

# Use of Literature, Resources and Innovative Methodologies in the English Classroom

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**ABSTRACT:** This research is aimed at analysing English teachers' perception, use and level of professional development regarding literature, resources and innovative methodologies in the classroom. The type of quantitative investigation method used had a descriptive-comparative nature, where 70 secondary teachers, that taught English as a foreign language, answered a questionnaire created *ad hoc*. The results show that teachers consider literature as a great resource for the development of basic competences; nevertheless, most of them do not use it to a great extent and, when they do, it is through reading tasks of textbooks and graded books. We conclude that literature texts are perceived as too difficult, probably because teachers may not know how to select the best-suited works in terms of cognition and interest. As educational implications, we propose for EFL teachers to acquire, during their initial education, the pertinent knowledge about literary works, tasks, ICTs and audiovisual materials for the teaching of English, and how to assess these contents. It is interesting, to point out the limitations of the study, related to the compilation of the best literature works for the English teaching, in order to plan future lines of investigation.

**Keywords:** English literature, secondary education, resources, methodology, innovation.

## El uso de literatura, recursos y metodologías innovadoras en el aula de inglés

**RESUMEN:** Esta investigación tiene como objetivo analizar la percepción, el uso y el nivel de desarrollo profesional del profesorado de inglés con respecto a la literatura, los recursos y las metodologías innovadoras en el aula. El tipo de investigación cuantitativa utilizada fue de naturaleza descriptiva-comparativa, donde 70 profesores de secundaria, que enseñaban inglés como lengua extranjera, respondieron un cuestionario creado *ad hoc*. Los resultados muestran que el profesorado considera la literatura como un gran recurso para el desarrollo de competencias básicas; sin embargo, la mayoría no la usa en gran medida y, cuando lo hacen, es a través de tareas de lectura de libros de texto y lecturas graduadas. Concluimos que los textos literarios se perciben como demasiado difíciles, probablemente porque el profesorado desconozca cómo seleccionar las obras más adecuadas en términos de cognición e interés. Como implicaciones educativas, proponemos que el profesorado de inglés adquiera, durante su formación inicial, el conocimiento pertinente sobre obras literarias, tareas, TIC, materiales audiovisuales, estrategias de evaluación relacionadas. Es interesante señalar las limitaciones del estudio, relacionadas con la compilación de las mejores obras literarias para la enseñanza del inglés, y para planificar futuras líneas de investigación.

**Palabras clave:** Literatura inglesa, educación secundaria, recursos, metodología, innovación.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Spanish education system has tried to adapt to the exigencies of the global society following a set of common objectives that are shared by the rest of the European countries. Some of these are, for example, developing a social and cultural identity by studying a foreign language or using the language for communication purposes, promoting a wider use of authentic and motivating materials and ICTs, and adopting a student-centred approach (Morales, 2000). Nevertheless, these objectives and recommendations do not translate the same way in all countries, something which can be inferred from the results of several studies and evaluations carried out all across Europe in which we can see that many teachers do not follow such objectives and recommendations in the actual classroom (González, 2016). Research in this area is therefore necessary to discover the reason why this is happening.

Despite the possible benefits for the use of literature at high school levels discussed by scholars, its role in the Spanish national curriculum is very uncertain; the curriculum for the English subject in particular does not make any reference to the use of literature. Traditionally, literary works have usually been relegated from the EFL classroom and, when they have been used, it has not been to their full potential, as happened during the Grammar-translation Period. It is the intention of this study to shed some light on the reasons why this has happened, analysing English teachers' opinions, use and the level of professional development that they have attained in this respect.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. The use of Literature in the EFL classroom

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary (Harper, 2018), the origins of the word "Literature" come from as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, meaning "book-learning" (from Latin *litteratura/litteratura* "learning, a writing, grammar," originally "writing formed with letters"); and also defined as "an epistle, writing, document; literature, great books; science, or learning" (Harper, 2018). It is therefore not surprising to link the terms *literature* and *learning* and, as the word *grammar* suggests, *language*. For the purpose of this study, we will consider literature as the body of writings produced in a particular language (in prose or verse), especially those considered having value as art, expressing ideas of permanent or universal interest.

