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CON ÉNFASIS EN INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA PARA ALUMNADO
ADULTO

QUIS CUSTODIET IPSOS CUSTODES?
A LOOK INTO THREE LITERATURE CLASSES AT THE U.C.R.
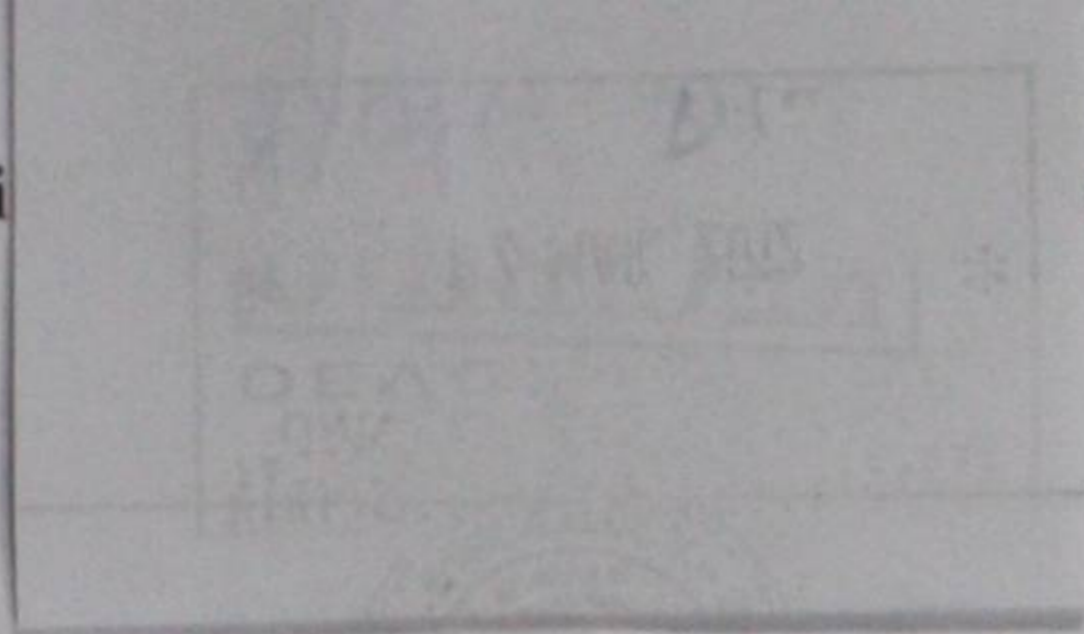
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Reconocimientos

Agradezco a todas las personas que me brindaron ayuda en esta investigación, y a la Universidad de Costa Rica por dejarme entrar a sus aulas.

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RESUMEN

Se analiza en tres cursos de literatura (Panorámica Británica, Crítica Literaria e Introducción al Drama) de la Universidad de Costa Rica, el papel que tiene la literatura en el aprendizaje y dominio de la cultura, la escritura, la lectura, así como de la gramática y el vocabulario en inglés. Se consideran también las formas en que la literatura se enseña en estos cursos, los materiales que son usados en el aula y las opiniones de los estudiantes acerca de los cursos. Finalmente, se proponen soluciones para las debilidades encontradas.

Palabras claves: cultura, escritura, gramática, lectura, literatura, materiales pedagógicos, vocabulario

ABSTRACT

An analysis is made of the role of literature in the learning or mastering of culture, reading, writing, and grammar and vocabulary in English in the courses Survey of British Literature, Literary Criticism and Introduction to Drama at the University of Costa Rica. Research is also carried out on how literature is taught, the materials that are used in the classroom and the opinions that the students have about said courses. Finally, some solutions are given for those weaknesses found.

Keywords: culture, grammar, literature, pedagogical materials, reading, vocabulary, writing

Dedication:

ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn

ホセ・ロベルトとフアン・カロルスサラビア先生にです。

Natürlich auch für Herrn Randolph, mein Jedi Meister.

My dad for all the help throughout the entire process.

Mein Liebe.

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List of Abbreviations (in Order of Appearance)

U.C.R. = Universidad de Costa Rica, University of Costa Rica

B.I. = Bachillerato en Inglés, Bachelors in English

U.N.A. = Universidad Nacional, National University of Costa Rica

B.C.E.. = Before Common Era

C.E. = Common Era

E.S.L. = English as a Second Language

E.F.L. = English as a Foreign Language

C.A.F.T.A. = Central-American Free Trade Agreement

U.S. = United States

P.1. = Professor 1, the professor of Panorámica Británica

P.2. = Professor 2, the professor of Crítica Literaria

P.3. = Professor 3, the professor of Introducción al Drama

Fig. = Figure

D.V.D. = Digital Video/Versatile Disc

C.L.T. = Communicative Language Teaching

S.G.A. = Story Grammar Approach

R.R.A. = Reader Response Approach

C.M. = Cultural Model

L.M. = Language Model

P.G.M. = Personal Growth Model

C.E.F. = Common European Framework

I. Introduction

This project arose due to the need to investigate about literature in Costa Rica (or to be more specific, literature in Costa Rica *at a university level*). There are many ways to teach literature, and many benefits that students can obtain from it. This investigation seeks to inform on the current trends in the teaching of literature in Costa Rica at college level, and the strengths and weaknesses this type of courses have.

This project is divided in the following sections: The introduction, the framework of reference, the methodology, the development, the discussion (conclusions and recommendations) and finally the works cited (which contains all the sources used in this paper). The attached document of appendices can be consulted when necessary.

The Problem and Its Importance

The University of Costa Rica (U.C.R.) has a College of Letters (Facultad de Letras), and within it is the "School of Modern Languages" (Escuela de Lenguas Modernas). This school offers a bachelors degree in English ("Bachillerato en Inglés", B.I.) and its curriculum includes two emphases: Teaching and literature. This research is carried out in the latter area, in the courses of "Panorámica Británica" (Survey of British Literature), "Crítica Literaria" (Literary Criticism, "Crítica Literaria"), and "Introducción al Drama" (Introduction to Drama, "Introduccíon al Drama").

There have been many studies on literature before in many countries around the world. Some of these include the ones carried out by Brumfit and Carter (1986), Showalter

(2003) and Blau (2003) (to mention just a very few). These authors (and many more) have somewhat different perspectives or insights on literature, so they were all taken into account when writing the framework of reference.

This study provides insights on the actual and current way that literature professors teach, the way the students perceive the course and how they actually behave in class; the perception of the professors of said classes and how literature influences reading and writing skills. Hence, the objectives of these project were: (01) To see how the students improve their reading and writing processes, the culture skill and the components grammar and vocabulary in the literature courses, (02) which techniques are used by the professor to teach literature, (03) what is the role of the professor in the literature classroom, (04) what is the view of the students of the literature courses in relation to their English learning process, (05) and to discover which materials are used when teaching literature. (All these objectives are explained in more detail in the *objectives* section.)

In order to achieve these objectives, a qualitative non-experimental investigation was implemented, along with the quantification of the obtained data. The three courses (previously mentioned in the introduction) were observed, for a grand total of 41 observations in total: Fifteen for Panorámica Británica, and thirteen for both Crítica Literaria (C.L.) and Introducción al Drama (I.D.). Besides this, seven interviews were carried out: three to professors (one to each of the course), and four to students. Furthermore, surveys were given to each professor and to the students of the courses: Sixteen surveys were obtained from Panorámica Británica, eight from Crítica Literara, and 22 from Introducción al Drama.

Finally, this project is significant to the area of applied linguistics in the sense that changes can be made to the programme and syllabuses of the U.C.R., and it encourages better

analysis skills (reading and writing) in the classroom. It also provides insights on the methodologies used by the professors; their frame of mind on the courses, and the attitude and outlooks of the students on both the professors and the courses. Furthermore, this research can serve as a basis for a longitudinal project at the U.C.R. or a more substantial one that would cover more universities and study centres in the country.

II. Framework of Reference

Literature

Literature has been the companion of mankind for thousands of years. From the epic Gilgamesh, the monumental "odysseys" of Greek literature to the Devil of Göthe and Gandalf in The Lord of the Rings, literature has been an intimate friend of mankind. All of the history and diverse culture of *Homo sapiens* can be seen in literature, since it is a direct projection of mankind itself. All of this is literature, and that is why literature —just like the concept of *culture*— is almost impossible to define. Indeed, Terry Eagleton (9) thinks that "literature, in the sense of a set of works of assured and unalterable value, distinguished by certain shared, inherent properties, *does not exist* [italics added]". In spite of that, many professionals will disagree with the statement (including the writer).

For example, Roland Barthes (qtd. in Showalter 22) believes that "realistically speaking, literature is what gets taught. And what gets taught ranges from the classics, the canon, the great tradition of English and [U.S.] American works; to postcolonial literature in English from all over the world to popular literature, including best-sellers". This is somewhat true: If a specific work is not taught, explained and told to other people. If only the writer knows what he wrote and this writer meets his death, and no one finds his work; it would be as if he never wrote anything at all. It is not only "what is taught" (Barthes, qtd. in Showalter 22), for this is a rather limiting concept, but also what is *found* by other people. When teaching any language, this is an important notion to take into account, for if a specific piece is not discovered, its culture and language will never be taught, and so will wither away

in the ashes of time.

What Literature Provides

Literature dispenses several significant aspects that are usually not embedded in other types of classroom activities or methodologies: The characteristics of a specific era, time, place and culture (which does *not necessarily* have to be an English-speaking one) and the *language* of said culture. "Language that illustrates a particular register or dialect is within a social [and historical] context, and thus there is a basis for determining why a particular form is used. As such, literature is ideal for developing an awareness of language use" (McKay 192). Because of this, when reading literature the students can understand *why* a specific form is used in which particular context; in other words they would learn the use and usage of a certain form (be it a word, sentence, idiom, etc.). Even more, they would learn *which* form is actually used. However, there is an evident issue with these statements that may pass unnoticed. It is true that literature incites "awareness of language use" (MacKay 192), but it is important to notice that if a professor does not point out said form in the classroom, the students may or may not actually note it.

Language is an ever-changing being, and whether it is changed by the people or a "chosen few" (who actually may decide *not* to change it), it is reflected in literature. As Miranda says, "literature is language, not static language, but language in use, language alive and growing, shaping and being shaped" (70). With literature, people can precisely see how this changes have occurred, as can be observed by comparing "Sir Gawain and the Greene Knight" with Shakespeare and/or with Oscar Wilde.

In the more specific areas of language, Collie and Slater argue that "while there is little doubt that extensive reading increases a learner's receptive vocabulary and facilitates

transfer to a more active form of knowledge, it is sometimes objected that literature does not give learners the kind of vocabulary they really need" (4). Even if this is somewhat true, the researcher believes that literature certainly provides the vocabulary the learners really need. There are many modern classics (Harry Potter, Watchmen) that definitely deliver current and actual vocabulary that the students may use in their lives. Even more, Collie and Slater note that:

> Literature gives a rich context in which individual lexical or syntactical items are made more memorable. Reading a substantial and contextualised body of text, students can gain familiarity with many features of written language -the formation and function of sentences, the variety of possible structures, the different ways of connecting ideas- which broaden and enrich their own writing skills. (5)

It is important to teach literature, whether written in the year 300 B.C.E., 950 C.E., the 1600s or in 2003. As long as teachers clarify doubts concerning usage and tell the students what forms they should use or not (if teachers do not know they should be trained to do so), there is no real reason to not include old (or ancient) texts. All this, of course, depends on the nature of the course.

As mentioned before, the other thing that is embedded in literary texts, is culture. One of the main purposes of the literature class is to promote cultural diversity and insights into the target culture. Collie and Slater (as mentioned before) assert that "literature gives a rich context [italics added]", and this notion is further developed by McKay, who states, that "literature may work to promote greater tolerance for cultural differences for both [italics added] the teacher and the student" (193). Indeed, literature is an opening to the different cultures of the world; one can read "The Art of War" by Sun-Tzu, "The Jungle Book" by

Rudyard Kipling and "Watchmen" by Alan Moore, Dave Gibbons and Higgins, and will certainly have access to very different cultures, and by doing so will open his mind.

Literature can help students not only in the linguistic sense, but also in the sense that it will transport them to areas that they may not ever visit (because of economic, time, etc. reasons). As Collie and Slater agree, "for such learners, more indirect routes to this form of understanding must be adopted so that they gain an understanding of the way of life of the country: radio programmes, films or videos, newspapers and last, but not least, literary works. A reader can discover thoughts, feelings, customs, possessions. . . how they speak and behave behind closed doors" (4). Of all these, literary works are one of the oldest way to learn about a new culture.

Nowadays some people have access to Podcasts[1] and YouTube[2], and these media are excellent seeing that they provide real and accurate information about a place. However, literature provides students with one thing that neither Podcasts nor YouTube can provide: A text so that the students can imagine. If the text is chosen correctly and portrays a specific culture in an accurate manner, the student will have to *imagine* that things that go on in the story, i.e. they would use their minds in a different way than if they were just watching a video (this is not to say that videos cannot be used) because of the imagination of each student.

McKay also makes a very interesting comment when saying that "texts that reflect a particular cultural perspective may be difficult for ESL [English as a Second Language {or EFL, English as a Foreign Language}] students to read" (192). Miranda (71) also agrees and claims that "when introducing the students to a literary work, the greatest difficulties do not

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1. Digital audio recordings.

2. A web-page in which videos of almost any kind can be found.

arise from language, but from cultural differences". This is certainly a fascinating topic; since the teacher must not only consider which texts to choose (this will be dealt with later), but must also take into account the cultural assumptions that are *within* each text. All this is owing to the fact that the students may *not* understand certain cultural actions or traits (one may say "why do they bang their heads when they say hi?" referring to the indigenous people of New Zealand); and that it is important to see "whether or not any benefits can arise from examining the cultural assumptions of a piece of literature" (McKay 192). Why choose a culturally-different and amusing text if the students are not going to understand it, both in the cultural and linguistic sense? Sometimes it is better to choose a simple text that the students will understand in both the cultural and the linguistic sense than to select one that would give such a culture shock that they would immediately be apathetic to it, or so linguistically difficult that they may not understand it. Professors should look for (or be taught to look for, if they do not know) texts which are not only suitable to the linguistic level of the students, but also that they may be understood in the cultural sense by them.

Theories Related to Teaching Literature

There are many theories on how to teach literature; indeed, it could be said that a new theory appears every year or that each professor has his/her own theories. However, only four will be mentioned here, which are the ones that Elaine Showalter explains in her book (*Teaching Literature*): Subject-centred, teacher-centred, student-centred and eclectic theories. These were chosen since they represent accordingly the general of theories related to the teaching of literature, i.e. at least one of these is applied in the literature classroom. Each one of them, and the variations that they have will be explained.

Subject-Centred Theories

The main characteristic of this theory is easily summarised by Paulo Freire in a few lines of his very political, controversial book "Pedagogy of the Oppressed":

> Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. . . the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. . . knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. (53)

This theory is very much summarised in the last sentences. The students are receivers of knowledge, they are only taught what is the correct way to analyse and think how Hamlet is. They do not interact with the professor (or as Freire says, "the ones who consider themselves more knowledgeable" (53)), they only memorise the literature and the opinions of the professor. This theory is also called the "the 'transmission" theory of teaching. This approach is primarily about transferring knowledge from the teacher to the student. Its main focus is content, "what is taught" (Showalter 58).

It is quite likely that this is one of the first ways of teaching literature, and even though there are new approaches on how to teach it (see the "Eclectic Theories" section); it is still implemented in many classrooms in which the professor only lectures. This theory sees students as an "empty bin" in which the professor deposits all of his/her knowledge, with little interaction on part of the students.

This theory also includes the area of, as *Riebling (qtd. in Showalter 28)* mentions, "teaching from political conviction, [or] critical pedagogy. [This] has the belief that all

teaching is political and that the mission of the instructors was to shape the future of the nation by exposing students to the salvational power of the canon or the anticanon. . . this would cause a lifelong awareness of systems of oppression based on race, class and gender". In this theory you cause the students, in a way, to become either "rebels" or followers of the politics that are occurring in a certain place at a certain time. (As in for example, the C.A.F.T.A. issue in Costa Rica. However, that topic is for someone else to write on.)

Related to the former is also what Gerald Graff calls "teaching the conflicts" (258). He believes that teachers should purposely "include disciplinary and political conflicts in their class, whether through team-teaching and actual debates, or through assigning critical reading that foreground internal debate. But the classroom should be an open, democratic, inclusive arena of political and critical conflict" (Graff 258). However, should this be the centre of the class? William Pritchard (184) states that "by turning 'conflict' into a subject for the classroom, real conflict is defanged and too easily 'understood'". In point of fact, if these "controversial" topics are addressed constantly in the class and become the *basis* of the class; they will loose their fascination, just like having a class of Tolkien every day will make it loose its magic.

Teacher-Centred Theories

One of the two teacher-centred theories is the "performance teaching" theory. This is "obviously a teacher-centered model, which stresses the instructor's speaking and acting abilities, along with his intellectual ones" (Showalter 32). This model is basically one that focuses on *performance*, meaning that the classroom is closely related to what one would call a "show" or "theatre". As a matter of fact, it might be compared to stand-up comedy. Lionel Basney, (qtd. in Showalter) actually states that "the basic equipment for a classroom teacher

is the same as for a stand-up comedian, . . . a striking voice, a direct gaze, and the inner freedom to say more or less anything that comes to mind" (33).

However, it is dangerous to focus too much attention on this type of teaching. "The dangers of this volcanic theory of education come from its emphasis on what the teacher does. [The teachers] run the risk of monopolizing the spotlight. This way of teaching is seductive and exhilarating, but it can be very tricky to carry off. All good teachers are good performers, but not all good performers and comedians are good teachers" (Showalter 33). Hence, it is important to keep a balance of the focus of the class, so that the instructor does not become the centre of the classroom. If this happens, there is a massive risk of becoming a "subject-centred" professor.

