

USING LITERARY TEXTS IN THE EFL CLASSROOM: A PILOT STUDY ON FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS' READING PREFERENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract: First-year English majors have to meet new expectations and face new challenges when they enter tertiary education, such as reading English literature and participating in literature classes. Despite the rediscovery of literature in EFL education (Bloemert et al., 2017), secondary schools in Hungary primarily focus on preparing their students for final exams and language exams, thus first-year English majors tend to experience difficulties related to reading in the target language. One possible solution to their difficulties might be the inclusion of literary texts in EFL university courses. The purpose of the present article is to introduce the issue from the students' perspective: it reports on a pilot study whose primary aim is to explore first-year English majors' reading preferences and their perceptions of using literature in the EFL classroom. The instrument is an online questionnaire and the sample includes 39 first-year university students majoring in English. Based on the results, it may be claimed that students are in favour of using literary texts in the EFL classroom. It is hoped that the findings on students' reading habits will be beneficial for EFL teachers who plan to incorporate literature into their university courses.

Keywords: literature, literature in the EFL classroom, reading habits, pilot study, validation

1 Introduction

The idea of incorporating literature in the English language classroom is not novel; nonetheless, it seems that the “re-emergence of literature as a valuable component in FL teaching” (Bloemert et al., 2017) has turned the attention again towards the role of using literary texts for language teaching purposes. Several researchers have addressed the questions why to use literary texts in the EFL/ESL classroom and why it should become a component of language education (e.g. McKay, 1982; Paran & Robinson, 2016; Parkinson & Thomas, 2000).

Despite the rich theoretical and methodological background, however, we can find few recent empirical studies. Some exceptions include Lao and Krashen (2000), whose study explored the impact of popular literature on literacy development in the EFL classroom; or a joint investigation conducted by Bloemert et al. (2017) in the Netherlands, who investigated Dutch students' perspectives on EFL literature education with the help of a questionnaire. Besides, we may find several interesting empirical studies in the Japanese context: for example, Kusanagi (2015) used a novel during an EFL course with medical students, Nasu (2015) conducted interviews with students on the role of literature in the EFL classroom. In the two above-mentioned examples, the researchers examined the place of literature in the EFL classroom from

the students' perspective; however, they focused on only one aspect of using literature in the EFL classroom such as language development or teaching culture. No research has included all the main aspects (language development, cultural knowledge, motivation, personal development) suggested by theoretical studies and methodological books (e.g. Duff & Maley, 2007; Hall, 2005; Paran & Robinson, 2016). Regarding the Hungarian context, reading habits and reading comprehension skills have been researched before (Hódi & Tóth, 2019; Steklács, 2013; Szűcs, 2017), nevertheless no recent study investigating students' experience of and opinion on using literature in the EFL university classroom has been found. Therefore, the present research was conducted with the purpose of filling a part of this gap.

The aims of the present study are to inquire about first-year university students' reading preferences both in Hungarian and in English and to investigate the role of literature in the EFL classroom from the students' perspective. Focusing on the role of literature in the EFL classroom, it is intended to explore the students' previous experience regarding working with literature in the EFL classroom, and their thoughts on the use of literature for language development purposes. As understanding students' experiences and viewpoints is crucial before one starts to consider including literature in the EFL classes, it is hoped that the preliminary results of the pilot study may be beneficial for EFL teachers who would like to experiment with literature in their classes. The present paper starts with the definition of the key terms and a literature review on reading and using literature in the EFL classroom. In the following section, the research methods are detailed and the results of the pilot study are presented. As a conclusion, some implications for the main study are proposed.

2 Review of literature

2.1 Definitions of key terms

2.1.1 Literature

Finding one universally acknowledged definition of the notion 'literature', which would cover all the aspects of this complex and collective term, is a truly challenging task. As pointed out by Ross (1993), the term is constantly changing: it "evolves as criticism evolves, and each critical school, as it defines its practice, recreates literature in its own image" (p.581). Nevertheless, there have been numerous attempts to grasp the meaning of literature.

Originally, the term, which is derived from Latin, referred to writing or the status of being widely read (Ross, 1993), so literature has always carried "socially and culturally constituted notions of value" (Parkinson & Thomas, 2000, pp.24–25). Thus the idea of canon, a list of texts which are considered to be parts of tradition, emerged in the 19th century when national literature replaced classic literature, and its place in education became an important issue in Europe (Hall, 2005). Nowadays, the word still has a connotation of high culture and value, but it has also become a collective term which is revised constantly according to various principles and changing aspects.

Definitions of literature might be divided into two groups: ontological and functional definitions. The main purpose of the first group is to determine literature as a static, unchanging term and finding its common features that would define it. (Carter, 2007; Parkinson & Thomas, 2000) Therefore, researchers have attempted to provide a definition by examining various literary texts and searching for common features. One distinctive feature of literature can be its language which is considered to be different from ordinary language. It is a common view that literary language is “flowery (or, more positively, ‘elevated’), unusually figurative, often old-fashioned and difficult to understand, and indirect” (Hall, 2005, p.10) as opposed to everyday language. Nevertheless, this distinction needs to be treated carefully since it is difficult to determine the boundary between literary and non-literary language; furthermore, literary language is made from ordinary language (Hall, 2005).

Parkinson and Thomas (2000) regard literature as a functional rather than an ontological term, thus they do not try to look for common features to provide a definition; rather they support the idea of looking at what literature does and what one can do with it. Considering its functions, literature “has traditionally been expected to be both pleasurable and thought-provoking to fulfill both aesthetic and moral function” (p.24) in Western cultures. It should also be noted that the main function of literature might vary in different cultures, contexts and at different times.