The role that literature has held in the foreign language learning and teaching field has been changing over the centuries. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, during the Grammar-Translation Period, literature was considered a "key element" (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014, p. 249) and was used for mechanical translations, gave virtually no attention to communication in that language. With time, as the importance of spoken language arose, literature was doomed to a nearly forgotten place (Garipova, 2013, 2014). Long after that, the use of literature as a tool emerged again during the 1980s, as research showed that it could be useful in the teaching of cultural elements as well. As Hernández (2010, p. 1) stated, "Literature opens the door that leads to a wider and closer look on the culture/s where the target language is spoken".

Ultimately, the role of literature in this field has been subject to more changes; recent research has showed that it is also a catalyst for the promotion of interactions among individuals through discussions and debates (McKay, 1982), the improvement of critical thinking and linguistic skills as a whole (Shtepani, 2012) and the development of cross-cultural and intercultural awareness on the part of the learners (Divsar & Tahriri, 2009), among many others which will be discussed later.

### *2.1.1. Benefits of teaching English through Literature*

The beneficial effects of the use of literature in the EFL classroom have been analysed and discussed by many in the field (Badria & Khaled, 2014; Carter, 2007; Carter & Long, 1991; Collie & Slater, 1990; Hişmanoğlu, 2005; Lazar, 1993; Maley, 1989; Paran, 1998, 2000, 2006; Pérez-Valverde & Ruiz-Cecilia, 2012). In 1989, Maley created a list of features that, in his opinion, turned literature into a powerful resource in the EFL classroom. These characteristics were: universality, non-triviality (because literary texts do not trivialise life as other kinds of traditional materials do); personal relevance (because the learners may be able to relate its content to their own lives); variety of topics; interest; economy and suggestive power (as literature is ideal for generating discussions and debates, a fact that was also stated by Badria and Khaled, 2014) and ambiguity. During the beginning of the 1990s, academics such as Collie and Slater (1990), Carter and Long (1991) and Lazar (1993) offered several lists of inherent aspects that were present in literature that made it especially valuable for the EFL classroom. In 2005, Hişmanoğlu (2005) collected and summarised the work of a number of previous scholars in a very comprehensive article, *Teaching English Through Literature*. It is here where we can read that the reasons that may lead an EFL teacher to use literature in the classroom are: valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement. Thus, in 2012, Pérez-Valverde y Ruiz-Cecilia (2012) focused their investigation on the teacher training process and evaluated the ability of teachers to manage their own learning about the didactic resources based on literature.

### *2.1.2. Drawbacks of teaching English through Literature*

Foncubierta, Herrero and Fonseca-Mora (2018) investigated the foreign-language students' reading competence in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) university contexts, and concluded that is a critical skill to grasp content but their results searching show students' low level of reading competence. According to Divsar and Tahriri (2009), there are several limitations that the learner may face when reading a literary text in a foreign language: lack of linguistic knowledge, lack of analytical skills, lack of schemata and lack of knowledge about literature and the characteristics of its genres. All this may frustrate and demotivate the students and the teacher (Al Mullah, 2006), who then perceive literature as something "too difficult". McKay (1982) has also pointed out that the structural complexity and unique use of language that we find in literature can influence the reader's enjoyment and have negative consequences. For this reason, it is important for teachers to consider the learners' linguistic level, interests and motivations when selecting the most suitable literary work (or adaptation). Some authors such as Chen (2014) and Ortells (2013) have stated that allowing some freedom of choice for the learners to read whatever they want from a list of appropriate or adequate works, with a variety of topics, might be the key to increase their

level of engagement. Students may not be aware of the multiple reading options available to them; well-read teachers, in this case, could be of help to facilitate their decision.

One of the reasons why language teachers do not use literature in the EFL classroom is, according to Hişmanoğlu (2005, p. 65), the lack of preparation that some teachers have in the area of literature teaching, as some of them try to include it in their lessons but do not know how to do it properly or feel confused (Hirvela, 1989; Paran, 1998, 2000; Mrozowska, 2000; Ostria González, 2003). This may be due to the fact that literature is studied as a separate course at University levels. As Scher (1976) points out, teachers sometimes blame their students for difficulties that stem from their own weaknesses and unrealistic expectations. Some other reasons why its introduction in the classroom might failure: the absence of clear-cut objectives defining the role of literature; students' scarce command of the English language; time constraints in the curriculum; and little weight that literary work in the classroom has in the assessment process (giving students the impression that it is not worth the effort) (Gallardo Álvarez, 2008).