The other teacher centred-theory is the one of "teaching as a spiritual journey" (Showalter 34). Parker J. Palmer, a supporter of this theory believes that "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher. This teacher-centered model emphasizes the teacher's inner being, his or her character and self-knowledge" (10). This is interesting because it is very related to the integrity of a teacher, but what would happen when said teacher has a lack of or even "no" integrity whatsoever? The good thing is that this way of teaching encourages self-reflection. Teachers can record in journals "the moments in which they feel connected, engaged and affirmed' as well as when they feel disconnected, disengaged and bored" (Brookfield 72). This is indeed a good method because it encourages teachers to be self conscious of what they are doing in the classroom, even though some people may "not want to be self-conscious of their reactions [or as written before, if they have integrity or not]. Then again, it is a good counterbalance to the studiously objective and unemotional stance so familiar to a traditional style of teaching" (Showalter 35).

Student-centred Theories

An interesting parameter can be sometimes seen in a classroom: The more aged the professor, the more he lectures; and the younger the professor, the more "'dynamic' he/she is and the more he/she focuses on the students. In fact, the impact of research on learning styles has led to a shift towards student-centered theories" (Showalter 35). Victoria Thorpe Miller (57) notes that "there has been a gradual but inexorable shift from the traditional exposure in which the students will emulate what the professor said, toward an active, *collaborative learning* [italics added] that takes place as the student confronts the text directly". With this way of teaching the spotlight changed from the professor to the student, in what is called "active learning". As can be seen there have been changes in the way in which literature is taught, from a teacher-centred perspective, to one in which even if the professor is still the guider of the students, the latter also have a central and more participative role in the classroom.

Eclectic Theories

When a person takes ideas or theories from different sources, or when he/she has a wide variety of tastes (e.g. in music: classical, flamenco, metal, pop), he is said to have an encyclopaedic or eclectic taste, and this also occurs when teaching in the classroom. This is "probably the most widespread theory of teaching literature, which is having no theory at all, and trying to make use of whatever will do the job" (Showalter 37). With this theory the professor will use what best works form him in the classroom: If the class prefers lectures, but every now and then a discussion, an eclectic way of teaching will work the best in this classroom. Admittedly, this "theory" (if it can be called that) seems to be the best one because "as teachers, we need to be pragmatic, using whatever seems to work and not getting in the

way of the book and the students" (Gould-Axelrod 74). The most important characteristic of

the eclectic teacher is that he "is ready to go with the flow, to use whatever is

needed" (Showalter 38). This is very important because if a teacher does not adapt to the

particular situations that can (and probably will) happen in the classroom, it may cause

stagnation in the classroom with the topics that are covered and also frustration for both the

students and the course teacher.

A Language-based Approach for Teaching Literature/Literature and

E.S.L./E.F.L.

In the Costa Rican context (and others that are not covered in this research), when

professors teach literature; they are also, intrinsically, teaching language. People who follow

this approach "believe in a closer integration of language and literature in the classroom,

since this will help students in achieving their main aim, which is to improve their knowledge

of, and proficiency, in English" (Lazar 27). When giving the students a literary text they may

learn not only all the "linguistic" characteristics of it, but also the cultural and historical

features and nuances of the text. Many professors may focus in the teaching of literature

itself, but others may also place emphasis on its relationship with language, or "the use of

literature for language practice" (Lazar 27). Literature can provide students with the

necessary tools to understand a language. Through the seamlessly (sometimes) integrated

words of a reading, the students will learn particular vocabulary and grammatical forms that

they may need, amongst other things.

Teachers will sometimes aim to "provide the students with [the] tools [that] they need

to interpret a text. [Professors may make use of] stylistics, which involves the close study of linguistic features of a text in order to arrive at an understanding of how meanings of the text are transmitted" (Lazar 27). This is one of the activities that can be used in the literature classroom in order to help the learners with the learning of the target language (which does not necessarily have to be English).

In his guide book for teachers and trainers, Gillian Lazar writes some activities that can be carried out in the classroom with literature texts. Whilst reading his book, a person can notice a very interesting (and *wonderful*) thing: No matter the proficiency level, literature can be used in activities with the students. For example, Lazar designed an "*upper intermediate upwards* [italics added] activity in which groups of students are each given different sections of a dialogue from a play, which they have to rewrite in reported speech using a range of verbs" (28). Or for example, "elementary upwards students are given three poems and six titles, three fake and three real. They then have to match the title with the corresponding poem" (Lazar 29). The students can also analyse a text in a linguistic sense, e.g. the students can "note down any linguistic features of a text which are particularly noticeable" (Lazar 32). Indeed, the activities a professor can conduct are endless, only limited by the imagination of the professor and the texts themselves.

E.S.L./E.F.L. and Literature

The use of literature in an E.S.L. (English as a Second Language) and/or E.F.L. (English as a Foreign Language) context has been supported by many authors (including the writer of this paper). It is undeniable that through literature an E.S.L. and/or E.F.L. student can understand in a better way the linguistic and cultural mannerisms treated in a text, and it is also important to acknowledge the relation between them (this has been said for example

by Lawal, who said "a strong relationship exists between literature and language, both as disciplines and social tools" (1)). For example, the previous author also mentioned that "literature provides an additional way in which the learner of English as a second language (ESL) is exposed to the elasticity of the language. . . a means of reinforcing language skill[s]" (1). It is interesting that the author uses the term "elasticity" because as a matter of fact, literature does not stagnate and does not always use the same language. In this way, students will be exposed to not only different aspects of the language, but *also* different ways in which the language is exposed.

There are many benefits a professor can obtain when using literature and Savvidou, in the conclusion of her brief-yet-enlightening article claims the following:

> [Literature in the EFL classroom] can offer a distinct literary world, which can widen learners' understanding of their own and other cultures, and it can create opportunities for personal expression as well as reinforce learners' knowledge of lexical and grammatical structure. It offers learners the strategies to analyse and interpret language in context in order to recognize not only how language is manipulated, but also why. It helps develop not only their linguistic and communicative skills, but their knowledge about language in all its discourse types. The use of literary texts in the language classroom can be a potentially powerful pedagogic tool. (3)

This paragraph points out many benefits of using literature in the E.F.L. (or E.S.L.) classroom in a very succinct manner. Not only, as written before, does literature provide *worlds* which the learners may not know, but it will also widen the world view of the learners. It will, if used correctly and at a level that the students will understand most of it, provide linguistic notions and nuances to the learners. This will eventually help them when communicating in

the real world, and will let them know (if it is the case that the text is current and actual, e.g. Harry Potter) when they have to use a specific form at a specific time. The previous statement expounds how important the competence of the teacher is when choosing the texts, and Lawal confirms this by saying that "in the hands of a competent ESL teacher, certain carefully selected texts of literature can be used to lend meaning and colour to the language lessons" (2).

The writer pointed out before that there has been, for many years, a lack of emphasis on literature due to the "communicative" approach. Two Japanese researchers, Ubukawa and Miyazaki-Ishida, also argue this and report that "for the past fifteen years, "communicative" has been the big word in teaching English, and because the term "communicative" implies oral skills of the language, *reading and writing skills seem to have been treated as if they were not important* [italics added]. Communicative language skills, however, should include every skill of language and the reading skill is no exception" (1). It is always necessary to have a balance: Teachers cannot focus on one specific approach blindly and without analysis, just as this writer believes that has happened with the "C.L.T." (Communicative Language Teaching). Educators should not leave *any* skill unattended in (or outside) the classroom, whether it be culture, listening, speaking, reading and writing. Literature can integrate all these skills, if the professor knows how to do so. If this is not the case, said teachers should try to learn or be taught how to do this. It is important to foment this because

> there has been an increasing awareness of the significance of integrating literature in EFL/ESL curriculum. The traditional structurally-based texts, and the newer, integrated, communicative courses might not be sufficient for the demands of academic classes. On the other hand, a syllabus that is based, or that draws heavily on authentic stories, provides a motivating medium for

language learning while fostering the development of the thinking skills that

are needed for L2 academic literacy (Anway-Amer 1).

The benefits that the use of literature can have in the classroom are undeniable, and even

though the recent fashion has been to promote the "C.L.T., these "communicative" courses

are quite likely to be insufficient for many students who have different academic needs. If the

teacher of an E.F.L. or E.S.L course uses literature, he/she can give infinite variety to it (due

to the enormous amount of literary texts that exist), and will go beyond the "normal" skills

(listening, speaking, reading, writing), into the better realm of literature in which critical

thinking, pragmatics, culture and history are studied.

Selecting Materials

Selecting literary materials is not an easy task, especially when they are to be used in

the classroom. However, Brumfit (189) outlines in a great manner the criteria on how to

select these materials: "(1) On a *linguistic* level, (2) on a *cultural* level, (3) the *length*, (4) the

pedagogical role, (5) the *genre it represents*, and (6) the "*classic status (or face validity)*". It

is important to analyse a text at a linguistic level, in order to see if the students will actually

comprehend the language in it, as well as the culture within it (it may be difficult for the

students to comprehend the text if the culture in it is too different from the one of the

students).

The length is, without doubt, very important, seeing that it can affect the development

of a class or course, and must be used according to the level of the apprentices. The

pedagogical role is necessary, since the teacher needs to know how the text might work in the

classroom. The genre it represents must be taken into account too, inasmuch as a student

might not like a specific genre (e.g. horror or fantasy). Finally, a teacher cannot choose any

random text, the text must have "face validity" or a "classical status", i.e. so good a status that the work is known by most educated people to be excellent.

Littlewood (181) adds a somewhat different criteria for selecting literary texts. The ones he gives are: "(1) Literature seen as *linguistic* structures, (2) *stylistic appropriateness*, (3) *interest* and *relevance* to the pupils, (4) the *superficial* and *underlying themes* of the work at hand, and (5) the literary work within *history* and/or a *literary or intellectual movement* [italics added]". The first one has already been explained in the previous paragraph; the style is important because a specific work can have a dated or archaic style that might not work for the target students. The teacher must also select a work that the students will find interesting, if this were not the case the students may not feel incited to read it at all; just as with the superficial and underlying themes of said work.

Ultimately, for more advance students the teacher can take into account the place in history a specific literary work has, the role it might have had at a distinct moment, and its relationship with a particular literary movement. If all these steps are taken into account, the teacher can be sure that the text that he will choose for his classroom will work, since every problem he may encounter has been taken into account.
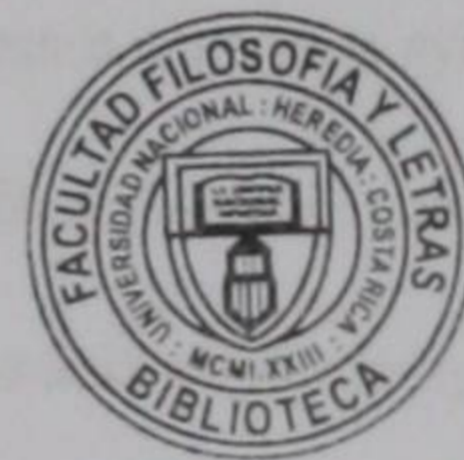
Approaches to Teach Literature

A teacher can select a text, yet he must know how to *approach* it in the classroom. Some of theses approaches are: The *Story Grammar Approach* (S.G.A.), the *Reader Response Approach* (R.R.A.), the *Cultural Model* (C.M.), the *Language Model* (L.M.) and the *Personal Growth Model* (P.G.M.). The S.G.A. "focuses on the cognitive aspects of learning, in which readers are consciously aware if text structure" (Anwar-Amer 1). This could be said to be a very basic approach since it focuses more on the text than anything else,

but "this enhances their [the students'] comprehension and improves their recall of information presented in the text, (Taylor and Beach qtd. in Anwar-Amer 2).

The R.R.A. "focuses more on the affective aspect of the learner, i.e. his feelings, emotions, free expressions and opinions" (Anwar-Amer 6). This is of great moment, for the reactions a learner has towards a text is one of the basis of the relationship between the reader and the text. In this way, the person becomes conscious, through the reading of the text, of what he felt when reading said text.

Savvidou states that the C.M. "represents the traditional approach to teaching literature, it requires learners to explore and interpret the social, political, literary and historical context of a specific text. This does not only reveal the universality of such thoughts and ideas, but also encourages learners to understand different cultures and ideologies in relation to their own" (6). This approach is important because it contains one of the most important things of literature which is *culture*, and it is necessary to explore these areas (and the other ones mentioned) in order to have a full and better understanding of the context in which the work takes place (in real life and within the work itself).

Another model is the L.M, which "enables learners to access a text in a systematic and methodical way in order to exemplify specific linguistic features, e.g. literal and figurative language, direct and indirect speech" (Savvidou 7). This is self-explanatory, in this approach the main focus is on the linguistic features that a text may have. This may help the students learn the language in a better way because they will learn it in context.

Finally, the P.G.M. is exactly that, a *personal* approach. This means that "learners are encouraged to express their opinions, feelings and opinions and make connections between their own personal and cultural experiences and those expressed in the text. Another aspect of this model is that "it helps learners develop knowledge of ideas and language —content and

formal schemata— through different themes and topics" (Savvidou, 9). This approach will let the students feel acquainted with the text, and if used correctly by the professor, will have them develop more passion for literature and a more personal relationship with the text. Hence, it will help the readers become more conscious of not only what they are reading, but also of their personal thoughts.

The Role of the Professors

The theories on how to teach are very important, but something that is perhaps more important to consider is the role of the professor in the classroom. What is he/she supposed to do in it? Is he supposed to give lectures and have the students listen to his comments and then write an essay? Is it presumed that he will be doing interactive activities with the students, or only handing out questionnaires that the students have to bring in completed for the next class? Blau makes a reflection that may seem evident and simple to acknowledge, but that may actually not be considered or understood by literature teachers. He reasons that "the difference between us [the professors and the students] . . . lays largely if not entirely in our roles and in what we saw responsible for" (2). One must examine the role that the literature teacher has in a classroom in order to see how this role affects the development of the class itself, the understanding of the topics by the students and the students themselves (more on the latter posteriorly).

There are many types of literature teachers, but they can essentially be divided into two types: The interactive ones, and the non-interactive ones. The first is the teacher that comes to the front and lectures the students, reads the reading for them and tells them what they have to think about the readings. The other type is one that encourages the students to

participate in class, one that has them do group activities in which the readings are discussed and encourages students to think by themselves. Still, in reality there are not "type of teachers", but "followers of theories". Hence, these "types of teachers" fit within the specific theories written by Showalter and others (Freire, Brumfit, etc.)

There has been wide research and criticism on the first. Blau devoted the several pages of the first part of his book "The Literature Workshop" to explain this, and he does it in a very convincing manner. He argues that "students act like consumers of literary interpretations, rather than producers of them. In a reading assignment, students may do the reading themselves, but return to classes prepared to take notes on what constitutes the correct interpretation of the text" (20). This is an awful truth that cannot be denied. There is also wide empirical evidence (Blau 2003; Bean and Moni 2003; Knapp 2008) that proves this. Even if Blau made his statement based on the context of the U.S., this is something to also take into account not only in said country, but in any.

Some students do not read for pleasure, but they read because they have to. Because of that, they do not effectuate critical analysis of what they read, since the professor will come to class and explain the reading to them again, moulding the opinion of the students so that it will match his. This type of discussion is what Blau admits sometimes is called:

> Socratic, because "discuss" in practice means that the professor asks questions
> that prompt responses that eventually allow the professor to say or collaborate
> with his students in saying the very things he would otherwise have said in a
> single uninterrupted turn. In any event, what the students do is take notes, to
> record what, *according to the instructor* [italics added], the poems are about
> and what a literate reader should know about them (25).

This is a sad scenario that is apparently a global phenomena, or at least one in America, since

these exact parameters can be seen both in Costa Rica and the U.S. This is something that Blau calls "a culture of interpretative dependance, one which has been and continues to be inadvertently nourished by schools" (20). Langer (qtd. in Bean & Moni 639), in his study of how literature was taught in twenty-five U.S. schools, discovered that "in more typical schools, teachers were at the center of instruction, guiding students into predetermined intertextual and personal connections with literature. In the higher performing schools, students were constantly encouraged to go beyond the basic learning experience in challenging and enriching ways". This is something that can be noticed many times and in many schools, high-schools and universities of Costa Rica. Knapp goes as far as saying that "students are forced to study their professor rather than the subject" (9). If this "chain of thought" continues, the students will rarely develop their critical thinking, not only in the literature classroom, but also in life.

The Function of the Students

Now that the position of the professor has been analysed, it is important to do so with the students. What happens when a student reads a text? Does he/she interact with it? Does he love it, ponder on what just happened in it, or simply reads the text and memorises what has occurred in it for the next test? To some extent, what happens to the students is the responsibility of the professor, for if he/she does not teach the student how to analyse a text, and the students do not know from before how to do it, they basically will not be able to do it. This is certainly the fault of the professor, but what happens when the students do not understand the text? As Blau acknowledges, "how often have you asked students what questions they have about some piece of reading they have completed and they'll tell you

they don't have any questions? But then you quickly realize they don't understand much of what they have read" (40). In this case the students can obviously be affected by the professor (as written in the beginning of this paragraph), but it is the failing of the students too.

Then again, to some extent, it all has to do with the degree of maturity of the learner, since "students often seem paralyzed by their questions or seem *unaware* [italics added] of their questions, which may mean that they haven't arrived at a sufficiently advanced state of understanding to know that they are confused" (Blau 41). If the reader has not read much in his life, does not use critical analysis or does not have sufficient understanding of a topic, he will not be able to perform in a good manner in class.