Based on previous approaches, some have attempted to include various aspects in one definition. For instance, Alexander (2007) defines literature as texts whose “merit (...) lies in its combination of literary art and human interest” (p.4). In addition, he makes an important remark stating that high art cannot survive without human interest; in order to avoid that, a piece of writing must please its readers and its language must have life. Although Alexander (2007) focuses on high art when he specifies what he means by literature, interest is essential in the case of both low and high literature.

In the current study, the terms ‘literature’ and ‘literary texts’ are used to refer to texts in English that are written with creative, artistic, moral and teaching purposes in the form of traditional and experimental literary genres. Traditional genres refer to the ones included in the canon (e.g. tragedy, sonnets); experimental literary genres signify those genres which do not form a part of the canon (e.g. crime fiction, spoken poetry).

2.1.2 Reading in L1 and L2

It is not an exaggeration to say that we are surrounded by written texts. We read constantly, everyday; we read many different texts, we read some with a specific aim in mind, but we can also read texts that we just come upon (Grabe, 2009). In spite of the fact that reading is present in our everyday lives, it is difficult to grasp what we mean by it.

Various definitions of reading exist which could be categorised according to two main approaches. Bottom-up approaches describe the reader as constructing meaning in a linear manner from the bottom (i.e., letters, words, phrases, etc.) progressing to larger units of discourse and higher order meaning. In this view reading is regarded as a fixed order of stages “from sensory input to comprehension” (Hudson, 1998, p.46). At the other end of the scale, top-down approaches claim that the reader “approaches a text with conceptualizations above the textual

level already in operation and then works down to the text itself” (Hudson, 1998, p.47). A third approach, the interactive one, attempts to combine the elements of the other approaches maintaining that reading involves background knowledge, mental processes and text processing as well (Eskey, 2002; Hudson, 1998).

Eskey (2002) defines reading as a psycholinguistic process, sociocultural practice and individual behaviour. He claims that reading can be considered to be successful if one manages to understand a text. In order to grasp the meaning of a text, it is not enough to decode the text but one must also relate it to a previous body of knowledge. Apart from being a psycholinguistic process, reading is also a sociocultural practice as we read for various purposes, some of which are determined by culture (Eskey, 2002). We learn to read in order to become enculturated, or in the case of L2, acculturated, hence it may be stated that reading is a “culturally learned behaviour” (Eskey, 2002, p.7). The texts we are provided with and the purposes why we read can be also determined by our culture or the culture we would like to join. Certainly, culture is an important factor in shaping reading habits and skills, but reading is also an individual behaviour since readers are individuals with different reading habits (Eskey, 2002).

Considering reading in various languages, L1 and L2 are different and the differences may have an impact on the speed and accuracy of reading in L2, especially in the case of lower-level language proficiency. As Grabe (2009) points out, these differences include linguistic and processing, developmental and educational, sociocultural and institutional differences, which can either facilitate or debilitate reading in L2. Firstly, there are notable differences in terms of L2 students’ linguistic knowledge. According to Grabe (2009), the first significant difference is that students start reading in L2 later than in L1, but even in L1 they already speak the language when they learn to read. Therefore, L2 students do not have the same linguistic background and support as L1 readers to enable text comprehension. Secondly, there are developmental and educational distinctions which include contextual factors such as prior L1 reading experience and reading skills that enable one to become a successful reader especially in academic settings as well as different motivations for reading in L1 and L2. Thirdly, the wider context, i.e. “[t]he wider societal and cultural contexts in which a learner is socialized” (Grabe, 2009, p.137), plays a significant role in L2 reading development; for instance, there are various expectations about texts in L1 and L2 contexts and these expectations might influence the students’ performance; the sociocultural context also determines how a text is read, and it establishes reading patterns that have a great impact on how readers read (Grabe, 2009).

Koda (1994) notes three main differences between reading in L1 and L2. The L2 reader has prior experience related to reading, L2 reading is cross-linguistic, and reading ability advances before oral fluency is achieved. The first two differences also indicate L1 transfer since L2 reading involves at least two languages and there is a “cognitive interplay between the two languages” (p.5). Hence, L1 has a substantial influence on L2 reading since the students use their L1 reading skills and strategies in L2 reading even if there are no linguistic similarities between the two languages (Koda, 1994). Therefore, the present study focuses on reading in both languages. Although the target group involves solely English majors and the primary aim is to shed some light on their reading in English, previous reading experience and reading in L1 cannot be avoided.

2.1.3 Motivation

Apart from the genres students read, the time they spend on reading, the factors affecting their motivation to read are also regarded as crucial to have better understanding of reading habits. Moreover, obtaining more information on students' motivation to read is also important for teachers who would like to incorporate literature in their language classes. Since the focus is on foreign language learners, motivation theories related to the foreign language classroom were considered.

Two of the best-known concepts in motivation theories are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Intrinsic motivation “deals with behaviour performed for its own sake in order to experience pleasure and satisfaction” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p.23); while the term extrinsic motivation refers to behaviour performed to receive external rewards or to avoid punishment (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). A third type of motivation is amotivation, i.e. complete lack of motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). However, within these three types of motivation, several subtypes can be determined. The two models of motivation below are followed in this study as well.