## **2.2. The use of innovative methodologies and resources in the EFL classroom**

Different kinds of resources can be used in the EFL classroom when we teach through literature, such as: drama, debates, e-learning, ICTs, audio-visual material.

### *2.2.1. The use of drama*

It has been shown that the use of drama techniques in learning environments improves the students' cognitive, metacognitive and even socio-affective skills. Many authors have studied the advantages of using it in the classroom. Murillo (2017), for example, pointed out that the use of drama in educational environments is beneficial because it helps to build confidence; it develops skills and strategies for learning; it is appropriate for different learning styles; it provides room for language personalization; and it is cross-curricular since the aims are more than just linguistic.

### *2.2.2. The use of debates*

When using debates in the classroom, students must read critically to become informed and make a clear statement of their own view of the issue being debated. It is for this reason that Stapleton (2001) and Osborne (2005) point out to the effectiveness of debates in the development of the reading skill and critical thinking.

Most of the time in traditional classrooms, students do not feel comfortable enough to speak or are shy, because they are not used to this kind of activity (Marcellino, 2005). It is important that, in order to prepare them for real communication, they adopt a more active role. Debates engage students in various cognitive and linguistic ways (Krieger, 2005) and provide meaningful practice that forces a self-conscious reflection on their own opinion (Nesbett, 2003). Thus, the possible benefits of this technique in the EFL classroom are clear.

### *2.2.3. The use of e-learning and ICTs*

With the beginning of the digital era, new methodological approaches and pedagogical training tools have emerged in the educational field (Gutierrez, 2014). One of the main

reasons why technology has had such a success is the strong connection students have with technological gadgets; in fact, it has been shown that they are a source of motivation for them (Tananuraksakul, 2014). Blended e-learning, which mixes traditional and virtual instruction, is one of the most celebrated approaches. Many studies, such as Means et al. (2013), Lee & Hung (2015), and Tananurasakul (2016), have confirmed that blended e-learning gathers all the benefits of digital instruction, without neglecting traditional education. According to the findings obtained by Sharpe et al. (2016), it could be a good idea to use blended learning to provide supplementary resources; this is already being done at university level, achieving good results among students and teachers alike.

#### 2.2.4. *The use of audio-visual materials*

Watching films, videos and TV series in English to improve the students' linguistic and cultural skills have been used in the classroom for a long time. According to multiple studies (Stempleski, 1992; Casanave & Freedman, 1995; Qiang, Hai, & Wolff, 2007), the introduction of this kind of material in the learning process has beneficial consequences for both the teacher and the students, as they enhance their motivation and create a positive environment (Jung & Park, 2016, Kabookah, 2016). In 2014, a research carried out by Tunkay showed that films and their accompanying tasks were a good source of authentic input and cross-cultural aspects, as well as being an important source for the development of other non-verbal and para-linguistic skills on the part of the students. The results obtained in this research suggested that the teachers' beliefs about film viewing, the learners' perception of films to develop their English skills, the time allocated for viewing and the kind of activities/tasks carried out before, during and after the film make an impact on the overall experience. The objectives of the tasks should also be clearly defined and the whole experience should not be passive: it should require the students' participation in one way or another (Tunkay, 2014).

### 3. EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1. Research questions and objectives

The main research questions that induced the beginning of this research are:

- How do English teachers perceive the use of literature as a learning tool in the classroom?
- What kind of resources do English teachers use in the classroom?
- What is the current English teachers' training level regarding the use of literature and creative methodologies and resources?

Consequently, two main research objectives have been established:

- A. To determine English teachers' opinion and degree of use regarding: literature, innovative methodologies, innovative resources and their current state of professional development and innovative practices.
- B. To establish a relationship between the sociodemographic data and the information collected.

**3.2. Method**

A quantitative methodological approach of a descriptive-comparative nature has been adopted during the development of this study. The material analysed originates from a questionnaire created *ad hoc*. This quantitative method was chosen because the information can be analysed easily due to the numerical nature of the data collected (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

*3.2.1. Participants*

The participants in this study have been selected via non-random purposive sampling. Only one inclusion criterion was taken into account in order to create the sample: to be an English teacher for compulsory and non-compulsory secondary education levels in the Region of Murcia. The final sample was formed by 70 English teachers, who participated anonymously and freely.