Students usually ask the professor for the words they do not understand, and they are disappointed when the professor does not know the word; they are disappointed because they do not want to *think*, since they want the professor to give them everything. Blau explains this and what happens in the classroom in an almost-perfect manner in the following lines:

> The conventional idea about reading instruction is that a responsible teacher will preview all unknown words and teach them before asking the students to read a literary work, so that the student's don't experience any frustration in reading, as if reading is or ought to be a process in which one never experiences frustration and never encounters new words and always understands everything immediately. No wonder, then, that the students seem daunted by any problems they encounter in reading difficult texts and seem to have little capacity to reflect on the state of their understanding and seem at a loss for what to do for themselves when they encounter interpretative difficulties. Instruction has systematically taught them to depend entirely on teachers to prevent or remove any textual difficulties they might encounter

(41).

If the professor continues this "chain of thought and teaching" (as suggested in the previous paragraph), students will probably not develop critical thinking, and in general, will not learn how to *think* nor how to deal with the problems in the text. Something similar is argued by Agee (qtd. in Bean and Moni 640) when they say that "how high school [actually any teacher at any level] teachers approach literature sends messages to their students not only about what kinds of literature are valued but also *who* [italics added] is valued". It is the *responsibility* of the professor to teach and guide the students, but the latter must *also* be at the helm of their part in class.

III. Methodology

Type of Investigation

This research project is of the qualitative type, even though there is quantification of data (more on this later). Qualitative research "can be taken to refer to research that is based on [italics added] *descriptive* data that does not make (regular) use of statistical procedures" (Mackey and Gass 162) (even though the quote states that in qualitative research statistical procedures are rare, this research project used them). One of the principal basis of qualitative research is that "the main instrument of recollection in a qualitative analysis, is the investigator himself" (Hernández-Sampieri et al. 583). LeCompte and Preissle acknowledge that qualitative research "deal[s] with *empirical* data, or potentially verifiable information obtained from the environment and accessed via human senses. Sources and types of data are limited only by the creativity and energy of the researcher" (158).

This investigation is a non-experimental one, because "there is no deliberate variable manipulation, and you observe the phenomena in the natural context, so they can be analysed afterwards." (Hernández-Sampieri et al. 205). Furthermore, the design of this research is an "ethnographic realistic (mixed) one because the researcher recollects both quantitative and qualitative data from the group that is being studied. In the end, the categories are described in narrative and statistical terms" (Hernández-Sampieri et al. 698). It is ethnographic (because the researcher is immersed with the subjects of study (in this case for a period of two months without the people being observed knowing so). Due to the nature of the research (ethnographic) there is a certain degree of subjectivity involved, and this is controlled

through the gathering of various types of data (e.g. interviews, observations and questionnaires).

A specific characteristic of this project is that it is, specifically, a deductive-qualitative one because "the investigators [in this case investigator] begin with specific research questions and set out to answer them" (Ellis and Barkhuizen 257). Also, even though Mackey and Gass believe that "qualitative researchers tend to work more intensively with fewer participants" (163), this is not the case of this research project because the researcher will be working with all the participants of the groups.

Qualitative research provides "careful and detailed descriptions" (Mackey and Gass 162), something necessary since descriptive observations is one of the main bases of the project. Tenowski and Damico point out that it also analyses "individuals and events in their natural settings" (qtd. in Mackey and Gass 163). This is another important factor because all of the observations were carried out in the natural setting of the students, hence allowing the creator of the product to observe how things really are in the natural context.

As mentioned before, the research uses quantitative investigation in the way that it will quantify the amounts of interviews, tests (both those already applied and those to be applied), surveys and questionnaires. In this latter case, obtained the answers were also quantified (as well as the amount of observations). They were analysed in a qualitative way (in addition to the interviews), but were summarised in a quantitative one.

The instruments that were used (observations of three literature courses, questionnaires (to both students and professors) and personal interviews) are used in order to triangulate the data, i.e. to verify a phenomena through each of these instruments in order to find if said phenomena are real. With the observations the general objectives of the research are covered. This is the main instrument, since it will be used for more time than the other

two. Mackey and Gass comment that "observations can allow the study of a particular behaviour at close range with many important contextual variables present" (187). This way to amass data is very important and is the main one used in this project, since it will provide direct and specific information of the context.

The questionnaires are to find out information that cannot be discerned in the classroom about the students and professors. Brown defines questionnaires as "a subset of survey research, any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out the answers or selecting them among existing answers'" (qtd. in Mackey and Gass 92). When learners (or person in general) fills out a questionnaire, they are "able to report about themselves, such as their beliefs and motivations about learning or their reaction to learning or classroom instruction or activities. . ." (Mackey and Gass 92). This citation states the value of questionnaires very well. Questionnaires will provide important enlightening in the "affective" area of this research.

Lastly, the semi-structured interviews were used in order to get more information, but in a more personal way that would let the interviewee express his/her feelings in a freer manner. "Interviews can allow researchers to investigate phenomena that are not directly observable, such as learners self-reported perceptions or attitudes. Also, because interviews are interactive, researchers can elicit additional data if initial answers are vague, incomplete, off-topic, or not specific enough" (Mackey and Gass 173). Interviews, as stated in the previous quotation, can provide additional (and in this case required data) so that the research is more reliable.

In order to analyse the qualitative data, a cyclical analysis was used. As Mackey and Gass write, "this refers to the process of data collection, followed by data analysis, and an

hypothesis-formation stage based on the first round of data collection, followed by a second and more focused round of data collection in which hypotheses are tested and further refined, with the process continuing until a rich and full picture of the data is obtained" (178-79). This is a way in which all the hypotheses can be accommodated and/or discarded so that the research can be done in a more orderly manner.

Finally, the aim of this study is to analyse the courses, in order to see their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, this research will be given to both the authorities of the U.C.R. and U.N.A, so that it can serve for further analysis of everything that was studied here. In addition, this study will promote further research in this area or related areas of study.

Objectives

This project aimed to discover what major issues (such as the methodologies used to teach literature, the techniques and materials used in the classroom, etc.) have an impact on the teaching of literature and to see how literature helps the students improve their reading and writing language skills and the Grammar and Culture components (grammar and culture) in the B.I. of the U.C.R. Because of this, the following five research questions were proposed:

I. (Chapter I.) To see how students improve their reading and writing processes, the culture skill and the components grammar and vocabulary in the literature courses.

    A. To discover if professors develop the use of writing, and how they do that.

    B. To learn if professors develop the use of accurate grammar, and how they do that.

    C. To realised if professors develop vocabulary, and how they do so.

II. (Chapter II.) To ascertain which techniques (methodologies) are used by the professor to teach literature, and to find out if these techniques are engaging to the students.

III. (Chapter III.) To ferret out which is the role of the professor in the literature classroom.

IV. (Chapter IV.) To recognise what is the view of the students about the literature courses in relation to their English learning process.

V. (Chapter V.) To comprehend which materials are used when teaching literature in a foreign language classroom, if these literature didactic materials help improve the previously-mentioned-skills and components of the students in the classroom, and how the materials help the students.

All these research questions can be divided in four sets. The first set includes the initial three questions. The first one is essential and is the main objective of this research project. Since this is a Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics, it is important to know how literature is *applied* and consequently how it influences the culture, reading, and writing skills of the students. The second is about ascertaining how the professors develop the (previously mentioned) skills and the grammar and vocabulary components of the students.

The second set is concerned with the teaching of literature itself. The techniques that the professor uses are analysed, besides the necessary inquiry of noticing if these are sufficient to trigger the curiosity of the students (or not). The techniques are identified and the researcher analyses which ones work and which ones do not. The relationship between the activities used in the classroom and the performance of students in each of them are also investigated.

Another important issue to take into account is to discover the role of the professor, since it has an impact on the language learning of the students. This is related to the students, and this research finds out what they think of the literature courses, and to discern how they think these courses help them in the learning of the language. These two questions belong to the third set.

The final set is about materials. Materials are, unfailingly, important and valuable sources that are normally used in the classroom. (Due to the readings or "texts", even more in the literature classroom.) However, it is necessary to know which materials are being employed in the classroom and the use(s) each professor gives to them.

All of these hypotheses (research questions), which are the dependent variables of the projects, can be affected by the following independent variables (as discovered through the observations): (1) The pupils studying more because they are going to do the Masters in

English Literature of the U.C.R., (2) the amount of students in the class (this can affect classroom participation), (3) the age of the students and (4) the amount of time each person has been in the programme. All these variables can affect the project, and they were controlled through the observations themselves and the surveys carried out by the researcher.

Subjects or Sources of Information

The sources of information of this project were the students of the literature courses

of the third (Introducción al Drama) and fourth (Crítica Literaria and Panorámica Británica)

levels in the U.C.R. taught when the research was carried out and the professors of said

courses. These courses were chosen because they were the ones accessible by the researcher

and provided sufficient, relevant and actual information to carry out the research.

Data Collection

The researcher was totally immersed himself in the environment for a period of two

months (from August to October). During this time he carried out a total of 43 observations:

Fifteen in "Panorámica Británica", and fourteen in each of "Crítica Literaria" and

"Introduccíon al Drama" He also conducted seven interviews, four to students (two of

"Panorámica Británica" and one of both "Crítica Literaria" and "Introduccíon al Drama") and

one to each professor of every course. Finally, at the moment in which this is written, nine

surveys from the students of "Panorámica Británica", five from "Crítica Literaria" and 22

from "Introduccíon al Drama" were obtained. There is a substantial difference in the amount

of surveys obtained because only the professor of the "Introducción al Drama" course let the

researcher pass his survey during actual class time. The professors of the other two courses

did not allow the investigator to do so (see Appendix #12). Because of said actions, even

though the researcher went to the classes several times again to tell the students to bring the

surveys, it was more difficult to obtain them.

Analysis of Data

Each observation (a grand total of 41, fifteen in "Panorámica Británica" and thirteen in both "Crítica Literaria" and "Introduccíon al Drama") was carried out by the researcher in a totally immersed environment (each observation lasted from 45 to 90 minutes). As a matter of fact, the students of the course asked to the researcher what had happened to him when he stopped coming to the classes, proving that said learners thought that the researcher was a member of the class himself. Every observation was read and analysed thrice, after it was written, before the first advance and before the second advance. Concerning the questionnaires, each was analysed thoroughly. Every single question was turned into data (see Appendix #14) so that it could be easily scrutinised posteriorly. Finally, the interviews were heard, transcribed and analysed so that the triangulation of data could be completed.

IV. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*[3]

Development

Arrangement of This Section

This section answers the research questions that the investigator, *the watcher*, proposed for this project, an answer to the questions previously asked. Each research questions is a chapter, and each chapter is analysed through the "eyes" of each course.

Chapter I: Reading, Writing, Culture, Grammar and Vocabulary

Literature has always been related to reading (indeed, one usually "reads" literature, although you may watch or listen to it) and writing, so it was mandatory to see how the students improved their reading and writing processes, the culture skill and the components grammar and vocabulary in the observed literature courses. This is something very important to analyse, in order to prove if "literature is ideal for developing an awareness of language use" (McKay 192).

Reading and Writing

Without doubt, and as the researcher himself has seen, the reading, writing and culture skills are an *integral* part of literature. Concerning the "reading" process, this skill was necessarily improved during any of the courses under perusal, since the students are assigned

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3. *Trans. Latin:* Who watches the watchmen?

readings for each class. Moreover, the pupils admit in *both* the questionnaires and interviews (e.g. with Samael) that they do study the readings they are assigned to. This, however, is contradicted by the perception of the professors, who believe that the students do not read the texts.

However, in reality, neither view is wholly correct, and this was discovered through the observations; the interviews; and the surveys. The truth here is, perhaps, a logical one, although one that had to be verified: The students do read the texts, but they do not read *all* of them. Since these are literature courses, the students *necessarily* have to read. It was noted during the observation period that there were students who read the minimum because they did not really want to be in those courses (e.g. "Mike", who simply wants to finish the career, but does not really want to be there; this was stated to the researcher in an informal way outside of class); yet there were also students who read *as much as they could*. This is an important thing to emphasise, since it was evident during the observations (and through the interviews, questionnaires and informal conversations) that the students do like to read the assigned texts, but that there is a problem with the quantity that is assigned. In other words, for some students who are taking three or four literature courses, the amount of reading can be overwhelming. If a student is in a course he is expected to give his best and read everything that was assigned, but "one can only do so much". The pupils confessed that they like to read, but that, realistically speaking, they cannot read all the texts.

Ironically enough, P.1. stated in the interview that because of cultural reasons he does not expect students to read the texts that he assigns. This is, in a way, contradictory, for if he were to encourage the students to read more during the semester (and not only for the test), he would be destroying the same habit he is criticising. The researcher did note in the observations that some undergraduates read the texts for this course, but because of the way

of teaching of the professor (lectures), they will not read as much as in other courses. This means that since the students know *beforehand* that the professor will read in class the text(s) he originally assigned, some of the students will not read the text outside the classroom, thus creating a paradox (even more when noticing the view of the professor that was stated at the beginning of this paragraph).

Nevertheless, the reading process is widely improved through all the courses, seeing that whether in class or at home, the students will read (at least some) of the texts of the course package, whether just for the pleasure of reading, or just for the evaluations of the course. Some students also stated in the questionnaire that they can now "read more thoroughly, notice more details and read in a faster way", so it is evident that this process (reading) is improved.

For some people, reading is related to writing (interview with P.2.[4]), and writing is inherently related to literature. In spite of that, this is not always the case in the classroom. This happened in the course of Introducción al Drama, a course in which the students did read a lot, but did not have to write much. For example, the quizzes that they had to take (see Appendix #07) were very short: These were always a small paper with three questions, and little space for the students to write. P.3. (the professor of Introducción al Drama) stated that she does not really get into mechanics, and that for writing the students have the composition courses. Nonetheless, she asks for two papers (essays) during the semester (see Appendix #03 for the course syllabus). This can be further seen in the questionnaire that she answered, in which she did not mark the option of "writing" when asked which skill she develops the most in the classroom.

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4. Carried out on 6/10/09 from 9 to 9:20

This view of the relationship between writing and literature is, however, not shared by the professors of the other two courses. The professors were very passionate in the interviews when defending the connection between writing and literature. P.2. (the professor of Crítica Literaria) even actually said that "you cannot separate reading [i.e. literature] and writing". This perspective could be seen in her course, where she asked for reaction and response papers and essays. Indeed, the students had to write much more compared to the former course.

The Panorámica Británica course also includes a lot of writing. The professor did not assign as many written tasks as in the Crítica Literaria course. (Still, there was a general sense of fear in Panorámica Británica about these assignments.) Some seniors handed in their written assignment after it was corrected by the professor (for some it had been corrected twice or thrice), and had to hand it in again because of the corrections that the professor made. This professor is one that truly believes in the relationship between literature and writing, as he said so in the interview[5] (he defended this relationship vehemently) and can be seen in his classes.

Overall, it can be said that the professors do develop reading and writing skills. This can easily be seen in the following graphs, which portray information taken from the questionnaires the researcher gave to the students of every course (the questionnaire was the same for all the students, the number of questionnaires vary because of the quantity of students in each course and the sum of questionnaires the researcher was able to obtain):

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5. Interview carried out on 3/10/09, from 20:55 to 21:30

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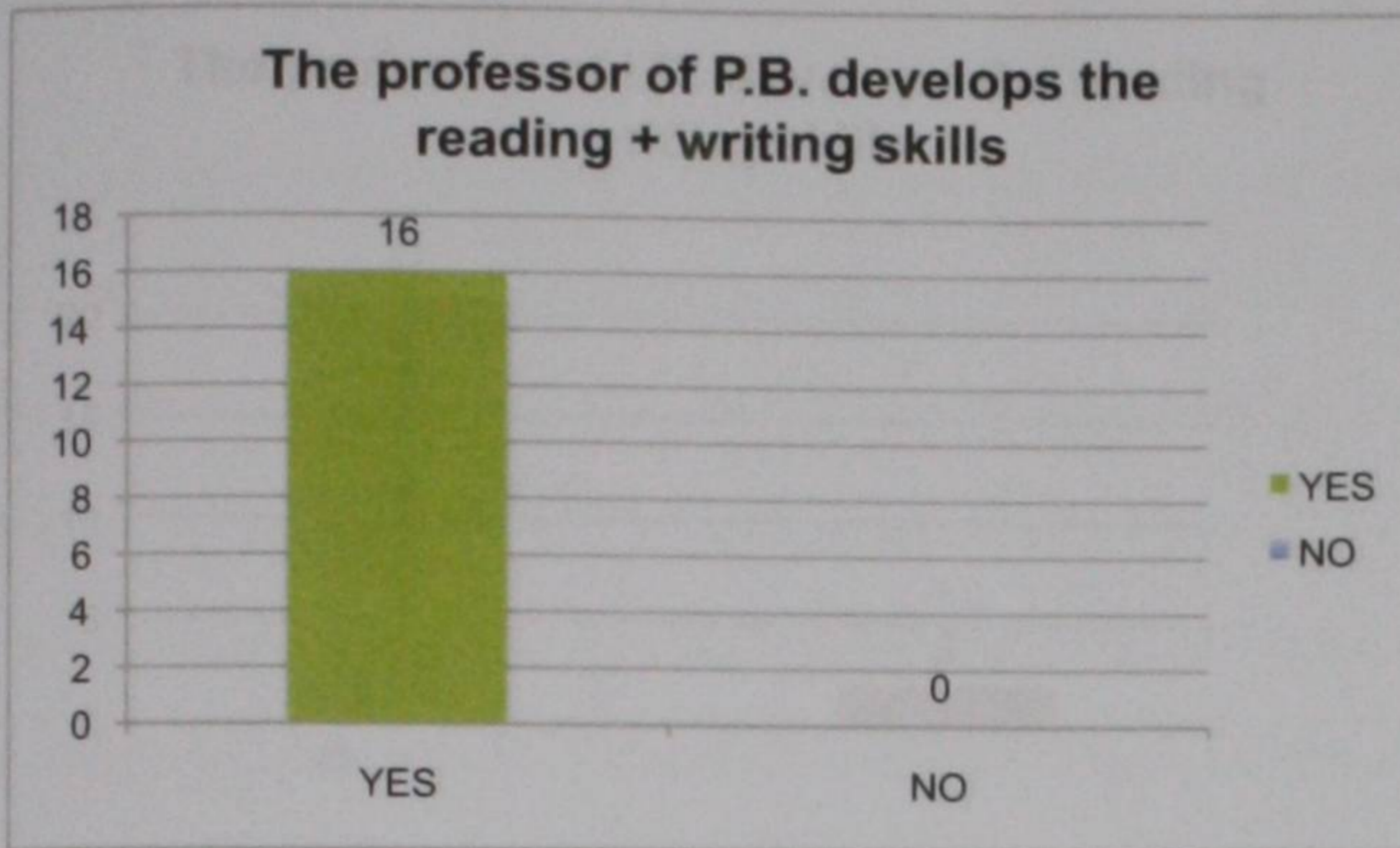5. Interview carried out on 3/10/09, from 20:55 to 21:30

The professor of P.B. develops the reading + writing skills

Fig. 01. The professor of Panorámica Británica develops reading and writing skills.