According to Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory, “extrinsic forms of motivation can be placed on a continuum representing different degrees of external control or internal regulation (self-determination) depending on how internalised these extrinsic goals are” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p.24). Extrinsic motivation includes external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation and integrated regulation. Externally regulated actions are performed to satisfy an external demand or receive a reward. Introjected regulation is a “controlled form of regulation in which behaviours are performed to avoid guilt or anxiety or to attain ego enhancements” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.72). Identified regulation refers to a more self-determined type of extrinsic motivation when the goal is accepted and the behaviour is valued by the person. During integrated regulation, “identified regulations are fully assimilated to the self, which means they have been evaluated and brought into congruence with one's other values and needs” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.73) but the actions are not done for inherent enjoyment as in the case of intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation includes three subtypes of motivation: intrinsic motivation to learn, intrinsic motivation towards achievement, and intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). The first subtype deals with behaviour performed to learn, understand and explore something new; the second one involves engaging in an activity for the satisfaction experienced when one attempts to cope with challenges or accomplish something; the last one focuses on engagement in an activity in order to experience stimulation sensations (Vallerand, 1997, In: Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

2.2 The rationale behind investigating the use of literature in the EFL classroom

Since the 1960s, literature has been part of EFL education, although its functions and popularity have been changing over the decades (Hall, 2005). Despite its changing roles, numerous solid arguments have been listed to promote the use of literature in the EFL classroom;

at the same time counterarguments have been brought up in the relevant literature, which indicate the need to investigate the issue from the students' perspective.

The most commonly mentioned areas in which literature has been found to have positive impacts are language, culture and motivation. Regarding language usage, the two best-known benefits are that literary texts expand the students' vocabulary (Hall, 2005; McKay, 1982) and develop reading and writing skills (Hall, 2005; Parkinson & Thomas, 2000). As McKay (1982) points out, the inclusion of literature might promote language use since "[...] literature presents language in discourse in which the parameters of the setting and role relationship are defined" (p.530). Therefore, students become aware of not only the text's linguistic elements, but also the context in which the forms are embedded, the social and communication rules, which facilitate successful and effective communication. In addition, literary texts present various text types and styles which also enrich the students' language use and their general knowledge (Parkinson & Thomas, 2000).

Another frequent reason for including literature in the EFL classroom is that the texts introduce cultural values, issues and beliefs from a different cultural perspective and this provides some insight into foreign cultures and communities; consequently, students not only have some knowledge on a certain culture but they also understand it, which may lead to greater tolerance and respect (McKay, 1982). Literature is also motivational on the condition that students are willing to interact with the text (McKay, 1982). As Hall (2005) points out literature is supposed to be enjoyable, and so if students find pleasure in reading literary texts, it may motivate them to interact with the texts.

Despite the continuous presence of literature in the foreign language classroom, some have noted several difficulties that teachers and students might experience. One of the concerns is the language of the text in question, since most literary pieces considered appropriate for classroom use are often remote from learners in many ways such as historically, socially and in terms of life experience (Parkinson & Thomas, 2000). In numerous cases, it is not the meaning of the text that students do not understand, but rather the formal language and certain expressions which are unusual and strange for non-native speakers (Parkinson & Thomas, 2000). In addition, McKay (1982) mentions cultural perspective as a potential impediment to teaching literature in the EFL classroom. Literary texts reflect on certain cultural values, issues and assumptions from a different cultural perspective which can be staid or distant from the teachers and their students, too. Nonetheless, as noted above, literary texts also offer some insight into a foreign culture or community and they may initiate a better understanding of a different culture.

Although there are some issues that teachers have to think through when they decide to include literature in their classes, it seems that incorporating literature in the language classroom may benefit students and teachers as well. However, some preliminary information on students' reading habits, reading preferences and motivation for reading is needed in order to successfully work with literary texts in an EFL class. Apart from the benefits that literature provides, students who are to continue their studies in an English major programme can be mentioned as a reason why literature should be included in the EFL classroom. In many university courses literature is discussed as a form of art since it is supposed that the students have reached the language proficiency level required to read and discuss literature in a foreign language (Paran, 2008).

Considering the Hungarian context, students' reading habits and reading comprehension skills have been researched before (Hódi & Tóth, 2019; Steklács, 2013; Szűcs, 2017). While Steklács (2013) focused on reading strategies and also conducted a large-scale study exploring primary school students' attitude towards reading and their reading comprehension, Szűcs (2017) investigated first-year English major BA students' reading strategy awareness in her mixed-methods study. The results imply that first-year English majors' reading comprehension skills have to be improved and students have difficulty with the use of reading strategies. In their large-scale study, Hódi and Tóth (2019) explored Hungarian first-year university students' reading comprehension skills. Focusing on reading solely in Hungarian, the researchers found that there is a correlation between good reading comprehension skills and positive attitude towards reading. Another finding is that most students seem to have the comprehension skills which are required in tertiary education. These findings are quite reassuring; however, it must be noted that all first-year majors were involved in the study and reading in Hungarian was the focus of interest. Despite the fact that reading has been investigated in Hungary, and that using literature in the EFL classroom is researched in foreign contexts, it is an area which still has to be explored in the Hungarian context.

3 The study

3.1 Research questions

The following research questions are addressed in the present study in relation to Hungarian EFL students' reading in Hungarian and in English:

- 1 What are the reading preferences of first-year English majors in terms of genres that they choose to read in Hungarian and in English?
- 2 What factors motivate first-year English majors to read in English?
- 3 What are first-year English majors' thoughts and opinions on using literary texts in the EFL classroom?

3.2 Participants

The present study focuses on Hungarian first-year university students who are either majoring in English Studies or taking part in the English Teacher Training Programme. In order to ensure that the scope of participant selection is narrowed down, students from two first-year university seminars (Language Practice and Academic Skills) were addressed. With the purpose of obtaining more data for the pilot study, the author decided to include students from the two institutions in Budapest which she is familiar with. Nevertheless, students from the two universities are considered as one group since the purpose of the study is not to compare students but to have an overall view on their reading habits and opinions related to using literature in the EFL classroom.

In total 39 respondents, 27 female and 12 male students filled in the questionnaire. Based on the respondents' answers, their English language proficiency is between B2 and C2 level on the scale of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The majority of respondents (89.7%) (n=35) worked with various texts in their secondary EFL lessons; both literary and non-literary texts were mentioned by the students. Regarding university language courses, most respondents (87.2%) (n=34) have not worked with any literary text yet.