The socio-demographic data collected in the questionnaire is presented in Table 1.

*Table 1. Sociodemographic data collected in the survey*

Genre						Qualification									
Men			Women			Eng. Studies		English Philology		Translation & Interp.		Other			
N	F	%	N	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
12	12	17.1	58	57	81.4	2	2.9	64	91.4	2	2.9	2	2.9		
Age															
<25			26-35			36-45		46-55		>55					
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%				
0	0	13	18.6	0	0	26	37.1	26	37.1						
Employment status				Centre's Ownership				Training in methodology							
Civil servant		Supply		Public		Public-private		Private		None		1-3 courses		>3 courses	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
53	75.7	17	24.3	64	91.4	6	8.6	0	0	12	17.1	30	42.9	22	31.4
Teaching experience								Training in ICT							
< 3 years		3-9 years		10-19 years		years		> 30 years		Elementary		Intermediate		Advanced	
F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
6	8.6	13	18.6	19	27.1	28	40	4	5.7	6	8.6	53	75.7	10	14.3

### 3.2.2. Instrument

As no other questionnaire was found useful for the purpose of this research, the researcher created one *ad hoc*. The questionnaire is divided into two parts, being the first one devoted to the collection of socio-demographic data (genre, age, qualification, etc.). The second part is formed by criterion variables (literature in English, methodology, resources and professional development and innovation). The answers provided for each item are collected using a Likert scale with 5 options, from 1 (*I totally disagree*) to 5 (*I totally agree*). It also included a comments/suggestions section at the end; these will be shown in the discussion.

The validation of the instrument was carried out through an expert judgement in which five experts participated. The experts were 4 men and 1 woman; four of them work as English teachers in compulsory and non-compulsory secondary education and are head of the English department in their high school; the last one works as a professor at the Faculty of Education at the University of Murcia.

The internal consistency of the questionnaire was calculated using SPSS Statistics 24.0 for quantitative data (IBM Corp., 2016). This is usually measured according to Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability, which can range from 0 (low reliability) to 1 (high reliability). The value obtained was .926, meaning that the questionnaire has an excellent degree of reliability, according to De Vellis (2003).

### 3.2.3. Procedure

After having a meeting to establish the main objectives of the research, the researchers started with a review of the literature available on the topic. This provided an idea of the main issues that had been studied previously and the gaps that existed in the literature. With all that information, the authors started writing the questionnaire and dividing it into different dimensions. Two draft versions of it were revised again. When that version was ready, the questionnaire was re-examined by a group of experts who made the necessary suggestions for improvement. The final questionnaire was handed out to the teachers that are teaching English as a foreign language. While the questionnaires were being completed, the authors started the writing process after having a meeting to clarify the objectives and how these were being met. Another review of the literature available was necessary to complete the previous ideas. This was the longest stage in the development of the research. The answers obtained were coded and collected in a data matrix to analyse them afterwards using SPSS Statistics 24.0 for quantitative data (IBM Corp., 2016).

## 4. FINDINGS

The results gathered are going to be presented into five sections (objective A); the factors that are going to be shown are: number of respondents per item (N), minimal (Min) and maximal (Max) value received in the Likert scale for that item, mean (M) and Standard Deviation (SD). Further on, the relationship between the sociodemographic data and the information collected will be displayed (objective B).

**A. To determine English teachers' opinion and degree of use regarding: literature, innovative methodologies, innovative resources and their current state of professional development and innovative practices (A.1, A.2, A.3, A.4).**

*A. 1. To determine English teachers' opinion and degree of use of literature in the classroom.*

Table 5 displays the statistical values concerning teachers' opinion about the use of literature in the classroom.