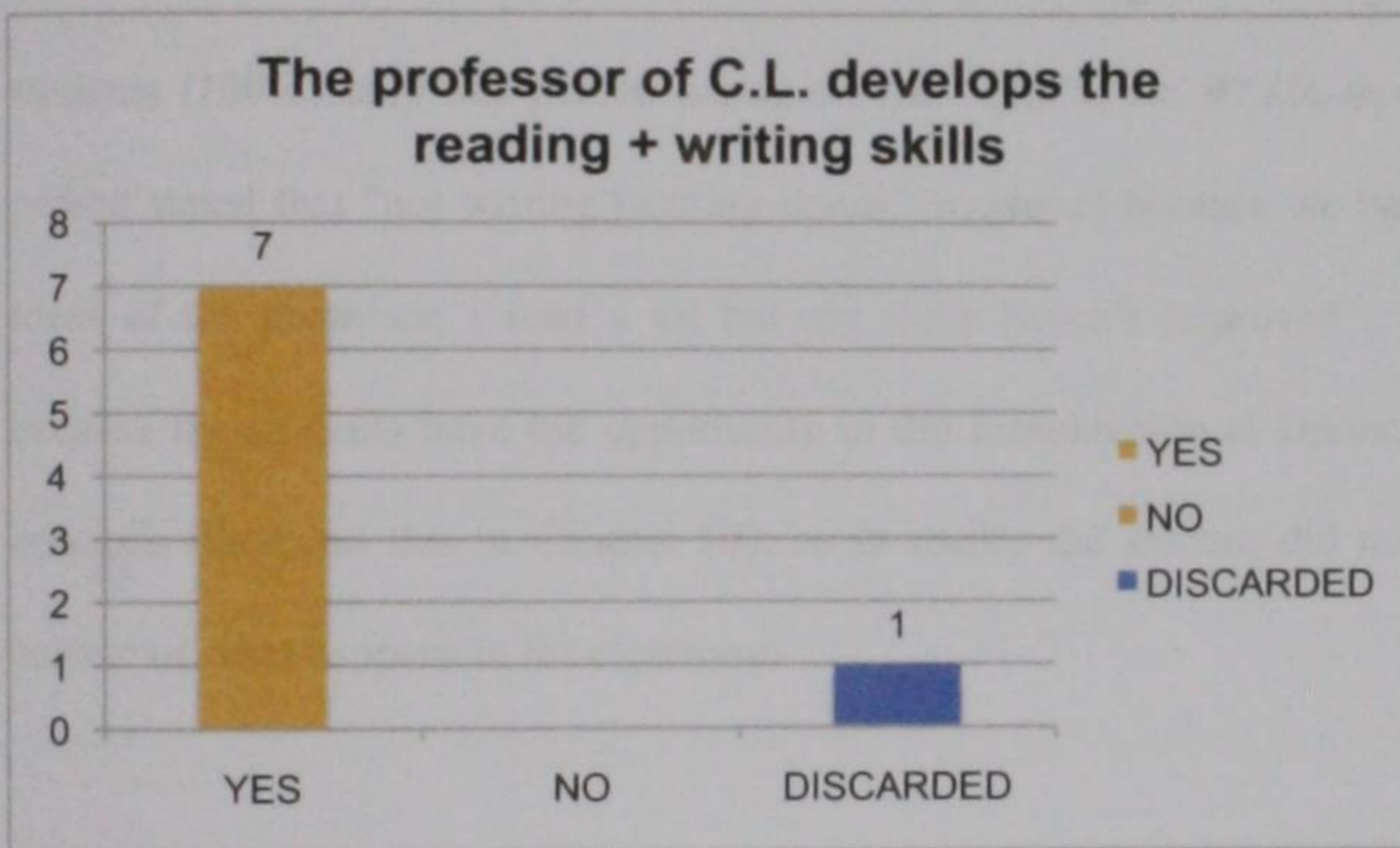**The professor of C.L. develops the reading + writing skills**

Fig. 02. The professor of Crítica Literaria develops reading and writing skills. One was discarded because the questions were not answered correctly.

The professor of I.D. develops the reading + writing skills
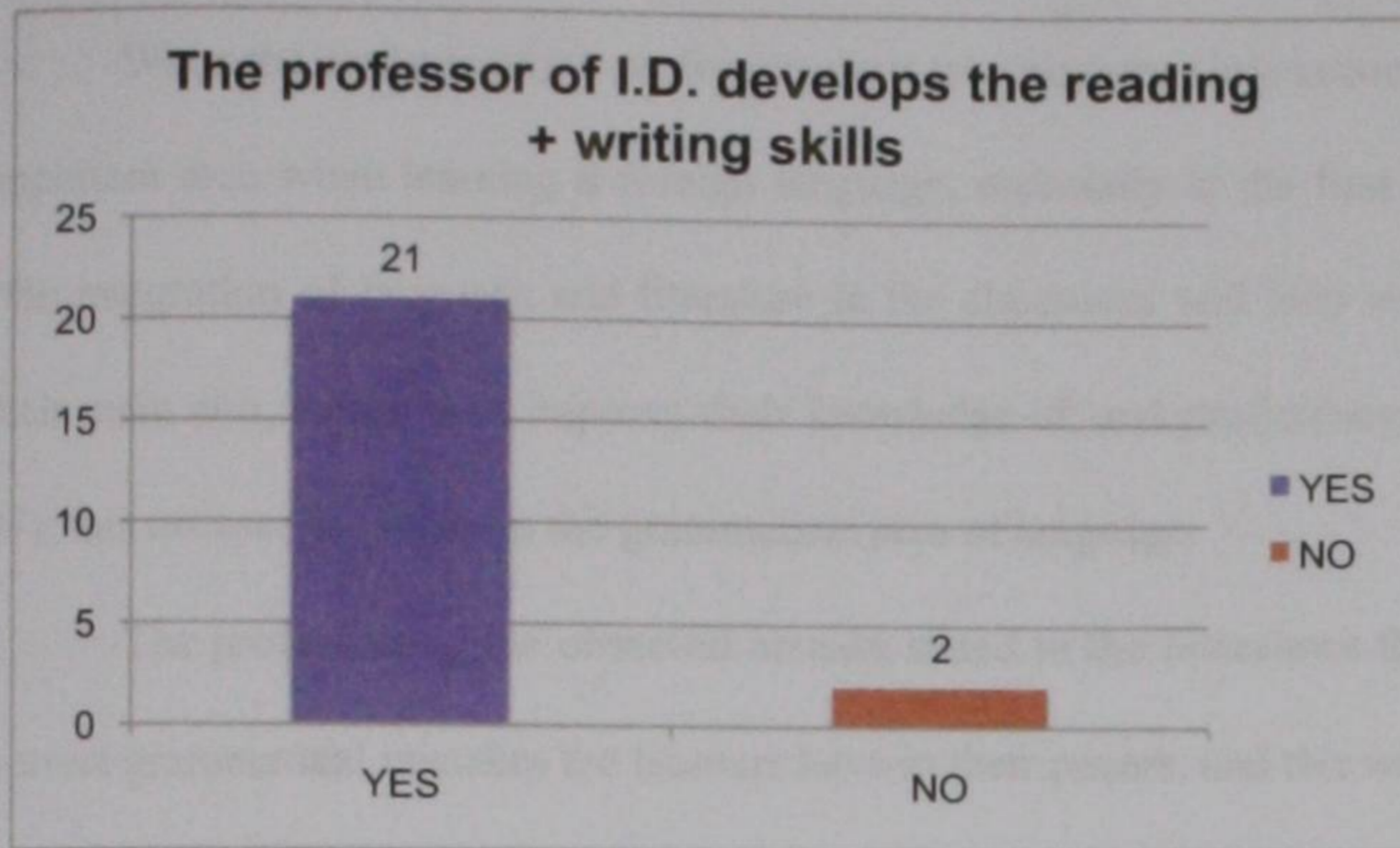
- YES: 21
- NO: 2

Fig. 03. The professor of Introducción al Drama develops reading and writing skills.

It is evident that the professors do develop reading and writing skills, as out of 46 students (100%) only one person answered "no" (2.2%, i.e. 97.8% answered "yes"). This person stated that "not writing [writing doesn't improve] because we have to transcribe the ideas of the professor, I read a lot but my skills haven't improved". This is a falsehood because the students have the opportunity in the Introducción al Drama class to state their opinions (more on this in Chapter III), so in reality the student did not write an accurate answer of what happens in the classroom.

Grammar

When the students write, professors must take grammar into account, since it is a very important area when learning a foreign language, especially at the first stages. Even more, "the integration of language and literature in the classroom will help students in achieving their main aim, which is to improve their knowledge of, and proficiency, in English" (Lazar 27); this necessarily includes the grammatical area of language.

The professors of the observed courses stated in the interviews that they will always correct grammatical mistakes the learners have in their papers, and this was observed in all of the classes. As a matter of fact, in the classroom itself, P.1. will always correct grammatical mistakes done in an oral way (and pronunciation ones too, for that matter)[6]. He would interrupt the student who was speaking and *immediately* correct the mistake. The other two professors would usually correct the grammatical mistakes, but they would not interrupt the students as frequently as P.1.[7]

In actual fact, the professors focus more on the content of the papers or on what the students say, again because at an advanced level students are 'supposed' to make few grammatical mistakes.[8] However, when this happens the professors will point out the mistake to the student. For example, P.1. believes that if there is too severe a mistake in the written a student handed in, he will give this student some grammatical information so that he can review it, and hence (hopefully) not make the same mistake again.

This way of correction was not observed in the other two courses, but the investigator did see that the professors corrected some written grammatical mistakes on the papers of the

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6. See Observation #03 of Panorámica Británica.

7. See for example Observation #12 of Crítica Literaria.

8. See the interview with "Professor 1", as he mentions this.

students. This means that the other two professors focus almost entirely on the content of the paper, but nevertheless correct the errors or mistakes that the students make. They also correct orally in class (less than P.1., though), as could be seen in Observation #12 of Crítica Literaria.

Lawal mentions that "literature provides an additional way in which the learner of English as a second language (ESL) is exposed to the elasticity of the language. . . a means of reinforcing language skill[s]" (1). Ergo, in an indirect way, through the class and the specific corrections made during class (in an oral way by both professors and students), the professors do develop an accurate use of grammar. This is something very important because even though this area is highly-developed by most students, a mastering of grammar is emphasised, letting the students constantly improve in this area.

Vocabulary

The professors do not develop vocabulary (or to be more specific, activities in which the specific aim is to develop vocabulary) in class in a specific way (e.g. as in "vocabulary" courses) because this is developed through the readings that the students are assigned to in each class.

With the exception of the Panorámica Británica class, in which the professor would state the meaning of unknown words to the student, vocabulary was not taught in a specific way. In the Crítica Literaria class P.2. said: "Students at this level are supposed to be able to use a dictionary, even if they don't". During all the courses a couple (at the most) of students could be seen consulting a dictionary[9], but several also asked for the meaning of words.

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9. As was observed in Observation #05 of Crítica Literaria.

The students also stated in the questionnaires (surveys) that their vocabulary does increase in the courses. For example, one from Panorámica Británica said "yes, I learn different words [...], I can expand my understanding of words in context". Another one from Crítica Literaria said that "the courses help me expand my vocabulary, perhaps not in an outstanding way, but they do help". Finally, one from Introducción al Drama wrote that "when I read my vocabulary and grammar improve. The only problem is that some vocabulary is very old, so it's not used nowadays".

Even more, they reaffirmed this statement in the oral interviews. For example, "Lois Lane" stated that her vocabulary increases "because I learn words that I didn't know…, because what we learned is like related to the United States, we have learnt anything from the words of Great Britain, so I think in that sense it helps". The interviewee makes it quite evident that her vocabulary is expanded in the courses, and that, as she said, "it helps". Samael stated that "yeah, because especially you have to look for all the words. Every word counts, and any meaning, any special meaning I pick up. I have never look, I have never looked up so many words in a course". Finally, Kaworu stated that "reading equals writing for me because that's where you get your vocabulary". Hence, even if some of the vocabulary the students learn is definitely dated, they will still learn some that can be applied "to the present era"; however, what is most important is that they will learn new vocabulary.

The literature lessons do expand the vocabulary of the students, since the latter show interest in learning the new vocabulary they find in the readings. If this is added to the fact that the students read the texts (as explained before), and that some answered that their

vocabulary does increase; it can be concluded that in a general sense, the vocabulary of the students is indeed developed in the class (even though professors do not specifically teach it).

Culture

Culture is an aspect that is always somewhat hard to define. As P.1. said in the interview, it is actually "almost impossible" to define it ("anthropologists have been trying to do that for 150 years", the professor also said). Not only this, but when students confront a literary text, "the greatest difficulties do not arise from language, but from cultural differences"(Miranda 71). However, not everything is the difficulties concerning the "cultural" factor, for "there are many benefits to using literature in the EFL classroom. It can offer a distinct literary world, which can widen learners' understanding of their own and other cultures" (Savvidou 3). Even if using a specific text can cause difficulties to the readers, the benefits are more.

That said, this "area" or "skill" is emphasised in every literature lesson, at least in an indirect manner. The Cultural Model which Savvidou (6) mentions (in more detail that "this model requires learners to explore and interpret the social, political, literary and historical context of a specific text") was, to some extent, used in each classroom. Every professor and every student agreed that when studying or reading literature, one is inherently familiarising oneself with a new culture. The students were the ones who highlighted this point the most. In the questionnaires, every single student agreed that they learnt about different cultures in the literature classroom; furthermore, they stated that they do not study only English culture, but also Greek, Mexican and U.S. cultures. When the students finish the literature courses they will learn about different cultures and have a more critical view of them.

The professors did not teach culture in the class in a specific way, although they did talk about the history of a specific place. This was very noticeable in Introducción al Drama: The professor not only covered English plays (such as Hamlet), but also Greek ones (e.g. Oedipus Rex). This professor stated in the questionnaire that she did not teach culture explicitly, but that it does come implicit with literature. She wrote in her questionnaire that "b/c [because] it's important to study a literary text in the context from which it emerges"; hence, it is implicitly taught in the classroom.

In Crítica Literaria the professor taught literature from various countries in the world, such as Mexico, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, England and the U.S.[10] She also stated in the questionnaire that "it's impossible to teach literature without teaching culture. In any contemporary literary analysis culture is a fundamental aspect". This sentences really sums up the relationship between culture and literature because culture is *inherent* in the literature a person reads. The students also mentioned that they did learn about new cultures, because a "text as a mirror of the culture that produces it. We learn many different things, even more about own culture". This course provided much variety in the texts, and so helped the students develop their culture skill and become critical of not only foreign cultures, but also their own.

The "culture" aspect was somewhat less covered (explicitly) in Panorámica Británica in comparison with the other two courses, and this can be due to the nature of the course, in which only literature from Great Britain is covered. This does not allow for the same variety in the readings as in the other courses, which are unhampered in the sense that the readings can be taken from different countries. The professor of Panorámica Británica also said (as written before) that he does not like the term culture; he even said in the questionnaire that

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10. See, for example, Observation #05.

"unless you can define it (a difficult task), I would prefer not to use it". Still, fifteen out of sixteen students (93.75%) said in the questionnaire, when asked if they learnt new things about English culture and other ones, that "we learn English history, but we do not see customs or traditions, texts let us know about their culture, of course, and literature from a specific country will show or use as reference their country or surroundings". Only one student simply replied "no" in capital letters. Through the observations the investigator came to the conclusion that culture is indeed learnt in the Panorámica Británica class, but to a certain extent less than in the other courses (for the reasons previously given). The drawback in what the students say is that some see culture as "customs and traditions", so even if it was observed[11] that culture was implicitly and explicitly discussed; some of the students felt that the area was not studied as much. However, this is an incorrect assumption that can be proved through the observations.

