

**Literature and Education:  
Proposal of an English Literature Program for  
E.S.O and Bachillerato as an Integrated and  
Interdisciplinary Tool for TESL**

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### **Abstract**

This paper seeks to analyze the role that literature has performed throughout the last years, the conflicts derived from the academic views, and how literature is an essential tool for the comprehensive study of a second language, as an integral part of the educational process. The Model suggested enhances the figure of the teacher and promotes the skills, knowledge and attitudes of the students within a multicultural environment.

**Key Words:** Literature, Education, Competence, Second Language Learning, Interdisciplinary.

### **Resumen**

Este trabajo persigue analizar el papel que ha jugado la literatura a lo largo de los años, los conflictos derivados de las diferentes perspectivas académicas, y cómo la literatura constituye una parte esencial e integral en el estudio y aprendizaje de una segunda lengua. El modelo propuesto pretende mejorar la figura del profesor, así como fomentar las habilidades, conocimiento y actitud de los alumnos dentro de un marco multicultural.

**Palabras clave:** Literatura, Educación, Competencias, Aprendizaje de una segunda Lengua, Interdisciplinaridad.

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**CHAPTER ONE**

**Introduction**

For hundreds of years, the role of literature in the foreign language curriculum was unquestioned. It was believed that learners could only appreciate a language through the study of its highest form of expression. Literature was seen as the only way to get to know a nation's culture and its people. Even though the literary language was often above the level of the learner, and the vocabulary load unbearable, classes persevered in their laborious word-by-word translation of entire books. (Richards and Rodgers, 2001:3).

Times changed. The 1970s and 80s saw teachers striving to bring the outside world into their classrooms, and the clear call was for authentic material such as train timetables and newspapers extracts to help learners to cope with the real world. Literature was not so much ousted as put into a corner and forgotten. There was even some question as to whether literature could be considered authentic or not. The study of literature fell into the academic world where scholars started to debate the conflicts the reading of literature could arise in class.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps we have now achieved a more reasonable balance. Literature can be taught in an interesting, critical and eye-opening way. Later-level students are ready to read longer texts and whole books, and they appreciate passages with more substance and diversity than can be provided by a daily newspaper or magazine (Carter, 1996:54).

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<sup>1</sup> For further discussion see: Gerald Graff's *Literature Against Itself*, chapter one, University of Chicago Press, 1979.

This paper seeks to analyze the role that literature has performed throughout the last years, the conflicts derived from the academic views, and how literature is an essential tool for the comprehensive study of a second language, as an integral part of the educational process. The Model suggested enhances the figure of the teacher and promotes the skills, knowledge and attitudes of the students within a multicultural environment.

### **1.1. State of the Problem**

The study of English as a second Language has often been ruled by a linguistic approach which usually neglects literary texts as a source of input for the students. The study of literature has hardly ever been considered as an integrated tool for a better comprehensive acknowledgement of the English language.

The lack of awareness of the methodological strategies to approach the vast resources literary texts can offer is another major problem to examine.

The resistance of students to read books as part of the learning process in their second language acquisition is also promoted by the fact that the traditional reading techniques employed in class disregard their active participation in the construction of a critical perspective.

### **1.2. Aim**

This study seeks to provide an all-inclusive methodological support to engage teachers and students in a communicative process that will foster the second language acquisition of students, and it will enhance the student's competence in the four skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Moreover, the impact of critical debates and reasoning through reading and discussing will help students develop a solid character personality in their future lives. To conclude, the wide range of opportunities a good teaching of literary texts can offer in the syllabus of

any course is not to be underestimated by any discipline, much less in language learning (Carter, 1996:92).

### **1.3. Significance of the Study**

If one considers the new demands and expectations in the education of students nowadays, the result is that programs are designed to stimulate and develop interest in individual learning competence, reliability in problem solving, and respect for multiculturalism. However, the reality is that the processes through which students try to pursue those objectives are not always successful. The integration of literature within the syllabus of the course will not only facilitate the study of a new language, but it will also contribute to bring about new perspectives on education. The awareness of literary figures, the critical reading and interpretation of texts, the historical context, the research and creative writing about universal themes, all of those are activities of undeniable value for a comprehensive education.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **HISTORICAL REVIEW OF LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODOLOGY**

#### **2.1 The Development of Methodology in Language Class.**

The history of the methodology of language teaching over the last hundred years offers a great variety of methods which mostly respond to social, political and educational reasons. Thus, changes in methodology have occurred with a certain frequency (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004).

The first language that was regularly studied as a dominant force in the Western countries was Latin. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century English, French and Italian appeared as languages that would progressively displace Latin to the academic sphere, as a subject

of scholar study. Therefore, Latin became the model to study other languages, and this would continue until the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Richards and Rodgers 2001: 3).