3.3 Instrument: design and validation

As no readymade measuring instrument exists that could have been used for the special purposes of the current investigation, based on the emerging issues in the relevant literature a questionnaire was designed to investigate students' reading habits and their views on including literature in the EFL classroom. Apart from literature, examples of questionnaires and pilot studies were also studied (Csizér & Illés, 2010; Noels et al., 2003). The language of the questionnaire is Hungarian as it is the students' mother tongue; and the questionnaire contains 28 main questions. The questions and statements were based on the relevant literature with the exception of items related to motivation as those were based on the questionnaire of Noels et al. (2003). The questionnaire includes the following topics: reading habits and preferences, reading strategies, reading skills, factors affecting reading, motivation and opinion on the use of literature in the EFL classroom.

In order to ensure content validity, the constructs and the questionnaire were reviewed by six experts: four PhD students of the Language Pedagogy Programme, and two tutors. Some modifications were applied based on the suggestions: some items were reworded or added, others were deleted. The first piloting was conducted in April 2017, when altogether 95 students filled in the questionnaire. The results revealed a few inconsistencies related to some items. Hence, the questionnaire was revised again in March 2019 and two more questions on reading in the academic context were added. The second version was validated again with the help of the author's supervisor and one colleague in the PhD programme. The second piloting took place from the end of March to April 2019.

The final version of the questionnaire comprises the following eight different scales:

(I) Frequency of reading different genres in Hungarian (10 items)

Example: *Please answer the following question.* (Please mark your answer on the following scale: 1 = never; 2 = every other month; 3 = every month; 4 = once a fortnight; 5 = every week)

'How often do you read the following genres in Hungarian?'

(II) Frequency of reading different genres in English (10 items)

Example: *Please answer the following question.* (Please mark your answer on the following scale: 1 = never; 2 = every other month; 3 = every month; 4 = once a fortnight; 5 = every week)

‘How often do you read the following genres in English?’

(III) Extrinsic motivation to read in English (6 items)

Example: *Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.* (Please mark your answer on the following scale: 1 = not true; 2 = not really true; 3 = partly true, partly not; 4 = quite true; 5 = absolutely true)

‘I read in English to improve my language skills, so that I can get a better job.’

(IV) Intrinsic motivation (9 items)

Example: *Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.* (Please mark your answer on the following scale: 1 = not true; 2 = not really true; 3 = partly true, partly not; 4 = quite true; 5 = absolutely true)

‘I read in English because I like reading in English.’

(V) Reading strategies used during reading in English (9 items)

Example: *The following items refer to the reading strategies that you use while reading.* (Please indicate the truth value of the statements below, using the following scale: 1 = not true; 2 = not really true; 3 = partly true, partly not; 4 = quite true; 5 = absolutely true)

I try to make predictions about the plot based on the title or blurb before reading.’

(VI) Reading skills (10 items)

Example: *What do you think about your reading skills?* (Please indicate the truth value of the statements below, using the following scale: 1 = not true; 2 = not really true; 3 = partly true, partly not; 4 = quite true; 5 = absolutely true)

‘I can easily scan a text for specific pieces of information.’

(VII) Benefits of using literary texts in the EFL classroom (5 items)

Example: *Please indicate the truth value of the statements below, using the following scale.* (1 = not true; 2 = not really true; 3 = partly true, partly not; 4 = quite true; 5 = absolutely true)

‘Literary texts tell a lot about the target culture.’

(VIII) Drawbacks of using literary texts in the EFL classroom (5 items)

Example: *Please indicate the truth value of the statements below, using the following scale.* (1 = not true; 2 = not really true; 3 = partly true, partly not; 4 = quite true; 5 = absolutely true)

‘Literary texts are boring for students.’

3.4 Procedures of data collection and analysis

The link to the questionnaire was sent out by three tutors - including the author -, who then forwarded it to seven groups of first-year students: two groups of Academic Writing (42) and five groups of Language Practice (67). The questionnaire was available online for one month; it took approximately 15 minutes to fill it in. Most questions were answered by the respondents; however, it will be indicated in the present article if there is missing data. All the questionnaires were computerized and SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) was used for data analysis.

4 Results and discussion

This section presents and discusses the results of the pilot study. It starts with presenting the scales; next, it discusses the students' reading habits in terms of genres (including both Hungarian and English) and their motivation related to reading in English. Finally, it concludes with the first-year English majors' disposition towards using literary texts in the EFL classroom.

4.1 Scales

The reliability of the constructs was checked by calculating the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients of the different scales. Altogether eight scales were determined, which are listed in Table 1 with the number of items. As Table 1 shows, most of the scales are considered to be reliable as their Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients reached the threshold (0.7). Table 1 contains all the scales subjected to analysis; however, it is only the first six scales that are analysed in the present study. A sample questionnaire is available in Appendix A.

Scales (number of items)	Cronbach Alpha
Frequency of reading different genres in Hungarian (10)	0.67
Frequency of reading different genres in English (10)	0.75
Extrinsic motivation to read in English (6)	0.61
Intrinsic motivation to read in English (9)	0.76
Benefits of using literary texts in the EFL classroom (5)	0.78
Drawbacks of using literary texts in the EFL classroom (5)	0.72
Reading strategies used during reading in English (9)	0.77
Reading skills (10)	0.91

Table 1. The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficients of the scales

As it can be seen in Table 1, almost all scales were found reliable as their Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient reached the threshold. Nevertheless, a factor analysis (maximum likelihood, Varimax rotation) was run to see which questions loaded together and which ones formed separate dimensions, and to find out any underlying structures. Three dimensions emerged in the

case of the first two scales (frequency of reading); two dimensions were identified in connection with the rest of the scales. The results are presented above with the exception of reading strategies and reading skills that are not subjected to analysis in the present paper.