*Table 5. Statistical values concerning teachers' opinion about the use of literature in the classroom*

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. Working with literary contents in English is a good teaching / learning tool	70	1	5	3.90	.837
2. Literary contents are useful in the English classroom	70	1	5	3.91	.928
3. The use of literary contents in the English classroom motivates students	68	1	5	3.26	1.167
4. I use literature for the realisation of listening tasks	70	1	5	<b>2.29</b>	1.156
5. I use literature for the realisation of reading tasks	70	1	5	3.63	1.206
6. I use literature for the realisation of writing tasks	69	1	5	2.99	1.278
7. I use literature for the realisation of speaking tasks	70	1	5	2.40	1.267
8. The use of literature fosters the development of basic competences in the students (linguistic competence, cultural awareness, social and civil awareness, etc.)	69	1	5	<b>3.97</b>	1.029
9. Working with literary contents promotes the development of <i>linguistic</i> abilities in the students	70	1	5	3.94	.976
10. Working with literary contents promotes the development of <i>communicative</i> abilities in the students	70	1	5	3.57	1.124

As we can see in the results detailed in table 5, most English teachers consider that the use of literature fosters the development of basic competences in the students (M=3.97). The mean is also high for the items related to the development of linguistic (M=3.94) and communicative abilities (M=3.57). Regarding the use of literary materials for the creation of different tasks, listening tasks are the least popular ones (M=2.29); the majority of the teachers use it for readings (M=3.63). Writing and speaking tasks achieve similar means (M=2.99 and M=2.40, respectively).

*A. 2. To determine English teachers' opinion and degree of use of innovative methodologies.*

Table 6 gathers the statistical values concerning teachers' opinion about the use of innovative methodologies in the classroom.

*Table 6. Statistical values concerning teachers' opinion about the use of innovative methodologies in the classroom*

Item	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
11. I try to use active methodologies in the teaching of literary contents during the teaching/ learning process	70	1	5	3.80	1.111
12. I use creative tasks (short stories, poems, theatre, etc.) to teach and/ or assess in the classroom	70	2	5	3.83	.868
13. I use literature to enhance my students' critical thinking skills	68	1	5	3.54	.937
14. I combine methodologies that require individual and collaborative work when teaching literary contents	70	1	5	3.39	1.231
15. I attend lectures/ seminars to work with literary contents	68	1	4	<b>1.66</b>	.803
16. I create debates to work with literary contents	69	1	5	1.94	1.013
17. Working with literature in the classroom allows me to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs	69	1	5	2.32	1.243
18. Literature allows me to create creative tasks which are attractive, pleasing and audio-visual	70	1	5	3.37	1.157
19. I propose creative tasks in which the students need to look for information and draw their own conclusions	70	1	5	<b>3.94</b>	.946
20. I assess literary contents through different techniques	68	1	5	3.09	1.267

Regarding the use of innovative methodologies, most English teachers consider that they offer creative activities in which students need to look for information and draw their own conclusions (M=3.94). This is closely followed by the use of creative tasks to teach and assess (M=3.83) and the use of active methodologies when teaching literary contents (M=3.80). However, most of them do not attend any seminars or lectures (M=1.66) about literature. None of the 70 respondents answered *I totally agree* with that item. The use of debates to work with literary contents is also very low (M=1.94).

*A. 3. To determine English teachers' opinion and degree of use of innovative resources.*

Table 7 presents the statistical values concerning teachers' opinion about the use of innovative resources in the classroom.

*Table 7. Statistical values concerning teachers' opinion about the use of innovative resources in the classroom*

<b>Item</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
21. I use textbooks as a tool to work with literary contents in the classroom	70	1	5	3.50	1.126
22. I use signs/ posters as a tool to work with literary contents in the classroom	69	1	5	2.72	1.338
23. I use audio-visual media (TV series, films, videos, etc.) as a tool to work with literature in the classroom	70	1	5	4.14	.967
24. I use social media platforms ( <i>Facebook, Twitter, Instagram</i> , etc.) as a resource to teach/ assess literary contents	68	1	5	2.65	1.553
25. I use adapted literature in the classroom ( <i>Graded readers</i> )	69	2	5	<b>4.58</b>	.736
26. I follow copyright rules for the use of literary and technological resources	70	1	5	3.49	1.370
27. I usually bring experts to the classroom to improve the learning experience	69	1	5	<b>1.64</b>	1.014
28. I design my own teaching resources to work with literary contents in the classroom	70	1	5	3.03	1.285
29. I share with the rest of the educational community the resources and tasks created about literature	69	1	5	2.75	1.355
30. I use different instruments to assess literary contents	70	1	5	3.30	1.184