Finally, the students fancy that culture is indeed useful. When analysing the following graph, it is evident that most of them believe that.
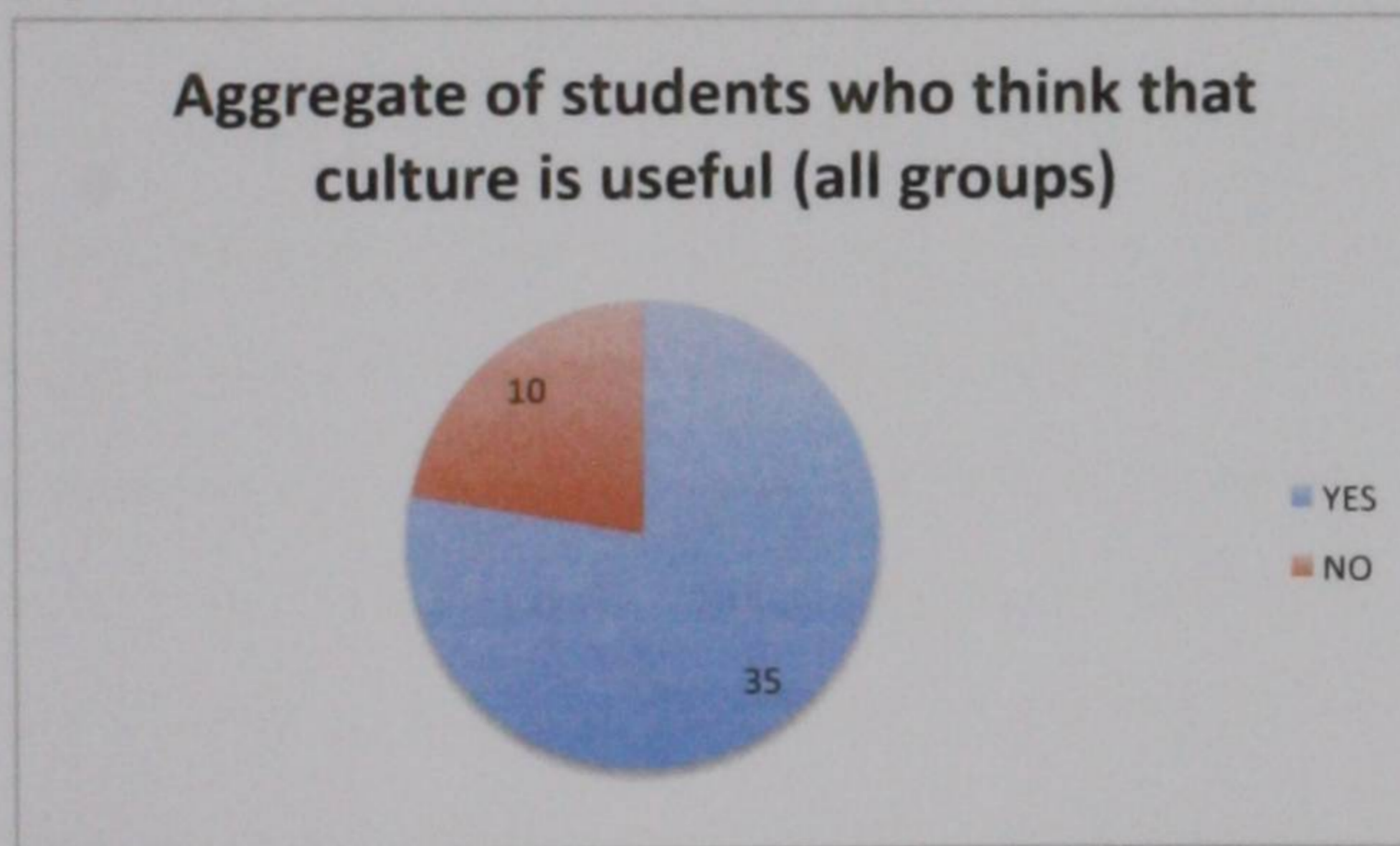

Fig. 04. The total number of students that believe that culture is useful or not.

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11. As in Observation #13.

The students would actually say in the questionnaires that "of course, literature from an [sic] specific country will show or use as reference their country or surroundings; the text as a mirror of the culture that produces it, [and that] lit. is a reflection of the time period it was written in". The students who wrote "no" put in writing things such as "no [only the word], "no específicamente con estas lecturas, no cultural contact whatsoever, few things, not really". These comments were taken from the all the questionnaires of the courses. It is very interesting to see that the majority of people who answered "no" were from the Crítica Literaria course (seven students out of ten, i.e. 7%). This is something to take into account because the observer noted that a lot of culture was implicitly taught in this course, so the researcher opines that these commentaries are contradicting the reality of the class. Even more, some of the comments were written in Spanish, which may show a low-proficiency level, and eventually a lack of understanding of the text and probably the culture. (This issue could be expanded in another research project.)

Chapter II: Methodologies

Even though there are many methods to teach literature, every professor has his/her own personal way of teaching. This was very evident to the enquirer in all three courses that he observed. In Panorámica Británica he noticed that literature was taught in basically only one way: Lecturing. In all of the classes the professor was in front of the class reading the texts (that were assigned for that day) aloud. The professor would also constantly ask the same student ("Lois Lane") to read parts of the readings out loud. In this course the professor would read a text and then ask for the opinions of the students. This is a *subject-centred* class, a class "in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor" (Freire 53).

Every few classes there would be a lively discussion between the students and the professor about the readings, but these were, in the first five weeks of class, rare cases. The professor admitted in the interview[12] that even though he enjoyed these discussions, he did not "encourage" them so much because the way in which he teaches literature (and had been taught literature) is lecturing. As written before, he even admitted that he did not expect students to read the assigned texts (and blamed that on the lack of reading habits that Costa Ricans have), and so for that reason reads the texts in class. At the beginning of the course the professor did most of the talking, to the point at which the students would rarely vocalise anything. This can easily be noted in the questionnaires, where some of the students stated that "he should use more" and that "they are effective for him". A reflection of the initial classes can be easily seen in these sentences, they are a portrait of the class.

Nonetheless, after some weeks of observations, the researcher noted that P.1. asked

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12. Interview carried out on 3/10/09, from 20:55 to 21:30

for the opinions of the students more than before; even though he was still lecturing the majority of the time. He still asked Lois Lane to read every time, and even though the latter said in the interview that she often felt embarrassed or afraid of making mistakes when reading; she continued to read when urged by P.1. The professor of the course did not give any particular reason for doing this, he just said in the interview "yeah she's good [smart]". In the final observations there was a lot of discussion in the class, a drastic change compared to the initial five weeks of the course. The students would state their opinions and comment on the readings that were perused in class, even when P.1. did not tell them to do so. As stated before, the professor still monopolised most of the conversation, but there was much more participation than before, and this is reflected in the following graph:
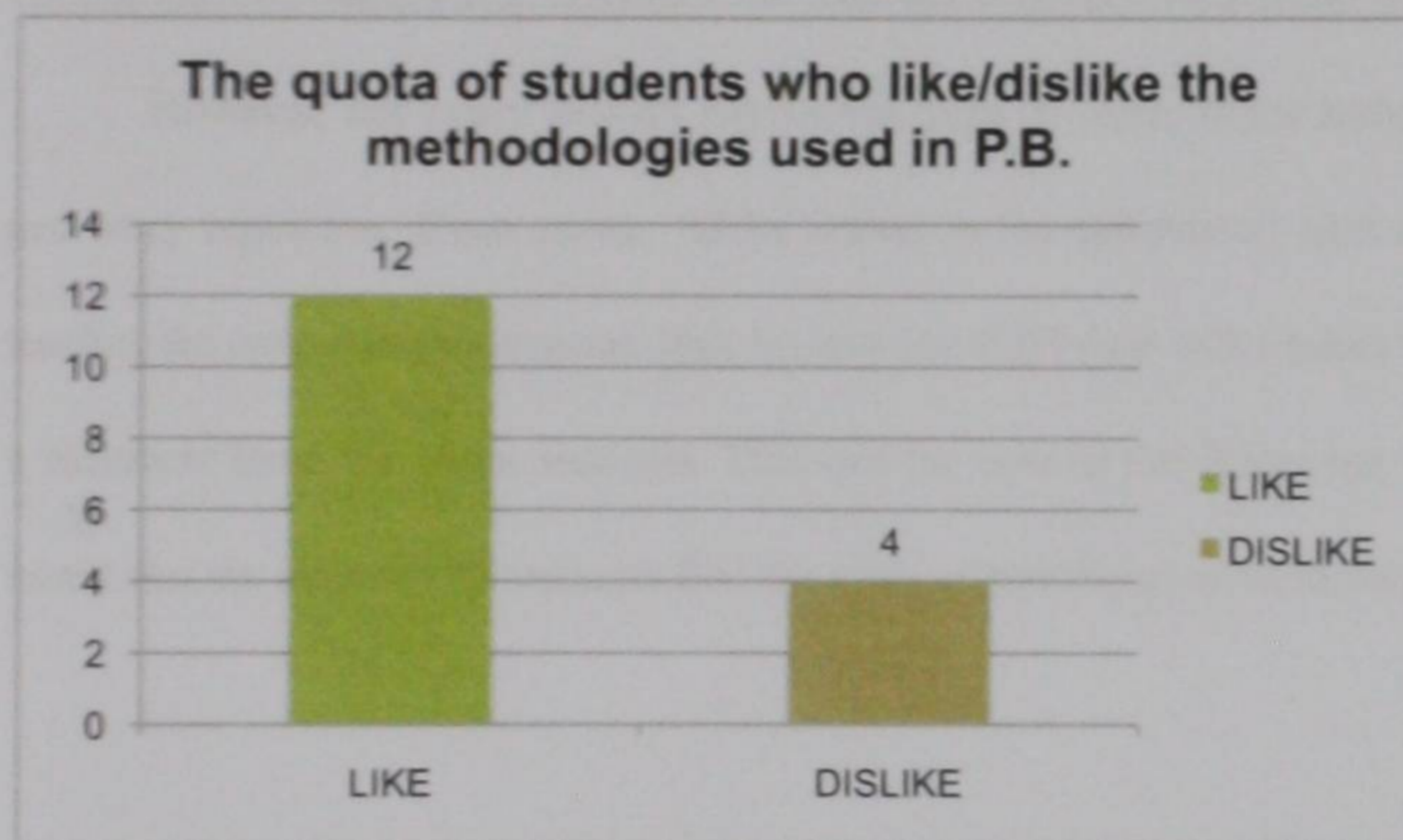

Fig. 05. The quota of students who like/dislike the methodologies used in Panorámica Británica

As can be seen, twelve students (75%) like the methodologies (lecturing, sometimes discussions) used in the course, whilst four students (25%) dislike it. The researcher believes

that this is a good reflection of the general perception that most students have in the course, since most of them (but not all, as in the graph) enjoyed the class.

Even though this class may seem boring to some students, many of them answered in the questionnaires that they do find the class quite enjoyable and "fun". As the researcher himself noted, in spite of the fact that the professor did lecture most of the time, he does so in a rather dynamic way. He is always interacting with the students and giving his opinions, and as many learners noted in the questionnaire, his *jokes* make the class very energetic. He would make personal comments on the reading, and when he had the chance, on religion. This was disliked by some students who felt offended because they felt it was an insult to the religion they observe, but the researcher felt that this was a minority within the class, and that the majority of students were entertained with the comments of P.1. on religion. Sometimes various students would also comment on what the professor said about (a particular) religion.

However, not every student enjoys this type of class. Some have stated that the class gets very repetitive. Even more, "Mike"stated in the interview[13] that the professor always teaches the course in this manner (this is circa the third time Mike takes the course), so this is a recurrent issue for some students. This can be seen in the following graph, in which it is noted that the majority of students find the class entertaining, even though some do not:

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13. Interview carried out on 10/9/09, from 18:15 to 18:47

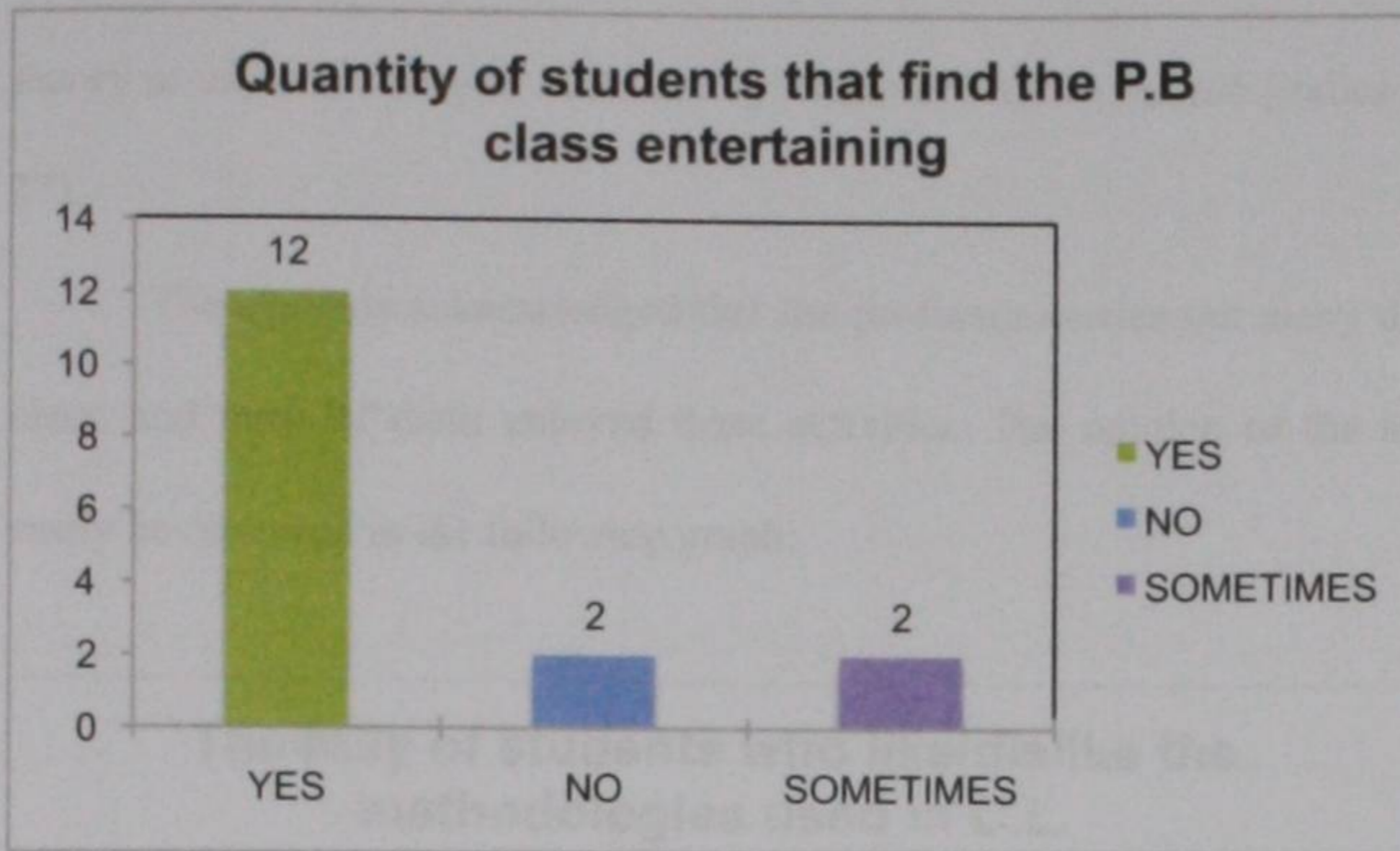**Quantity of students that find the P.B class entertaining**

Fig. 06. Quantity of students that find the Panorámica Británica class entertaining.

Twelve students out of sixteen, i.e. 75%, stated that they find the class entertaining, whilst only two (12.5%) said that they do not like it and two (12.5%) stated that "sometimes". The latter stated that "it is always the same (professor is funny though), you know what to expect, no surprises/activities".

An entirely different course is that of P.2., the professor of "Crítica Literaria", since even the professor herself admitted in the interview[14] that she has tried every single activity that could be done in class. She stated that she uses movies in the classroom ("Pan's Labyrinth"[15]), reaction papers, creative and academic writing, group discussion, role-playing, concept maps, Power Point presentations, music, pop culture and food. In point of fact, the professor is only limited by the mood she is in and what she feels the class should do (P.2. actually stated this in the interview.) The professor indeed uses the *eclectic theories* to teach, since this is "probably the most widespread theory of teaching literature, *which is having no*

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14. Interview carried out on 6/10/09, from 9 to 9:20

15. See Observation #09

theory at all, and trying to make use of whatever will do the job [italics added]" (Showalter

37).

The students acknowledged that the professor carries out many different activities in

class, and most of them enjoyed these activities. The opinion of the students on this can

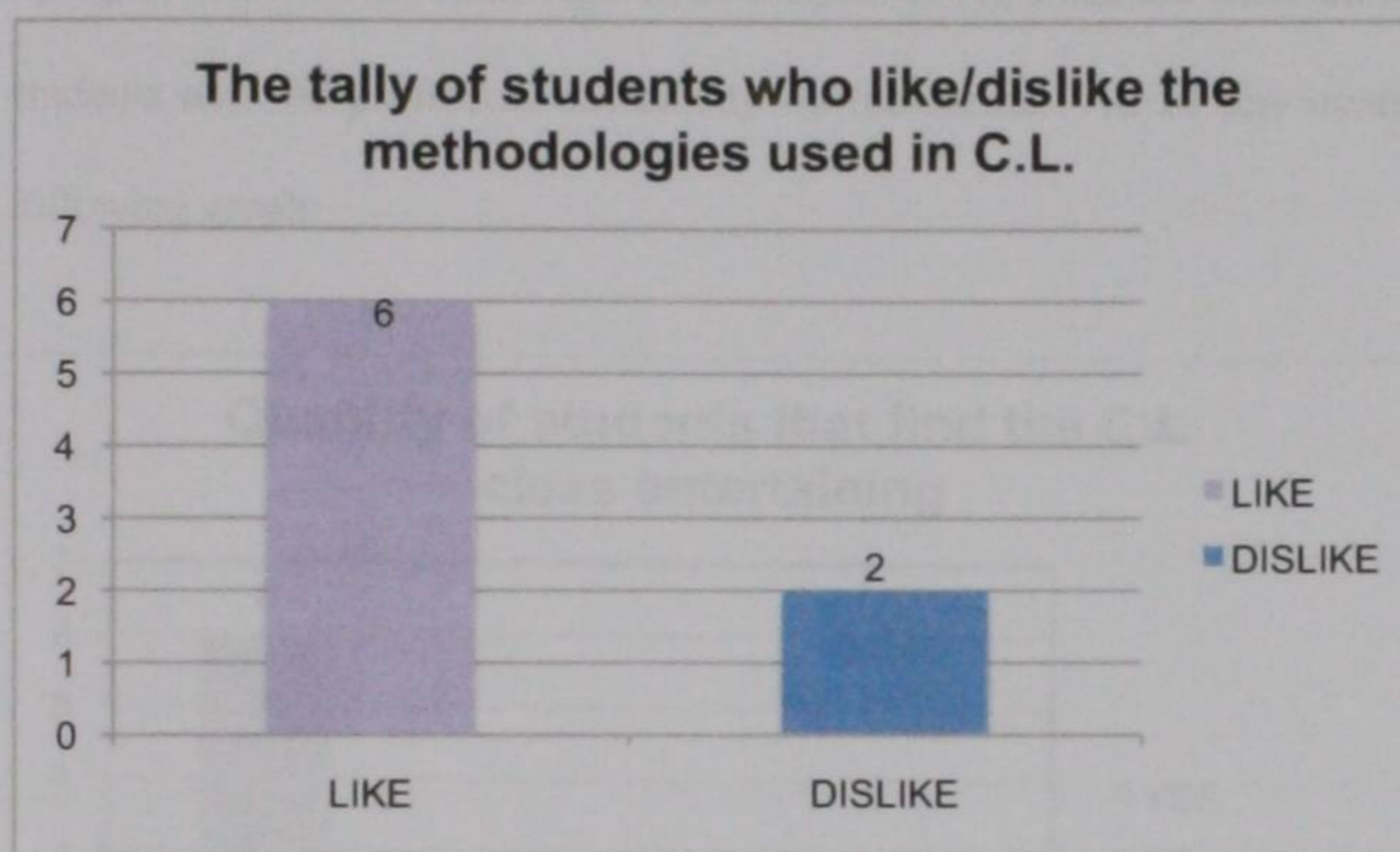easily be observed in the following graph:

Fig. 07. Tally of students who like/dislike the methodologies used in Crítica Literaria

Six students out of eight (75%) like the methodologies used in the classroom, whilst

only two students (25%) dislike them. The former stated that the methodologies of the course

were "appropriate, students can get to their own conclusion and then professor explains, there

is a balance between theory and practice", and the latter believe that the class is "repetitive

and teacher-centred, subjective so makes it boring".