4.2 Reading different genres in Hungarian and in English

Table 2 describes the first-year students' reading preferences in terms of the time they spend on reading certain genres. The results show that the students prefer poems and novels to dramas and to short stories in both languages since they mostly read those genres. Surprisingly, the genres usually considered as popular ones among readers (i.e. crime fiction, historical fiction, romance) received relatively low scores implying that they are not favoured by the respondents. Instead, students tend to read fantasies, biographies and nonfiction in both languages.

Genres	Hungarian (n=39)		English (n=39)	
	M	SD	M	SD
poem	3.00	1.27	3.15	1.60
drama	1.90	0.95	2.02	1.18
short story	2.80	1.01	2.79	1.20
novel	3.07	1.17	2.87	1.36
fantasy	2.02	0.99	2.25	1.10
sci-fi	1.59	0.67	1.68	0.87
romantic stories	1.90	1.06	1.90	1.08
historical fiction	1.60	0.84	1.60	1.05
crime stories	1.90	0.91	1.80	0.81
biographies, nonfiction	2.02	1.18	2.17	1.18

Table 2. First-year English majors' reading preferences

As a result of the factor analysis, three dimensions emerged related to reading both in Hungarian and in English (Table 3). Considering reading in Hungarian, it is interesting to see that poems and nonfiction form one dimension, while prose (short story, novel, romantic stories, historical fiction, crime stories) constitutes another dimension with drama. It seems that students distinguish fantasy and sci-fi from the rest of the genres in terms of reading time.

Table 3 also presents the results of the factor analysis related to the genres read in English. Three dimensions are revealed; however, there are some differences regarding the genres. Interestingly, novel, fantasy and sci-fi form one dimension. Short story, romantic stories, historical fiction and crime stories constitute the second dimension; drama and nonfiction belong to the third dimension. Considering similarities, it can be seen that fantasy and sci-fi form one dimension both in Hungarian and in English; romantic stories, historical fiction and crime stories also load together in both languages; and poems and biographies belong to one dimension in both languages.

Genres	Factors (genres read in Hungarian)			Factors (genres read in English)		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
poem	0.986					0.745
drama		0.568				0.551
short story		0.577			0.528	
novel		0.746		0.692		
fantasy			0.974	0.957		
sci-fi			0.592	0.564		
romantic stories		0.386			0.540	
historical fiction		0.470			0.483	
crime stories		0.353			0.787	
biographies, nonfiction	0.564					0.648

Table 3. Factor matrix: frequency of reading different genres in Hungarian and in English

In order to investigate any differences between female ($n=27$) and male ($n=12$) participants' reading preferences, an item-by-item analysis, independent-samples t-test was conducted. According to the results, it seems there is a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the two groups regarding romantic stories. Female students favour romantic stories in Hungarian ($M=2.29$, $SD=1.06$) compared to male students ($M=1.08$, $SD=0.28$; $t=5.47$, $p=0.00$). Female students tend to prefer reading romantic stories in English as well ($M=2.22$, $SD=1.15$) compared to male students ($M=1.25$, $SD=0.45$; $t=3.77$, $p=0.00$). There was no significant difference found between the two groups in terms of other genres. The mean scores are close to each other; moreover, the p value of each genre pair is over the threshold (.05). This suggests that students tend to read the same genres in both languages, and so their initial reading preference may have an impact on their reading in a foreign language.

Regarding time spent on reading, students tend to read more at weekends than on weekdays. Perhaps not surprisingly, English majors read more in English on weekdays ($M=1.89$, $SD=0.88$) and at weekends ($M=2.15$, $SD=0.98$) than in Hungarian on weekdays ($M=1.61$, $SD=0.84$) and at weekends ($M=2.00$, $SD=1.07$). Most of the students (89.7%) ($n=35$) started to read for pleasure in Hungarian in primary school and the majority (61.5%) ($n=24$) started to read for pleasure in English in secondary school.

4.3 Students' motivation to read in English

Students' motivation to read in English was also investigated. Two items out of seventeen were excluded as they were related to amotivation which is not subjected to analysis. Thus fifteen items were divided into two groups, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Two separate dimensions were identified (Table 4 and 5). Within extrinsic motivation (Table 4), the first dimension contains statements in which the students are involved as they refer to their vocabulary development, their English, etc. The second dimension, however, includes only one item which refers to a completely external factor: university. According to the results, students differentiate

between those external factors in which they are at least partly involved and the one which is completely external.

Statements	Factors	
	1	2
<i>I read in English because reading in a foreign language is important to me. (n=39)</i>	0.801	
<i>I read in English to improve my language skills, so that I can get a better job. (n=39)</i>	0.353	
<i>I read in English to prove myself that my English is good. (n=39)</i>	0.408	
<i>I read in English because I would have a guilty conscience if I did not read in a foreign language. (n=39)</i>	0.471	
<i>I read in English because I find it important for my personal development. (n=39)</i>	0.581	
<i>I read in English because it is a university requirement. (n=39)</i>		0.777

Table 4. Factor matrix: the reasons why students read in English (extrinsic motivation)

Two dimensions were found within intrinsic motivation as well (Table 5). The results show that the items related to language development (e.g. *I read in English to maintain my English.*) and to accomplishment (*I read in English because it feels good to understand a text in English.*) constitute one dimension. The second dimension involves statements referring to reading for pleasure (e.g. *I read in English because I like reading in English.*) and gaining knowledge (e.g. *I read in English because I like using different sources to learn about different cultures.*). Interestingly, knowledge and language development seem to be separated by the students.