With regards to the use of innovative resources, we can see that a great majority of English teachers use graded readers in their classrooms ( $M=4.58$ ). This is, in fact, the item which achieved the highest mean in the questionnaire. None of the respondents answered *I totally disagree* for this item, therefore all of them have considered the use of graded readers in the classroom to some extent. The use of textbooks to teach literary contents ( $M=3.50$ ) and different instruments to assess them ( $M=3.30$ ) receive the second and third highest mean in the section. On the contrary, teachers do not bring experts to improve the learning experience in the classroom, which is also the item that received the lowest mean in the survey ( $M=1.64$ ).

*A. 4. To determine English teachers' beliefs regarding their current state of professional development and innovative practices.*

Table 8 specifies the statistical values concerning teachers' opinion about their current state of professional development and innovative practices.

*Table 8. Statistical values concerning teachers' opinion about their current state of professional development and innovative practices*

<b>Item</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
31. I have attended training courses about literature in compulsory and non-compulsory secondary education	69	1	5	2.71	1.373
32. I have attended training courses about the use of literature as an education resource in compulsory and non-compulsory secondary education	70	1	5	2.46	1.401
33. I have attended training courses about the assessment of literary contents in compulsory and non-compulsory secondary education	69	1	5	2.36	1.350
34. I have attended training courses about the creation of literary materials for compulsory and non-compulsory secondary education	69	1	5	2.13	1.349
35. I have attended training courses about creativity in education	70	1	5	3.41	1.409
36. I usually go to lectures/ seminars/ debate groups about literature	69	1	5	2.06	1.162

(Continuation)

37. I use technological resources to foster the participation and interactivity level of the students (online conferences, virtual classrooms, forums, etc.)	70	1	5	<b>3.59</b>	1.245
38. I adapt the new technological devices that appear in the market to the literary contents	70	1	5	2.80	1.281
39. I use literature to design innovative focus of interest	67	1	5	2.15	.957
40. I take part in innovative/ research projects related to literature	69	1	5	<b>1.68</b>	.993

Table 8 proves that most English teachers use technology to foster the students' participation in the classroom and raise their interaction level ( $X=3.59$ ). Many of them have also attended courses about creativity in the classroom ( $X=3.41$ ). This contrasts with the low result obtained for the item *I take part in innovative/research projects related to literature* ( $X=1.68$ ). The rest of the items receive low values so most teachers do not agree with them.

#### **B. To establish a relationship between the sociodemographic data and the information collected.**

The results were analysed using non-parametric statistics because the population was not normally distributed. Items receiving values below 0.05 were selected as presenting statistically significant differences.

To begin with, after applying the Man-Whitney U test, the results did not show statistically significant differences regarding the genre of the respondents. Likewise, the Kruskal Wallis test did not show any statistically significant differences with regards to the qualification of the respondents. In terms of age, using the Kruskal Wallis test, items 6, 7 and 39 showed statistically significant differences. It appears that the older population (55 years old or more) consider using literature for the creation of writing and speaking tasks much more than the rest. On the contrary, younger respondents (between 26 and 35 years old) use it more to create innovation focus on the attention in the classroom.

Working experience was the next variable analysed. This time, items 33, 34, 36, 37 and 39 appeared as having statistically significant differences. The population who have done more training courses about the assessment of literary contents and the creation of their own teaching materials are those with less than 3 years of teaching experience. The same group also shows significant differences in the statistics because they seem to attend more seminars, conferences and lectures about literature, and they use it more to create innovative focus on attention. Those which have between 10 and 19 years of experience consider that use technology to foster participation in the classroom to a greater extent than the rest.

The next sociodemographic variable analysed was the training in the use of ICT. In this case, items 9, 20, 37 and 38 showed statistically significant differences. Those with an advanced level display to agree more with the fact that working literary contents fosters the development of the linguistic competence. They also use more technology to foster the participation of the students and adapt new technological devices and tools which appear in the market. Differences were also found in the population with an intermediate level, who consider assessing literary contents through different techniques to a greater extent.