There is one student, as written before, who wrote in the questionnaire that the class

was "teacher-centred". However, it can be noted in the observations that even though there

are moments in which the classroom is teacher centred, most of the class is, indeed, student-centred[16]. These classes are an outstanding example of what could be defined as a "dynamic literature lesson". There are classes in which the students work in groups and interact and discuss the readings, and others in which the professor would talk about the readings. This makes the class truly, to quote Showalter, *eclectic* ("which is having no theory at all, and trying to make use of whatever will do the job" (37)), since the attention is centred both in the students and the professor, but mostly on the former. All of this matter is evident in the following graph:

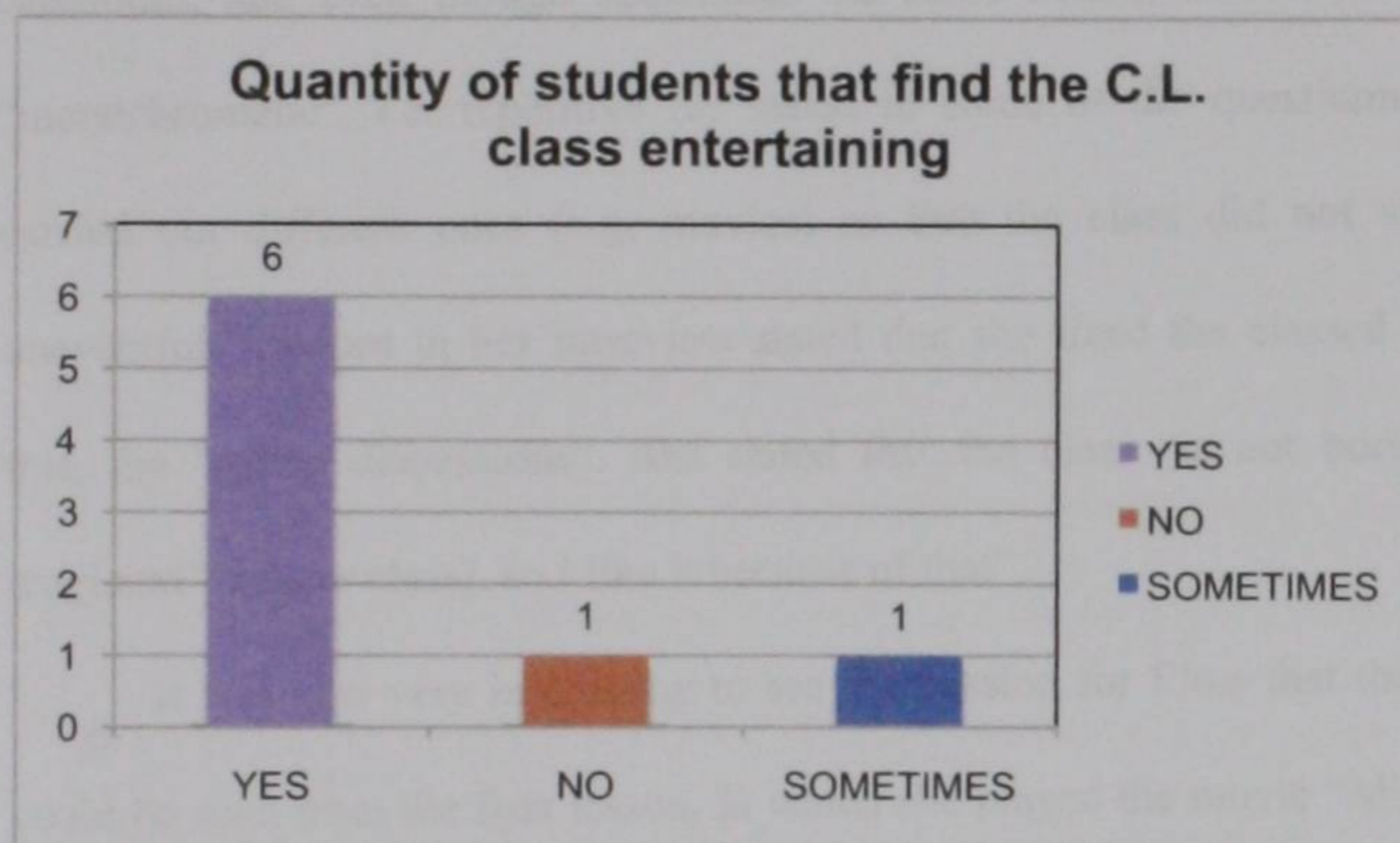**Quantity of students that find the C.L. class entertaining**

Fig. 08. Quantity of students that find the Crítica Literaria class entertaining.

It is observable that the majority of students (75%) do believe that the Crítica Literaria is entertaining, whilst only one (12.5%) stated that he did not like the class, and there was also only one (12.5%) who thought that it was entertaining only sometimes (this student stated that the professor "should present the material with more enthusiasm").

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16. Observation #6 of Crítica Literaria

Finally, P.3. is also a very dynamic professor, with a similar teaching style to P.2. She gives a student-centred lesson, in which the students would usually have to sit in pairs and discuss the readings. After this, a group discussion would be carried out, in which the students are seated in a circle and then state their opinions and answer the questions from the professor.

The professor not only uses and *eclectic theory*, and actually uses more the *student-centred* one, in which "an active, *collaborative learning* [italics added] takes place as the student confronts the text directly. With this way of teaching the spotlight changed from the professor to the student, in what is called "active learning" (Showalter 35). This is the usual classroom, and even though sometimes the same course of activities became somewhat "monochromatic", i.e. repetitive (as stated in some of the questionnaires), the professor carried out different ones (e.g. movies) so that the class did not stagnate and become uneventful. Kaworu in her interview stated that she liked the classed precisely because of this, the "group discussions". She stated that the class "is not boring, it's not a 'clase magistral' [master class], so I like it because of that".

It was also very interesting to see the passion for films that this professor has. This could be seen from the first lesson, in which she played the movie "Mighty Aphrodite" with Woody Allen (this was one of a few other movies that the professor would show during the observation period). Most students liked the methodologies used by the professor, as can be seen in the following graph:
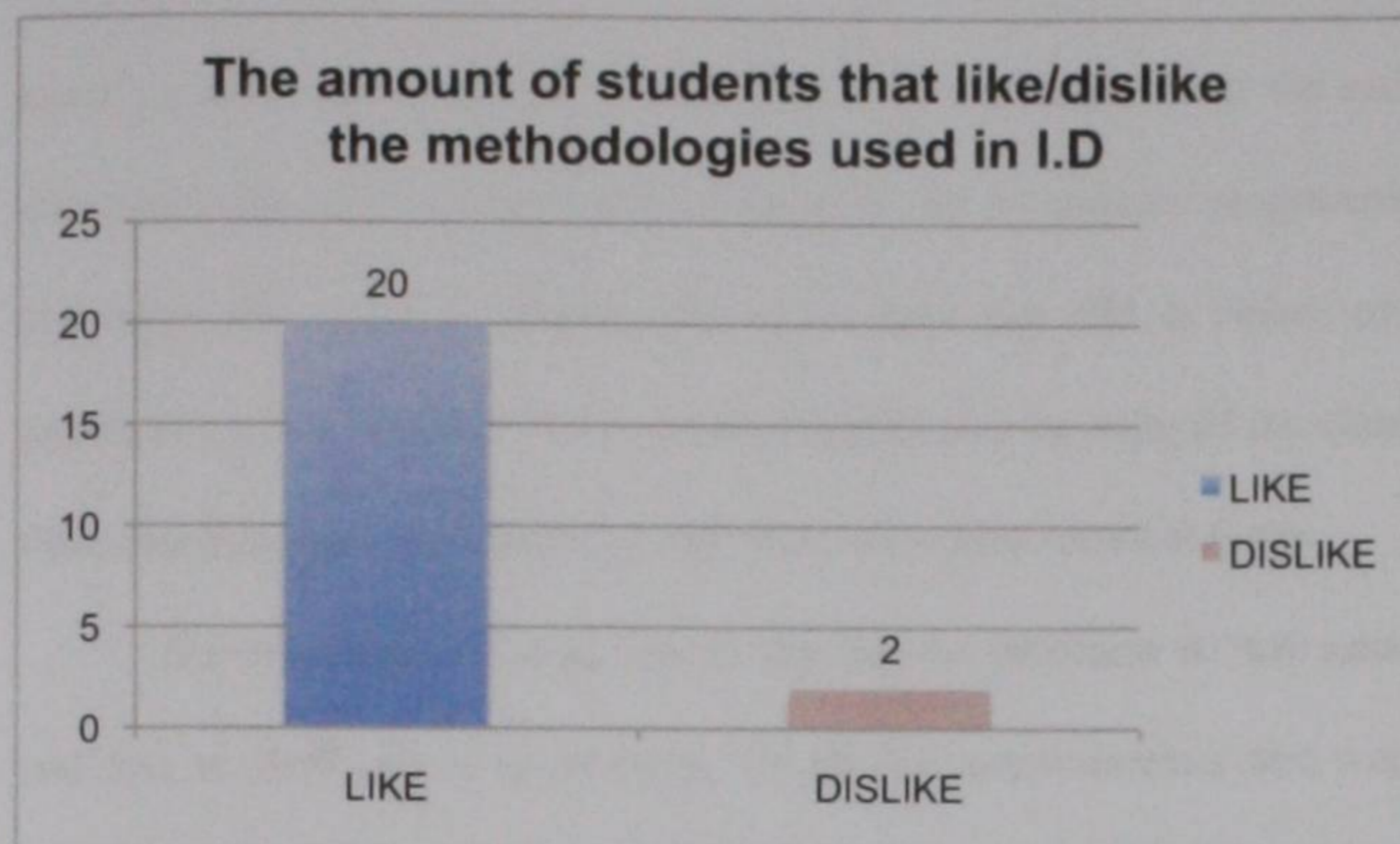
The amount of students that like/dislike the methodologies used in I.D

Fig. 09. The amount of students that like/dislike the methodologies used in Introducción al Drama

It can be discerned that 88% of the students like the methodologies used in this course, whilst only 12% (two students) dislike it. The learners who liked the methodologies (sixteen students, i.e. 88%) described the methodologies as "dynamic, intelligent, helps enjoy, interesting, different", but some also wrote that it could be a tad more dynamic. Finally, one student wrote in his questionnaires that "this is not a cinema course, wake up!" The professor talks and talks". (This questionnaire can be found in the appendices.) The researcher could observe that the professor liked to play films to the students, but all of these were related to the readings of the course. It was evident to the researcher through the observations that the movies complemented the readings and provided further information on them. Even more, the students enjoyed watching the movies.[17] Hence, the student that wrote that he did not like to watch movies in the course was the only to do so.

Concerning the "movie area", the professor assigned 10% to the "preparation of

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17. See Observation #02 of this course.

scene", a theatrical presentation the students have to carry out at the end of the course. She also had a man give two workshops on how to use a computer programme to edit movies, so that when the students filmed their scene they can edit it before presenting it to their professor and classmates. The researcher admits that he enjoyed the class a lot, although the films and film-related material got the class somewhat bored at times.

The investigator would dare to say that the professor is "too suitable" for the course, and this is obviously a good thing. Of all the questionnaires that were filled out by the students (see the following graph), only three students said that the class was *not* entertaining, and three more said that only *sometimes*. If this is compared to the other fifteen students (see the following graph) that replied that the class was indeed entertaining, and to the figure of methodology found in the previous page (in which it can be seen that the students do like the methodologies used by the professor), the effusive use of films can be taken as something positive, not negative.
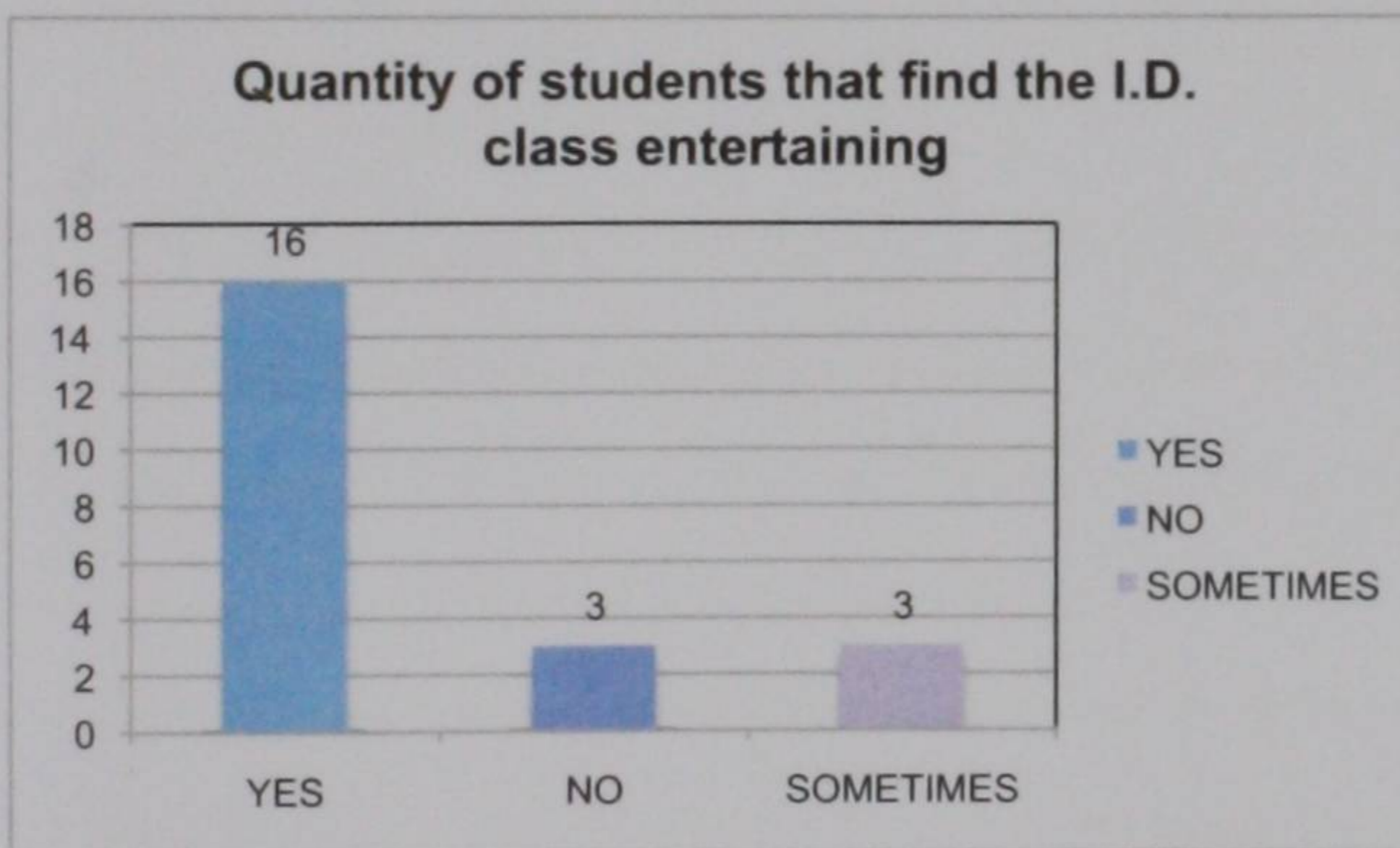