Statements	Factors	
	1	2
<i>I read in English because I like challenges. (n=39)</i>	0.678	
<i>I read in English to maintain my English. (n=38)</i>	0.759	
<i>I read in English to master the English language. (n=38)</i>	0.677	
<i>I read in English to develop my vocabulary. (n=39)</i>	0.530	
<i>I read in English because it feels good to understand a text in English. (n=39)</i>	0.719	
<i>I read in English because I like reading in English. (n=39)</i>		0.473
<i>I read in English because I like using different sources to learn about the English language and the world. (n=39)</i>		0.997
<i>I read in English because it is relaxing. (n=39)</i>		0.429
<i>I read in English because I like using different sources to learn about different cultures. (n=39)</i>		0.656

Table 5. Factor matrix: the reasons why students read in English (intrinsic motivation)

4.4 The use of literature in the EFL classroom from the students' perspective

In secondary education, the majority of respondents (89.7%) (n=35) worked with texts that were not included in their coursebooks. An impressive list of genres was mentioned by the students: literary texts, such as poems and novels; and non-literary texts, such as news and articles. Regarding first-year Language Practice (LP) classes the majority of participants (87.2%) (n=34) have not worked with any literary text in their LP classes. Nonetheless, the variety of texts is surprising in the case of those students who have had literature in their LP classes: poems and short stories, and some other non-literary genres (articles and news) were listed by the respondents.

The items in connection with using literature in the EFL classroom were separated into two groups, the benefits and the drawbacks of using literary texts. Regarding the benefits (Table 6), students differentiate between language development (e.g. *Literary texts used in LP classes develop students' vocabulary.*) and acquiring knowledge (e.g. *Literary texts tell a lot about the target culture.*). Surprisingly, students seem to associate preparation for literature courses with

knowledge and not with other possible goals such as developing reading skills or reading strategies.

Benefits of using literary texts	Factors	
	1	2
<i>Literary texts used in LP classes develop students' vocabulary.</i>	0.769	
<i>Literary texts used in LP classes develop students' language skills.</i>	0.915	
<i>Literary texts can make EFL classes more colourful.</i>	0.601	
<i>Literary texts tell a lot about the target culture.</i>		0.864
<i>Shorter literary texts used in LP classes prepare students for academic literature classes.</i>		0.507

Table 6. Factor matrix: Benefits of using literary texts in the EFL classroom

With relation to drawbacks, two dimensions were identified: time and the use of literature as material in the classroom (Table 7). The first dimension involves items that refer to working with literature as a time-consuming activity. The second dimension is more diverse as lack of interest and communication skills are also included. This may suggest that students regard literature as material used for communication activities and draw a parallel between the three items grouping them in the same dimension.

Drawbacks of using literary texts	Factors	
	1	2
<i>Students need to prepare a lot for EFL classes where literature is used.</i>	0.727	
<i>Working with literary texts in the EFL classroom takes too much time.</i>	0.901	
<i>Literary texts do not help students in everyday communication.</i>		0.401
<i>Literary texts are boring for students.</i>		0.844
<i>There is no point in using literature in the EFL classroom since there are several more interesting sources.</i>		0.536

Table 7. Students' opinion on including literary texts in the EFL classroom

The items were also analysed separately to see which ones the students agree and disagree with the most. The results of the descriptive analysis show that the students tend to be more

certain about the positive (especially related to language development) than about the negative factors of using literature in the EFL classroom. Mirroring the literature, students think that literary texts help them expand their vocabulary ($M=4.30$, $SD=0.83$) and improve their language skills ($M=4.05$, $SD=0.94$). However, contrary to the literature, they do not seem to realise the impact that working with literature can have on their communication skills ($M=2.35$, $SD=1.13$). The scores of statements which refer to the drawbacks are quite low, which suggests that the students have a rather positive attitude towards using literature in EFL education. Although the students' responses might provide some information on their assumptions about the role of literature in the EFL classroom, it must be noted that the majority of respondents have not had any previous experience in connection with using literature for language development purposes at university.

5 Conclusion

Although it was a small-scale study, the findings provide a general view on the respondents' reading habits and preferences including the time they spend on reading and the genres they read both in Hungarian and in English. The results also shed some light on the students' experience related to the inclusion of literature in the EFL classroom and their perceptions of its advantages and disadvantages.

Regarding research question 1 (What are the reading preferences of first-year English majors in terms of genres that they choose to read in Hungarian and in English?), students mostly read novels; besides, fantasy and nonfiction are the most popular genres both in Hungarian and in English. The data indicate that there is no difference among the genres read in Hungarian and in English, which may mean that readers tend to choose the same genres when they read in their native language and in English. Altogether three dimensions emerged related to reading both in Hungarian and in English. While the distribution of the genres is different, some similarities can be observed between the two languages.

In relation to research question 2 (What factors motivate first-year English majors to read in English?) it is safe to suggest that intrinsic motivation is more determinant than extrinsic motivation, which implies that the students read because they value reading in English. Furthermore, two dimensions were identified in the case of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. According to the results, students distinguish between external factors in which they are partly involved and those which are completely independent of them (i.e. expectations at university). Besides, students also differentiate between intrinsic factors connected to language development and accomplishment, and reading for pleasure and knowledge.

Findings suggest that students have positive opinions on including literature in EFL courses, especially related to language skills development and vocabulary expansion. They have some experience as well, but not at the university as the majority of students have not worked with literary texts in their Language Practice classes yet. The answers to items linked with research question 3 (What are first-year English majors' thoughts and opinions on using literary texts in the EFL classroom?) revealed two dimensions. Considering the benefits, the students distinguished between items related to language development and items connected to knowledge.

Within drawbacks, the students separated items linked with time from items related to the use of literature as a material in the EFL classroom.

