5) the dominance of English on social media.

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