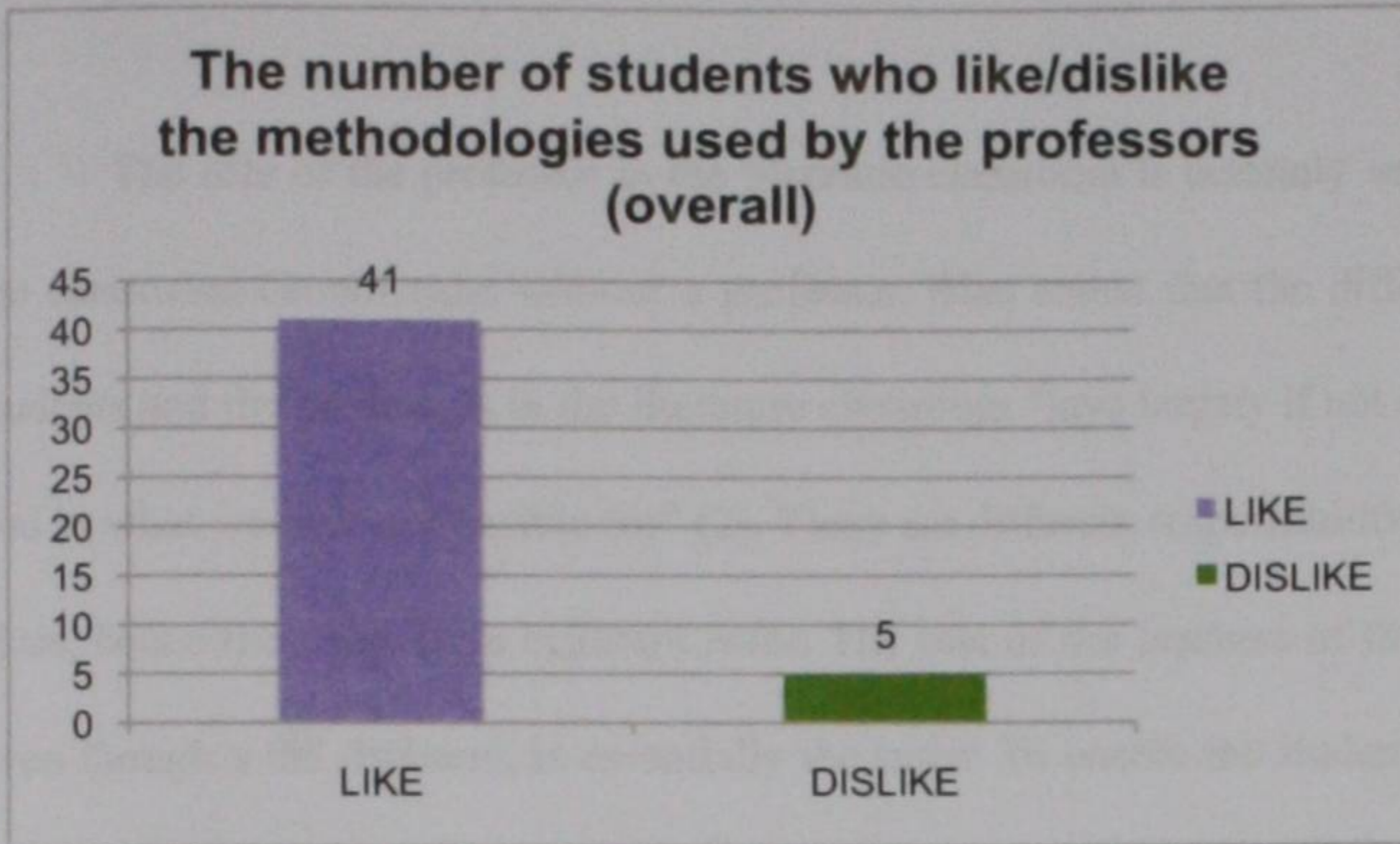Fig. 10. Graphic which shows how entertaining the students think the class is.

Fig. 11. Total amount of students that like or dislike the methodologies used by the professors.

Chapter III: The Role of the Professor in the Literature Classroom

The role of the professor in the literature classroom is certainly very important, since the classroom cannot exist without a professor. Blau stated that the difference between the students and the professors in the literature classroom "lays largely if not entirely in our roles and in what we saw responsible for" (2). There are different responsibilities to each person in class, hence they also have different *roles*. The role of the teachers of the observed courses, even though a tad different, is essentially the same: To enable the students to understand the texts. All of the professors stated this in both the questionnaires and interviews.

P.1. wrote in the questionnaire that his role is "to assist in the reading of the texts in class", but he was much more explicit in the interview. In this he said that his duty in the classroom was to "reject crazy ideas". He believes that he must guide the commentaries of the class (and the class itself) through a certain path that will not go too astray from what he considers to be the point of the author. For example, he mentioned in the interview that a girl wanted to say that the speaker in "The Collar"[18] was "the rain", an idea he thought was utterly incorrect (crazy —as stated by him—).

He said that if an idea is defensible he would allow it, but that when one can only make an argument whilst "looking mad"; he would not let this happen and correct the person immediately (something that was noticed by the researcher throughout the observations[19]). The professor said the following, which sums up his view of what he has to do in the classroom: "My job in part is to deflect conversation that is coming at me from some part, and to encourage conversation that is somewhat close, and interesting… not to try to hammer

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18. *"The Collar"* was written by George Herbert ca. in 1633

19. See Observation #13 of Panorámica Británica

them [the students] or say that they're stupid, but rather to encourage them… and to stimulate in them a love of trying to figure things out. You know, that this is fun, that they can enjoy this and apply it to everything".[20] The last part is very important because even though there are students who might disagree (e.g. Mike), he does stimulate love for literature and understanding.

The role that the professor states in his interview is also evident across the observations, as can be seen in Observation #15. The professor chooses a specific text to discuss in class, has a student read (usually "Lois Lane", or himself), lets the students comment a little, and then guides the discussion. Even if it may seem that the professor monopolises the entire class, he encourages discussions with the students and usually has several in each class. It was observed that he likes to *guide* the students so they can not only understand the readings, but also think in a certain way. The students that participate were usually the same, but every student did participate in class during the observation period. Hence, his role as a professor that encourages discussions (and rejects "crazy ideas") is well accomplished.

The next professor, P.2., wrote in the questionnaire that her role is that of a "guide", and that she encourages "the improvement of reading, writing and overall skills". This is indeed the case because the professor would encourage the students to read during class (as can be seen in Observation #04) and corrected them whenever they made a mistake (due to the advanced nature of the course the researcher believes it to be very necessary). Her job is, as she answered in the questionnaire and interview[21], "to explain difficult theory in ways they [the students] can understand". For example, in Observation #11 (and many other such as #3

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20. Taken from the interview carried out on 3/10/09, from 20:55 to 21:15. Available in the interview appendix.

21. Interview carried out on 6/10/09, from 9 to 9:20

and #4) the professor explained many concepts (e.g. that of 'The Other') so that the students could understand everything in a better way. Even more, "explanations" was mentioned by the students as one of the common activities that are carried out in the classroom, i.e. the professor is indeed a person that guides her students.

Something totally unrelated to this was the evident frustration this professor feels when talking about her students. She believes that they are "very arrogant because they think they can have a discussion with you just by reading three books. It is necessary to make the more disciplined and I do that in class; they have no idea how the literature courses were before...".[22] However, the researcher does not believe that this "frustration" affects the development of the lessons.

Finally, just as with the other two professors, P.3. affirmed that her role in the classroom is that of a "facilitator". She wrote in the questionnaire that her role was to create an academic setting in which everyone could take the most out of it, whether in the literature, communication or writing class. The professor mentioned in the interview that she does not impose what she thinks in the literature classroom, and that she is there to answer the questions the students have.

This was evident throughout the observations, as in for examples Observations # 08, #10, and #12. In the latter it is evident that the role of the professor is to help her students, as in this one she "went around the class asking the students how they were doing with the questions". Even more, the students answered in their questionnaires that the professor "lets students state their opinions and helps us [them] in class". This makes it clear that the role of the professor as a facilitator in class is definitely achieved.

Nevertheless, it is very difficult for a literature professor not to say what they believe

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22. Obtained from the interview carried out on 6/10/09, from 9 to 9:20

is correct. Every professor (P.1., P.2., P.3.) has opinions and specific perspectives on life, so they will always, in some way or another, tell the students what they (the professors) think. However, this does not mean that they are *imposing* their opinions on the students, for they let them think what they want, as long as they are not diverting so much from the reading itself.

Chapter IV: The View of the Students of the Literature Courses in Relation to Their English Learning Process

At the levels which the researcher observed (third and fourth) most students have an intermediate level of proficiency (the fourth level is B2, the third one B1.3). As in every class, there are students with a higher competence than others. For example, in the Panorámica Británica course the student "Mike" had a lower level compared to the majority of his classmates, something the researcher finds amazing considering that this is the third time "Mike" took the course. (If the reader wants to understand this in a better way, he/she should compare the oral fluency of "Mike" with that of "Lois Lane" in the interviews. The audio can be found in the attached DVD.)

When analysing every comment of the student of every course, the researcher came to the conclusion that even though the level of most students is fairly advanced; they believe that the classes do help them improve their language. They have obviously already learnt the language, but they have not mastered it. The researcher observed that in all of the courses the students improve mostly their reading and writing skills. Indeed, some of the comments they made on this were: "I have noticed my improvement since I started the literature courses; I can finally understand poems; I am more familiar with writing techniques, general knowledge, and spelling". These last sentences are an excellent and actual insight on the view that the students have between the literature courses and their learning (mastering) of the language. There is also improvement in the speaking and listening areas, mostly on the former. There are class discussions in which the students will participate actively, and in this manner improve their oral proficiency. Concerning listening, they will improve since they

have to hear their professors speak, and the investigator noted that in general said professors have an excellent pronunciation. Hence, in an overall sense, the views that the students have of the courses is that the latter help them in *mastering* (or for some, improving) every skill; furthermore, they think that the skills that they improve the most are the reading and writing ones. This should not be taken as something "natural" due to the nature of the courses, but as something that gives affirmation of the quality of these.

What is more, not only do the students believe that they improve the skills and areas mentioned in the previous paragraph, but they also have a very positive opinion of the courses. Notwithstanding the fact that this was not an initial research question (to find out whether the students like or disliked the courses), the writer thought that it was pertinent to include it due to its undeniable relationship to the rest of the paper, since the opinions of the students influence their perspective on the courses. When the surveys (questionnaires) were given to the students the researcher included a question in which he asked whether the students, in a very general way, liked the literature courses or not. The results are as follows:
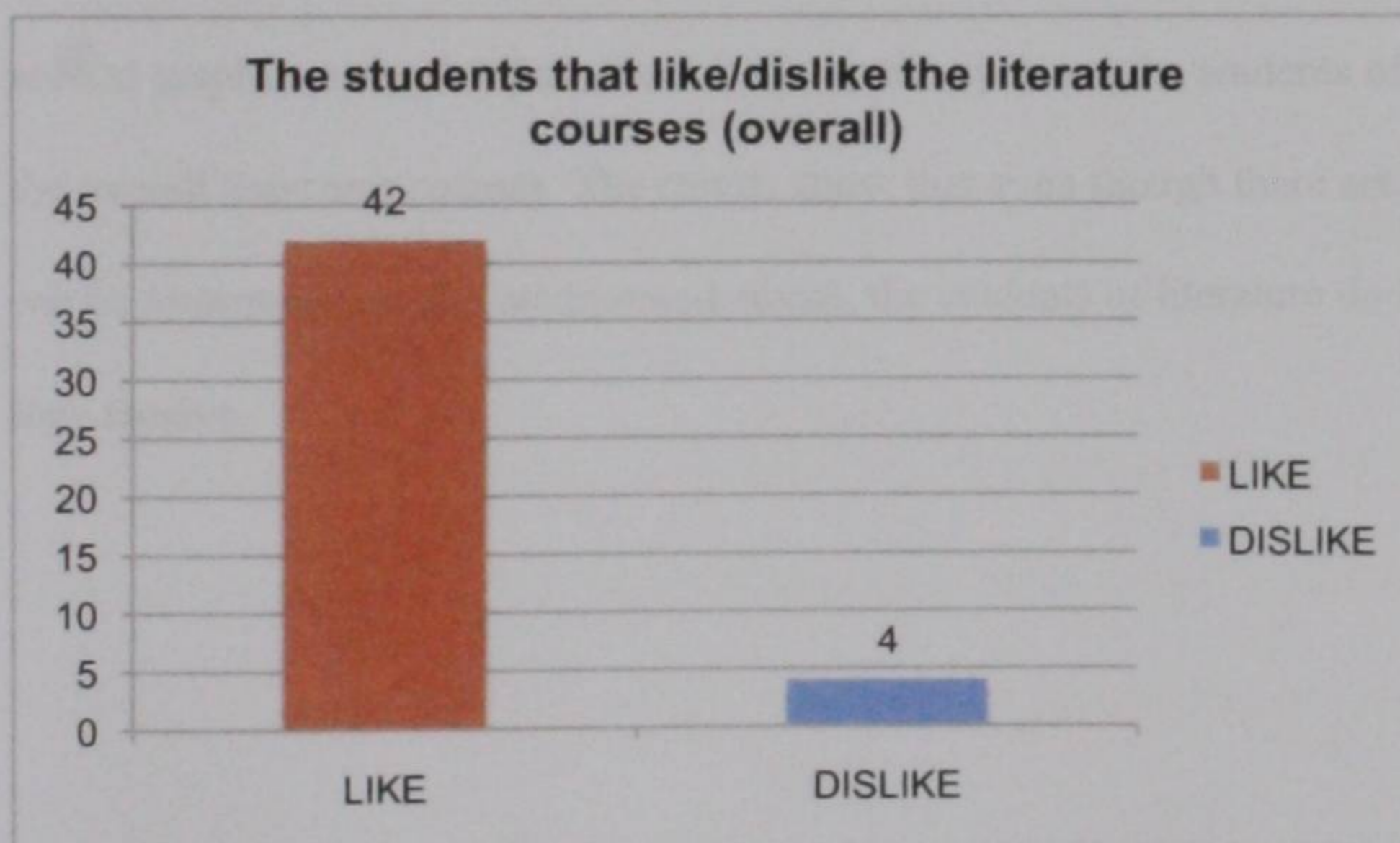

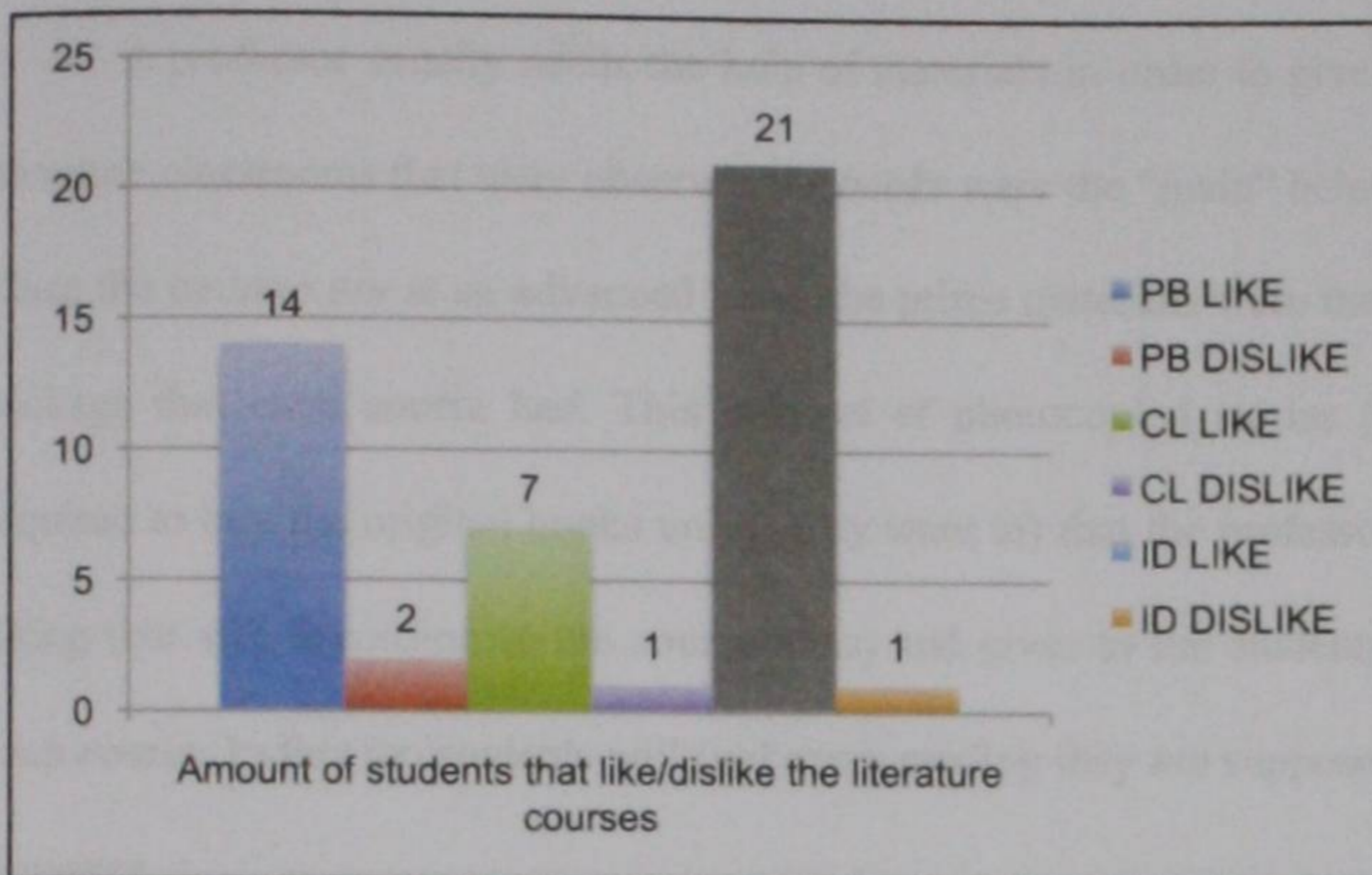Fig. 12. Overall opinion of the students about the courses.

Fig. 13. Total number of students in each course that like the (general) literature courses.

As it had been observed by the researcher in the observations, the students *do* like the literature courses, despite whatever difficulties or shortcomings they may have in any sense. In the first graph the reader can see that 91.30% of the students (42 out of 46) like the courses, whilst only 8.70% (four students out of 46) do *not* like the literature courses. The second graph is more detailed, since it shows the opinions the students of each course had of the overall literature courses. The results show that even though there are always aspects that can be improved (see the recommendations), the students of literature do like the courses that they receive.