Certainly, there are some limitations to this study. The sample was quite small despite the fact that the online questionnaire had been sent to a larger group of students and it had been available for several weeks. Therefore, an important step of future research is to involve more participants, perhaps extending its scope and including several universities, too. It is important to note that having more respondents might lead to different results regarding the scales and dimensions. Furthermore, some qualitative investigations might reveal more details on first-year English majors' reading habits, their motivation and their disposition towards using literature in the EFL classroom.

In a forthcoming study, a larger sample will provide a better overview of first-year English majors' reading preferences and their views on including literature in the EFL classroom. In order to examine the above-mentioned issues from a different perspective, literature and EFL tutors will be involved in an interview study. It is hoped that some qualitative investigations might add a greater depth to the research.

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APPENDIX A**The English translation of the questionnaire****First-year English majors' reading habits**

Dear Student,

I am Anna Pereszlényi, a student of the Language Pedagogy PhD Programme at Eötvös Loránd University. With this questionnaire, my aim is to explore first-year English majors' reading habits and their opinions on including literature in their English language classes. The questionnaire is anonymous; I will use the data solely for research purposes. The completion of the questionnaire is voluntary; and filling it in takes approximately 15 minutes.

Thank you for your help in advance!

I. The first part of the questionnaire consists of questions connected to your reading habits.

The first seven questions refer to your *reading habits in your mother tongue*.

1 When did you start reading for pleasure in your mother tongue?

- a. In kindergarten.
- b. In primary school.
- c. In secondary school.
- d. I do not read for pleasure in my mother tongue.
- e. Other, please specify: _____

2 Think of an average weekday. How much do you read in your mother tongue?

- a. Less than an hour.
- b. 1-2 hours
- c. 2-3 hours
- d. More than 3 hours.
- e. Other, please specify: _____

3 Think of an average day during the weekend. How much do you read in your mother tongue?

- a. Less than an hour.
- b. 1-2 hours
- c. 2-3 hours
- d. More than 3 hours.
- e. Other, please specify: _____

4 How often do you read the following genres in your mother tongue?

	1 never	2 every other month	3 every month	4 once a fortnight	5 every week	
a. poems		1	2	3	4	5
b. dramas		1	2	3	4	5
c. short stories		1	2	3	4	5
d. novels		1	2	3	4	5

5 How often do you read the following genres in your mother tongue?

	1 never	2 every other month	3 every month	4 once a fortnight	5 every week	
a. fantasy		1	2	3	4	5
b. science fiction		1	2	3	4	5
c. romantic stories		1	2	3	4	5
d. historical fiction		1	2	3	4	5
e. crime fiction		1	2	3	4	5
f. biographies, nonfiction		1	2	3	4	5
g. Other, please specify: _____						

6 Why do you read the following genres in your mother tongue?

	1 for fun	2 compulsory reading	3 I do not read it.
a. poems	1	2	3
b. dramas	1	2	3
c. short stories	1	2	3
d. novels	1	2	3

7 Why you do not read more than you do in your mother tongue? Please indicate the truth value of the statements below using the following scale.

	1 not true	2 not really true	3 partly true, partly not	4 quite true	5 absolutely true
a. I do not read more in my mother tongue because I have no time.	1	2	3	4	5
b. I do not read more in my mother tongue because I am not interested in reading.	1	2	3	4	5
c. I do not read more in my mother tongue because I had to read enough compulsory readings at school.	1	2	3	4	5
d. I do not read more in my mother tongue because reading a lot in my mother tongue makes me tired.	1	2	3	4	5
e. I do not read more in my mother tongue because I do not like reading longer texts.	1	2	3	4	5
f. I read enough in my mother tongue.	1	2	3	4	5

The next questions refer to your *reading habits in English*.

8 When did you start reading for pleasure in English?

- a. In kindergarten.
- b. In primary school.
- c. In secondary school.
- d. I do not read for pleasure in English.
- e. Other, please specify: _____

9 Think of an average weekday. How much do you read in English?

- a. Less than an hour.
- b. 1-2 hours
- c. 2-3 hours
- d. More than 3 hours.
- e. Other, please specify: _____

10 Think of an average day during the weekend. How much do you read in English?

- a. Less than an hour.
- b. 1-2 hours
- c. 2-3 hours
- d. More than 3 hours.
- e. Other, please specify: _____

11 How often do you read the following genres in English?

	1 never	2 every other month	3 every month	4 once a fortnight	5 every week
a. poems	1	2	3	4	5
b. dramas	1	2	3	4	5
c. short stories	1	2	3	4	5
d. novels	1	2	3	4	5

12 How often do you read the following genres in English?

	1 never	2 every other month	3 every month	4 once a fortnight	5 every week
a. fantasy	1	2	3	4	5
b. science fiction	1	2	3	4	5
c. romantic stories	1	2	3	4	5
d. historical fiction	1	2	3	4	5
e. crime fiction	1	2	3	4	5
f. biographies, nonfiction	1	2	3	4	5
g. Other, please specify: _____					

13 Why do you read the following genres in English?

	1 for fun	2 compulsory reading	3 I do not read it.
a. poems	1	2	3
b. dramas	1	2	3
c. short stories	1	2	3
d. novels	1	2	3

14 Why you do not read more than you do in English? Please indicate the truth value of the statements below, using the following scale.

1 not true 2 not really true 3 partly true, partly not 4 quite true 5 absolutely true

- a. I do not read more in English because I have no time.
1 2 3 4 5
- b. I do not read more in English because I am not interested in reading.
1 2 3 4 5
- c. I do not read more in English because I have enough compulsory reading at university.
1 2 3 4 5
- d. I do not read more in English because reading a lot in English makes me tired.
1 2 3 4 5
- e. I do not read more in English because reading longer English texts is difficult.
1 2 3 4 5
- f. I read enough in English.
1 2 3 4 5
- g. Other, please specify: _____

15 Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements.