Finally, the last variable to be considered is the degree of training in methodology. Items 29, 31 and 35 appeared as having statistically significant differences. The respondents who have done more than 3 training courses on methodology seem to share the materials they create with the rest of the educational community more than the rest. They have also done more training courses about literature in compulsory and non-compulsory education, as well as activities about creativity in the classroom.

## 5. DISCUSSION

A prominent feature that appeared after the literature review was that there are a great variety of opinions, approaches, aims and methods about the use of literature and innovative methodologies and resources in the English classroom. Despite that, there is a lack of research regarding what English teachers actually think and do during their lessons. This research project intends to shed some light to this obscure situation. Several ideas were identified in the findings, which are going to be explored in this section.

Although the results of this research project demonstrate that most teachers consider literature as a great resource for the development of basic competences on the part of the students, they are not sure that this type of content motivates the students. This brings into question the fact that they might not have found still the best approach to work with literature in the classroom. They seem confused, as Hirvela (1989), Paran (1998), Mrozowska (2000) and Ostria (2003) point out. Thinking that it is a good tool for the development of all the competences but stating that it does not stimulate students can lead them to frustration and finally to leave it out of their practices. In relation to this issue, one of the respondents commented that “it is difficult to motivate students with literature; it might be possible with good groups, but it is not common”. This statement shows two of the main misconceptions that many teachers have about literature: that students are not motivated to work with it and that only high-proficiency students can benefit from it. It is here where we can see an instance of this frustration that Al Mullah (2006) talks about. It is important to remember that teachers’ unrealistic expectations should be considered. Allowing some freedom of choice among a list of works specially created for a group of students in particular may be the key to increase their level of engagement and motivation. Not all literary works are classics, difficult or not interesting for teenagers; modern literature could probably be more motivating for students who have grown up watching the film version of young-adult literature works such as the sagas of *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis or *Harry Potter* by J. K. Rowling, which are in fact very popular among students.

Another possible reason for the previous issue may also have its roots in the following result: the potential of literary contents in the English classroom is mostly reduced to the

practice of the reading ability only. This conception is considerably traditional and shows that innovation in this area is rare. The *Real Decreto 1105/2014*, the Spanish national curriculum for compulsory and non-compulsory secondary education, prioritizes the development of productive skills, so a change in this regard is necessary. As Hişmanoğlu (2005) shows, literary works can have the potential of integrating the development of all the skills and develop many abilities. Reducing it to reading tasks is underestimating. Among all the skills, the practice of the listening skill received the lowest value, according to the respondents.

Regarding the methodological dimension, most respondents agree in offering creative tasks to teach and assess their students, especially those who have done more than 3 training courses about methodology. This item was not aimed at knowing their use of literature, but at discovering if they try to address or enhance creativity in the classroom. The results show that the most popular activities they choose are those in which students need to look for information and draw their own conclusions, that is to say, activities in which they can improve their critical thinking skills. From the majority of the respondents' point of view, creativity and critical thinking seem to be interrelated. It would be interesting to know which sources they use for the creation of these tasks, and whether they find them in traditional sources or, on the contrary, they try to find inspiration in more innovative sources.

The less frequently used technique, according to the results, are debates. Moreover, most teachers also state not attending any seminars or lectures related to literature. From the information collected we could reach the conclusion that most kinds of group work (either on the part of the teachers, or on the part of the students) are neglected or seen as rare in their methodologies. There is an attempt to foster the students' and teachers' critical thinking and creativity, but on an individual level, with no sharing of ideas. The importance of this finding cannot be overestimated: we have seen the many benefits of group work, collaboration and cooperation. It can mean an improvement of the students' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, self-esteem and, as Bolukbas, Keskin & Polat (2011) point out, it makes learning more meaningful, creating a safe environment. The Kruskal Wallis test showed that the respondents who had done more courses about methodology are keener on sharing their materials. The reason behind might be in the fact that most methodology courses try to promote group work among individuals and cooperation in order to improve. Doing more training activities would therefore be beneficial for English teachers in order to notice the advantages of collaboration. Probably related to the fact that most teachers do not go to seminars, conferences or debates related to literature, most respondents do not bring experts to the classroom to make students more interested in literature, nor use social media, although Pérez-Valverde & Ruiz-Cecilia (2012) conclude that training courses about literature help teachers to use it in foreign language classrooms. Sharing materials with other workmates is also very rare. These ideas are clearly linked to the fact that collaborative work is not particularly common in the classroom nor outside, among teachers. It is certainly difficult to meet professionals in the field if they do not attend any seminars or conferences on the matter. The situation could improve if a different point of view was adopted, one in which individual thinking is followed by a general collaboration, sharing, contrasting and comparison of ideas among professionals and students.