Chapter V: Materials

A professor usually needs the help of materials in order to give the class, and in the literature classrooms that were observed the *books* were the "main" helpers or materials used. Since the courses are at an advanced level, the prime materials were the course anthology or package that each course had. This is a set of photocopied stories (the students are not required to buy the original books unless they want to) that the professor compiles to his/her liking (but still according to the course aims) and gives to the students at the beginning of each course. In this the students will find every reading they are supposed to work with in the semester.

The Panorámica Británica course is the one which, of all the three courses, used the *least* amount of materials. As can be seen in any of the observation reports, the professor, besides the course anthology, only played some videos[23] that were used as a general introduction to the course during the entire observation period. It is interesting to note though, that Mike stated in his interview that this was the first time the professor did this in the Panorámica Británica course, as in the times that he previously took that course with the same professor they were (apparently) not used. Some maps (of England and Europe) were included at the beginning of the anthology, and just as with the videos, they were used to give the overall introduction of the course.

Lois Lane said in the interview that "there's a certain lack of materials, but due to the nature of the course and that we have to cover so much in one semester, the professor can't use a lot of materials". The researcher did notice in the observations that he carried out[24] that

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23. See Observation #4 in Appendix #07

24. From 10/8/09 to 5/10/09

the only materials used in this course were the books (course anthologies) and one movie played in the initial lessons. It is important to remember, that when choosing materials, a professor must take in account "(1) the *linguistic* level, (2) the *cultural* level, (3) the *length*, (4) the *pedagogical role*, (5) the *genre it represents*, and (6) the "*classic status (or face validity)*" (Brumfit 189). In the case of this course, point three was not really taken into account, since the length of some readings was excessive.

The next course, Crítica Literaria, is one in which, of all the three courses, used the largest quantity of materials in class. The variety of materials that were used is quite outstanding: course anthologies (two, one with the readings and one with theory), pictures, videos (e.g. "Pan's Labyrinth", see Observation #9, Appendix #07), scissors, drawings and construction paper (see Observation #2, Appendix #07). The use of this materials gave the class a lot of variety, and it helped the students understand specific concepts. For example, "Samael" stated so in his interview: He said that the movie the class saw ("Pan's Labyrinth") helped him understand patterns in the movie and the sacrificial hero. He specifically said: "As today we just saw a movie, I guess that might be effective. I did see the pattern and the kid, the sacrificial hero. But I know her and she, she makes good use of materials. She makes her classes interesting".

The students did seem more relaxed and apparently enjoyed the class more when they were using alternative materials (i.e. materials besides the course anthology[25]). However, as can be noted from the interview with "Samael", these materials also helped the students understand the theory in a better way because they would make relations between the theory or stories learnt in class and the "alternative" materials that were also used. Littlewood (181) also has a set of different criteria (than Bumfrit) for selecting materials which include

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25. See observation #08 (of Crítica Literaria).

"*interest* and *relevance* to the pupils, the *superficial* and *underlying themes* of the work at hand, and the literary work within *history* and/or a *literary or intellectual movement*". All these criteria, plus the ones of Bumfrit, are met in this course. The first one is especially present in this course because due to the diversity of readings most students felt interested in the course throughout the observation period. This was also stated by them in the questionnaires and interviews.

Finally, the Introducción al Drama course was one in which materials besides the course anthology were used, but not as many were employed in comparison to the Crítica Literaria course. This course used the course anthology as the main basis for every activity in class, but plenty of videos were also used. As a matter of fact, in the initial classes of the semester the movie "Mighty Aphrodite" (starring Woody Allen) was watched. This served as an introduction to the course, and helped the students understand in a better way what was being studied. "Kaworu" emphasised this in the interview with her when she said the following: "The movie, I actually love the movie, and it's a way, a perfect way to exemplify what you're seeing and seeing it in practice because in theory it could be like...you could say whatever, but you don't know exactly how it works until see it before or see it after, so yeah".

As written before, the movies helped the students make connections between the movie and the readings studied in class, ergo providing further understanding to the students of what they learnt. These course complies with the criteria presented by Littlewood and Brumfit, particularly with the criteria related to culture, since this course (just as Crítica Literaria) include readings from diverse cultures of the world. Not only this, but they provide the historical context of many countries.

In general these materials will not directly help the students in their writing, since most of the things (besides the book) that were used were of the "auditory" type, i.e. the

movies. Even more, the movies will usually have a language considered to be informal, meaning that it is not recommended for use in formal writing. Just as with grammar, they will not really aide in that sense because they would either (1) not have any grammatical component and/or (2) have a grammatical part, but not one used in formal writing. However, these materials do increase the vocabulary of the students and are likely to broaden their cultural perspectives, especially when these materials are the previously mentioned movies. The materials, in general, help the learners a lot more in the sense that they will relate these materials to the "core" of the course, namely to the readings and the theory that they are analysing.

V. Discussion

Conclusions

In order to arrive at the following conclusions, the researcher worked on this project for a period of circa one year (from the formulation of the research to the final stages). Four literature courses at the U.C.R. were observed (Panorámica Británica, Crítica Literaria and Introducción al Drama) for a period of a little more than two months, and so a total of fifteen observations in Panorámica Británica and thirteen in both Crítica Literaria and Introducción al Drama were carried out. Questionnaires were applied to each group, as well as seven interviews in total (one to each of the three professors and each of the four students). All the research questions are answered with all the obtained data, and the answers to those questions now follow (for a more detailed one see the "development" section).

The first question was concerning reading and writing processes, the culture "skill" and the grammar and vocabulary components. The students do read the assigned texts of the course (contrary to what the professors think), but they do not read them *all* because they do not have time to do so due to the amount of readings of all the courses combined. The professors do not expect the students to read, and P.2. complained about "the new generations and how they do not read". This contrasts with the view of P.1., who does not bother to "fight" this issue and so reads (himself or the student 'Lois Lane') the texts in class. However, the students do read some texts, and so develop their reading skill.

The view that literature is related to writing is shared by both P.1. and P.2., and they emphasise the correct use of these skills (they do so by correcting the papers of the students, several times —at least P.1. does so—). P.3. is less concerned with writing because she believes that that is why there are composition courses, and actually did not mark said option

(writing) in the questionnaire when asked which skills she develops the most in the classroom. This is somewhat contradictory because she asks for two essays in her course, but does not seem too concerned about the way in which they are written. The writing skill is most developed in the Panorámica Británica and Crítica Literaria class, not because these are fourth level courses, but more owing to the fact that the professors pay more attention to them (and pressure on the students in this way) than in the Introducción al Drama course.

Vocabulary and grammar are not taught explicitly: As a matter of fact, all the professors do not feel the need to do so because the courses that they teach are advanced, so the students are supposed to have grammar on par with the level they are in. The professors do, however, correct grammar whenever it is necessary, especially when these mistakes are in written form (as P.1. stated). If a student made a grammar mistake in an oral way, he/she will also be corrected orally.

Vocabulary is developed by the professors through the readings that they assign to the students, since they will use the readings in class and add vocabulary too. The students would sometimes be seen consulting the meaning of words in their dictionaries, which means that the readings do expand their vocabulary (and this was also confirmed by the students in the questionnaires). The students also stated in the interviews and questionnaires that their vocabulary is expanded because of the professors and the readings of the course(s).

Culture is always an area that is within literature, and the former is greatly expanded in the courses (the students made special emphasis on this in their questionnaires). It is interesting to see that the students do not only learn about British or U.S. cultures, but also of Mexican, Spanish and Greek ones. (This is something that should continue to be done because it provides different cultural insights to the students.) Culture is not *specifically* taught in the classroom, but the history of the reading and the setting in which it takes place is

usually discussed. Because of these actions the culture of a particular text, whether directly or indirectly, will be examined in the classroom.

The second research question was about the techniques that are used by the professors to teach literature and whether the students find them engaging or not. Each professor has his/her own teaching method, and this is quite evident in these courses. P.1. is basically a lecturer, and even though he does enjoy classes in which there are "lively discussions" with the students, he fervently defends his right to lecture. This professor lectured in basically every class that was observed, and students like "Mike" do not like that. However, most of the students do like the methodology[26] (lecturing in class) used by the professor.

P.2. and P.3. apply more dynamic activities than P.1. This was even admitted by P.2. , since she said that she has done "every possible activity", and this was proven in each of the classes that the writer observed. There were students who disliked the methodologies (movies, discussions, writing, creating diagrams) P.2. used in class, but the researcher found the comments (e.g. "the class is teacher centred) to be inaccurate with reality, since the class is certainly not teacher-centred.

P.3. is less dynamic than P.2. since the former mainly has discussions with the students. However, she enjoyed playing various movies related to the text that was being discussed in class for the students. Some students had an aversion towards some of the activities and thought that too many movies were played, but the majority of pupils do like the methodologies (analysing and watching movies, discussing texts) that were used in this class. Apropos of all the courses, it can be said that the majority of students like the methodologies used in them, despite whatever shortcomings might have occurred.

In the third question all of the professors stated that their *role* in the classroom is that

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26. Defined as "practices and procedures used in teaching" (Richards and Schmidt 330).

of a facilitator, to be a guide to the students. P.1. stated that his duty was not only to teach, but to reject "crazy ideas" (as stated by the professor himself) that students might have. The researcher also noticed that his role in the classroom was to create a passion for literature in the students (and this was also stated by him in the interview). P.2. passionately said that her role is to encourage the improvement of the reading, writing and overall skills, and to explain difficult stories the students may not understand. Her role is also to make the class entertaining and amusing to the students, so that they do not feel bored and so be able to enjoy the class more. P.3. stated that she does not impose her own thinking on the students, and even though she states her opinions in class, this helps in the sense that they facilitate the discussions in the class. The word "facilitate" in the previous sentence is a key one, since the role of this professor is not only to teach literature, but to *facilitate* or help the students understand the texts that are discussed in class.

Referring to the fourth question, although the general level of the students is, in average, fairly advanced (between B.1.2 and B.2.2 according to the C.E.F.[27]), most of them stated that the literature courses do help them improve their language skills (culture, reading, writing, and to a lesser degree, speaking and listening). The students stated (in the questionnaires) that they noticed their improvement since they started the literature courses, that they can finally understand poems and that they have become more familiar with writing techniques. Hence, the students believe that literature helps them in the mastering of the language (in the previously mentioned skills).

The fifth research question was about materials. In all of the classes, the main material that was used was the course book (anthology). This was most noticeable in Panorámica Británica, a class in which during the entire period of observations the only

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27. C.E.F. = Common European Framework

materials used besides the book were a couple of videos. The professor of Crítica Literaria (P.2.) was the one who used more materials, such as videos, pictures, scissors and drawings. P.3. (the one of Introducción al Drama) also used materials besides the course anthology, and most of them were movies related to what was studied that were used not only to give more variety to the class, but also as a way to compare the films with the texts.

Finally, it is interesting to see that the majority of students (91.30%) that answered the survey that was handed in by the researcher have the opinion that they like the literature courses. This is an outstanding achievement, and should encourage administrators and teachers not only to continue doing the good things in the same way, but also to improve on the weaknesses that were encountered. In the following paragraphs these weaknesses are addressed.

Recommendations

Based on the previous conclusions and the analysis of the data, a series of recommendations are now hereby written. However, the writer believes that it is first necessary to state that the courses are, for the most part, of outstanding quality. The professors are really *experts* on what they do (as they all have degrees of the areas that they teach), but most important of all, they have a genuine passion for literature and transmit that to the students. The following recommendations are now written to make the courses even better than they are now.

The Panorámica Británica course was noted for having many students (circa 37). Due to this, the classroom was extremely crowded, so there were days in which there were not enough desks in the classroom for all the students (there were students who had to get desks from other classrooms). The classroom was not as large as necessary, and this was not just a

constraint in the sense of space, but also caused difficulties in the circulation of air within it. It is necessary to either have a bigger classroom for this course (e.g. an auditorium) or fewer students in it, because this hinders their learning process.

In the same course, Panorámica Británica, various students complained that the amount of readings in the course was too overwhelming and that because of this, the class felt a tad rushed when analysing them. The writer, in order to correct this, proposes that (1) the course have fewer readings or that (2) the readings be covered in not one, but *two* courses. (i.e. the curriculum would have Panorámica Británica 1 and 2). When dividing this course (if this ever occurs), the research recommends to *not* divide in time periods (i.e. Anglo-Saxon, Middle English, Early Modern English, etc.), but to cover *all* periods in each course, but with different readings in each one. This will help the students analyse the texts in a more detailed and thorough manner, helping in the understanding and discussion of the readings.

It is very ironic that a lot of professors complain that the students do not read, but this action (or non-action) is actually fomented by one of the teachers, P.1., and this is undoubtedly related to his perspective on his "right to lecture". Even though it may seem that the students do not read in that course because of the lecturing of the professor, the observer noted that they were avid readers and will usually read for each Panorámica Británica lesson. Still, more diverse activities are recommended in this course so to keep the interest of the students and to break the monotony that sometimes occurs in it.

Following, more evaluations in the Panorámica Británica course are suggested. This may be surprising, but the researcher recommends that in the courses in which here are only two exams (as in Panorámica Británica), to keep those exams, but to lower their value in the course and to add more quizzes. Hence, in Panorámica Británica, instead of two evaluations of 25% each and 50% for four papers, the researcher recommends two exams (one midterm

and one final) of 20% each, two quizzes of 10% each and four papers of 10% each. This will help the students feel more relaxed concerning the evaluations (as the researcher observed that some were "terrified" when they were going to write a test —or paper—) and so feel less pressured.

It is also *very* important to place the theoretical courses of literature first, i.e. before the other courses are taken because this will help the students to analyse the subsequent readings through the knowledge acquired in this course. Studying the theory of literary approaches (Mythological, Feminist, New Historicist, Reader-Response, etc.) first will enable the students to see the readings through each approach, something that at the present moment only happens in the Crítica Literaria course in the fourth level. Hence, the researcher recommends moving the study of the approaches to the initial phases of the curriculum. In this way, the students will be more prepared for the coming literature courses.

The final recommendation is to have a tentative list in the syllabus of Crítica Literaria of the readings that will be covered in the course and on which day they will be (possibly) read, since this course was the only one that did not provide it (both the syllabuses Panorámica Británica and Introducción al Drama do include a list of the readings).[28] This will help the students know which are the readings to be studied and will help in the overall organisation of the course. This plan is obviously subject to change according to the particular circumstances that each course might have, but it would be good to provide a guide to the students at the beginning so they have a general idea of what is to be covered and when.

Lastly, the investigator also encourages the School of Modern Languages and the Department of Literature to continue holding literary festivals. In these festivals movies can

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28. See Appendix #03

be played, lectures or speeches can be done, theatre presentations can occur and people from different countries can be invited to the festival in order to foment literature itself. This helps as it creates bonding between the students of literature amongst themselves and with their alma matter. It will also develop more passion for literature in everyone that attends the festival, and so create more people that in the future will be interested in pursuing a masters in literature and/or teach literature itself.

Limitations

There have been important issues during the execution of this research project, which are analysed here. These issues deeply affected the project, to the point in which it had to be radically changed *twice*. Indeed, even if the basis of the project is still intact, there were important changes in it. It is also necessary to note that the *main* limitation of this project was certainly the amount of time to carry it out.

It was impracticable to do this research at additional locations due to the nature of the study and the quantity of researchers involved (only one). When this project started, it was to be carried out at the National University of Costa Rica (Universidad Nacional, U.N.A.). Three courses were originally going to be observed ("Literatura Victoriana, Literatura Multiétnica" and "Poesía, Drama y Tragedia"). However, after some discussion with the tutor, it was decided that the latter course should not be observed because it is taught in Spanish (this was decided in July). Nevertheless, in the wake of the "Summer" vacations, the researcher was utterly nonplussed when discovering that one of the literature courses, "Literatura Multiétnica", was closed due to lack of registration (as was stated by the department coordinator). This caused serious problems to the investigator (and the research itself), for he could not carry out the study based on only one course ("Literatura

Victoriana").

After analysing the situation, the researcher decided that he could implement the thesis at the U.C.R., since that university also has literature courses in English. After discussing this with the tutor, it was decided that this was the most reasonable thing to do. Be that as it may, there were further issues that had to be resolved. Since the original proposal was designed for the courses at the U.N.A., it was obvious that some changes had to be introduced, as the courses and programmes of the universities are different.

The investigator had to change the main objectives so they could be on-par with the curriculum of the U.C.R. At first the researcher was going to analyse the five skills (culture, listening, speaking, reading and writing), how they were learnt through literature, and how the latter helped the students develop the skills. However, when the switch of the universities occurred, the researcher had to go from analysing all the skills, to examine the culture, reading and writing skills and the grammar and vocabulary components. These changes were made because the students of the courses are at advanced levels and are "supposed" to have high oral and listening proficiency, and so the decision to not include much information on those skills was made. These courses at the U.C.R. were chosen because (1) the research was to be carried out in these levels (advanced) in the first place and (2) since the levels are advanced, it is easier to tell how literature helps the students.

Lastly, the researcher also had problems in obtaining the questionnaires that were at one point given to the students of the Panorámica Británica and Crítica Literaria classes: Even though he went to each class several times to collect said items, and even gave some students a second set of questionnaires (because they had "lost" the first one); he was not able to obtain the questionnaires from everyone in the class. This proved to be a limitation because not every opinion was taken into account in the Panorámica Británica and Crítica Literaria

courses. However, the quota of questionnaires that were obtained in each group is a sufficient sample so that accurate findings in this part were obtained.

Further Research

For further research, the investigator believes that it might be interesting to investigate the level of oral and written proficiency of the students of the literature courses and to see which are their main weaknesses. This project can also serve as the basis for a more longitudinal one (at least a one-year-long study) in the same vein, and for one that would cover not only three literature courses, but *every* literature course taught at the moment of this tentative research.

VI. Appendices

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