1 not true 2 not really true 3 partly true, partly not 4 quite true 5 absolutely true

- a. I think reading in English is a waste of time.
1 2 3 4 5
- b. I read in English because reading in a foreign language is important to me.
1 2 3 4 5
- c. I read in English because it is a university requirement.
1 2 3 4 5
- d. I read in English because I like challenges.
1 2 3 4 5
- e. I read in English because I like reading in English.
1 2 3 4 5
- f. I read in English to improve my language skills, so that I can get a better job.
1 2 3 4 5
- g. I read in English because I like using different sources to learn about the English language and the world.
1 2 3 4 5
- h. I read in English because it is relaxing.
1 2 3 4 5

- i. I read in English to prove myself that my English is good.
1 2 3 4 5
- j. I do not see the point of reading in English.
1 2 3 4 5
- k. I read in English to maintain my English.
1 2 3 4 5
- l. I read in English to master the English language.
1 2 3 4 5
- m. I read in English because I would have a guilty conscience if I did not read in a foreign language.
1 2 3 4 5
- n. I read in English to develop my vocabulary.
1 2 3 4 5
- o. I read in English because I find it important for my personal development.
1 2 3 4 5
- p. I read in English because I like using different sources to learn about different cultures.
1 2 3 4 5
- q. I read in English because it feels good to understand a text in English.
1 2 3 4 5

16 The following items refer to the reading strategies that you use while reading. Please indicate the truth value of the statements below, using the following scale.

1 not true 2 not really true 3 partly true, partly not 4 quite true 5 absolutely true

- a. I try to make predictions about the plot based on the title or blurb before reading.
1 2 3 4 5
- b. I pose questions about the text before and while reading.
1 2 3 4 5
- c. I highlight important pieces of information or make notes while reading.
1 2 3 4 5
- d. I reread the difficult parts to make sure that I completely understand the text.
1 2 3 4 5
- e. I try to guess the meaning of unknown words from their context.
1 2 3 4 5
- f. I look up the unfamiliar words.
1 2 3 4 5
- g. I tend to summarise the text that I read in my own words.
1 2 3 4 5
- h. I try to connect my readings to my previous knowledge (e.g. previous reading experience).
1 2 3 4 5
- i. I read critically: I ask questions and form an opinion about the text.
1 2 3 4 5

17 What do you think about your reading skills? Please indicate the truth value of the statements below, using the following scale.

1 not true 2 not really true 3 partly true, partly not 4 quite true 5 absolutely true

- a. I can easily summarise a text.
1 2 3 4 5
- b. I can easily scan a text for specific pieces of information.
1 2 3 4 5
- c. I can easily understand the gist of a text.
1 2 3 4 5
- d. I can easily identify the style of a text.
1 2 3 4 5
- e. The vocabulary does not cause any difficulties in understanding a text.
1 2 3 4 5
- f. I can easily understand the meaning of a text.
1 2 3 4 5
- g. I can easily recognize the structure of a text.
1 2 3 4 5
- h. I can easily form an opinion about the text that I read.
1 2 3 4 5
- i. I can easily separate facts from the author's views.
1 2 3 4 5
- j. I can easily draw parallels between different texts.
1 2 3 4 5

II. The second part of the questionnaire contains questions about your English language classes.

18 How often did you work with texts which were not included in the coursebook in English language classes at secondary school?

- a. never
b. every month – every two months
c. every week – fortnight
d. almost every class
e. Other, please specify: _____

19 What kind of texts did you work with in your English language classes at secondary school? You can indicate more than one answer here.

- a. poems
b. short stories
c. novels, extracts of novels
d. news, articles
e. Other, please specify: _____

20 What do you think was the purpose of working with literature in your English language classes at secondary school? You can indicate more than one answer here.

- a. developing vocabulary

- b. developing reading comprehension
- c. developing communication skills
- d. introducing controversial issues
- e. Other, please specify: _____

21 Have you worked with literary texts in your Language Practice (LP) classes?

- a. Not until now.
- b. Yes.

If yes: what kind of literary texts did you work with?

22 Please indicate the truth value of the statements below, using the following scale.

1 not true 2 not really true 3 partly true, partly not 4 quite true 5 absolutely true

- a. Literary texts tell a lot about the target culture.
1 2 3 4 5
- b. Literary texts used in LP classes develop students' vocabulary.
1 2 3 4 5
- c. Literary texts used in LP classes develop students' language skills.
1 2 3 4 5
- d. Shorter literary texts used in LP classes prepare students for academic literature classes.
1 2 3 4 5
- e. Literary texts can make EFL classes more colourful.
1 2 3 4 5
- f. Literary texts do not help students in everyday communication.
1 2 3 4 5
- g. Literary texts are boring for students.
1 2 3 4 5
- h. Students need to prepare a lot for EFL classes where literature is used.
1 2 3 4 5
- i. Working with literary texts in the EFL classroom takes too much time.
1 2 3 4 5
- j. There is no point in using literature in the EFL classroom since there are several more interesting sources.
1 2 3 4 5

23 Please complete the following sentences.

I think using literature in the EFL classroom is useful because

I think using literature in the EFL classroom is useless because

III. Personal details

Please answer the following questions.

24 Gender: female male

25 What is your major?

- a. English studies
- b. English language teacher

26 When did you start learning English?

- a. In kindergarten.
- b. In 1st-3rd grade, primary school.
- c. In 4th grade, primary school.
- d. In 9th grade, secondary school.
- e. Other, please specify: _____

27 What do you think your level of English is?

- a. B1
- b. B2
- c. C1
- d. C2
- e. Other, please specify: _____

28 Which foreign languages do you speak apart from English?

- a. German
- b. French
- c. Italian
- d. Spanish
- e. Other, please specify: _____

Thank you for your help!