The study proves that teachers commonly rely on traditional resources; there is not much innovation in this sense. The kind of activities that they usually offer (mainly readings) are approached as individual work (not much sharing/ comparison of ideas) and worked

through textbooks and adapted literature. The creativity and critical thinking abilities might not have much space here, although most respondents say that they try to offer tasks in which students put them into practice. One of the comments in the questionnaire explains the reason why graded readers are preferred over authentic literature. This happens, in this respondent's opinion, because "grader readers are easier to understand and literary works do not interest students, as their difficulty does not let them enjoy the reading process. Working with literature is great at university level, but it is not possible in Secondary Education". It is clear, then, that some teachers are still convinced that literature in English does not have a place in these levels. The reason for this could lie, as Hişmanoğlu (2005) says, in the lack of preparation that some teachers have in the area of literature teaching. As we saw in the literature review, it is primordial to select works which match the students level of cognition and interests. Although matching the interests of the whole classroom is particularly impossible unless all the students like the same topics, it is still possible to allow them some freedom of choice and autonomy to individually select what they want to read from a list of recommended readings. The number of tasks that could arise and their learning possibilities are numerous.

The last section of the questionnaire was aimed at understanding English teachers' considerations about their innovative practices and level of professional development in this area, especially in terms of literature use. The results demonstrate that one of the most popular training courses they attend is related with the increase of creativity in the classroom, not only on the part of the students but also among teachers. However, the results also display that at least half of the respondents do not create their own materials for the study of literary-related contents, so creativity is reduced in this sense. The reason, as one of them pointed out in the comments section, could be linked to a lack of time: "The creation of new materials demands some preparation and dedication that we teachers lack, especially since the increment of teaching hours per week/group, the number of students and the application of the assessment learning standards".

From the results obtained we can confirm that teachers are keener on using ICT as a way to promote linguistic abilities, rather than literature. Nevertheless, integrating the use of both literature and ICT as tools for language learning, as well as using some group work techniques such as debates to increase cooperation and interpersonal skills, could be an interesting method to get closer to the type of tasks that students will have to face in the future.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Regarding the research questions: How do English teachers perceive the use of literature as a learning tool in the classroom?; What kind of resources do English teachers use in the classroom?; What is the current English teachers' training level regarding the use of literature and creative methodologies and resources? The results collected in this study concludes that English teachers consider literature as a great source for the development of basic competences in the students, specially the linguistic and communicative competence. Nevertheless, most teachers do not use it to a great extent and, when they do, it is through reading tasks which are mainly found in textbooks and graded readers. This perception of authentic literature as being "too difficult" is still a reality and could lie in the fact that

teachers might not know how to select the best-suited works for their students in terms of cognition and interest. As this happens, literature ends up frustrating both students and teachers. The creative and critical thinking skills are important for teachers, but the way in which these abilities are practiced may not be the most suitable one; a wider use of group work and problem solving could, as it was shown in the literature review, boost them to a greater extent. Group work is rare and therefore there is not much collaboration among teachers and students, something that unfortunately prevents them from developing their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. It also prevents teachers from meeting experts or sharing their professional experiences with others.

We can find some educational implications in the future teacher training about the benefits of introducing literature and innovative aspects in the EFL classroom, in order to know *how* to select the best-suited literary works for their students; *how* to work with them using a variety of tasks in which all skills are present; *how* to offer individual as well as group work to foster participation, critical thinking, problem solving skills and creativity; *how* to blend the use of literature with other innovative sources such as ICT or audio-visual materials; and, finally, *how* to assess these contents so that the reading process does not frustrate both teachers and students alike. It would be helpful for teachers to try out all these practices during their initial education and progressively improve them while they are working thanks to extra training courses offered by educational institutions.

Finally, we want to indicate that this study has got some limitations related to the most suitable literary genres and authors to be used in the EFL classroom, in order to plan future lines of research related to the compilation of the best literary resources.

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