Lessons were mostly based on translation, grammar analysis and vocabulary. Sentences were analyzed following grammar patterns and textbooks offered examples of these practices. The oral competence was basically reduced to reading and repeating the sentences they had previously translated or repeating the teacher's commands in class.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century put under question some of the teaching techniques about language learning in Europe. Teachers started to promote the oral competence as an important skill in language learning, and new conversational texts were included along with reading and grammar. Those developments were assets in the process of language learning, and major improvements were made in relation to the oral competence.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century offered a wide range of methodological techniques and resources that pursued the successful acquisition of a second language. The oral communication stands out as one of the skills that methods try to foster (Larsen-Freeman 2000:121). Linguists and other professionals advocated for the active participation of the student in the learning process (<http://www.tesol-spain.org/index.html>). New approaches and theories emerged about language and methodology, and they all contributed to enhance certain aspects in the progress towards language acquisition.

## **2.2 The Classic Methods in Teaching a Second Language (up to the 1960s)**

As it has been mentioned before, the study of the classic languages was basically focused on translation and grammar. The traditional methods that are based on these premises promote the study of grammatical rules and patterns as the basis for a prospective achievement in the language acquisition (Larsen-Freeman 2000:17). Oral

communication and reading are presented through guided exercises, and repetition is part of the practice to reinforce acquisition.

Some of the most common and recognized methods of teaching a second language will be now mentioned and discussed, in order to illustrate the characteristics of the different methodologies employed.

### **2.2.1 The Grammar and Translation Method**

This method contemplates the teaching of a second language in the mother tongue of the learner. The techniques initially used in the study of the classic languages are here transferred to consolidate the grammar and facilitate the translation of literary texts. Vocabulary is learned isolated from the text and mostly in lists to be memorized (Richards and Rodgers, 2001:6). Reading is exercised only to foster the grammatical rules (Cook, 2001:202). Although literary texts are often used, no interest in the context or in the content is shown. Literature is only a resource for grammar and translation.

### **2.2.2 The Direct Method**

This method appeared as a reaction against the grammar and translation course design. It was created by Wilhelm Viëtor in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Direct method avoids the use of the mother tongue in order to integrate the target language from the very beginning. Therefore, translation does not take place. Grammar and vocabulary are learned inductively through everyday dialogues and situations (Demirel, 2004:39). Literary texts are offered to advanced students to provide them with an entertaining reading activity. Literature offers learners a cultural background that is usually considered very relevant in the learning process (Richards and Rodgers, 2001:13).

### **2.2.3 The Audio Lingual Method**

This method has several premises in common with the Direct method. Grammar is learned deductively without any explanation, but through recurrent practice and repetition. Based on the grounds of behavioral psychology, this method predicates that language learning is best accomplished through routine and mimicry. Therefore, dialogues are frequently memorized in order to promote patterns of imitation and habit formation. The four skills (listening- speaking, reading-writing) are organized in sequences, and developed in modules of contrastive analysis between L1 and L2 (Larsen Freeman, 2000:46). The use of visual resources and language laboratories are frequently promoted. This method lacks independent production in improvised situations and contexts, and it relies on mere repetition and imitation (Demirel, 2004:40).

### **2.2.4 New Methods in Contemporary Language Teaching**

The new demands of language learners have brought about new methods, more competitive and more effective from a practical viewpoint. The years between 1950 and 1980 were called the “The Age of Methods”, given to the numerous instructive suggestions for language teaching. Interest in new resources and techniques has increased and linguists search for better ways to teach languages.

Five of the most demanded methods of language learning will be now described to establish a general comparative view with the former methods mentioned. Then, chapter III will introduce literature as a challenging tool for second language acquisition, and as an interdisciplinary teaching resource in character education.

## **The Silent Way**

This method was designed by Caleb Gattengo, and it encourages learners to participate actively in creating their own set of rules and correction. The teacher's role in the class is to monitor students and promote their autonomy. Therefore, there are periods of "silence" when learners elaborate their criteria and solve their possible problems. The teacher does not interfere in the process although he is constantly supervising the vocabulary and its application to different contexts (Larsen-Freeman, 2000:62). The use of the mother tongue is avoided. Resources include color devices (charts, wooden/plastic rods) to help students associate grammar patterns (Demirel 2004:44).

## **Suggestopedia**

This method was created by Georgi Lozanov, a psychotherapist who believed that through a positive "suggestive" state, students can learn better and faster. Therefore, he tried to make students feel comfortable in the class to avoid any possible psychological barrier that could weaken the learning process (Richards and Rodgers 2001:101). The role of the teacher is like a mentor who will constantly make sure his students feel in a positive state to learn the language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000:81). Dialogues are especially important to foster communication and practice pronunciation and grammar acquisition. Errors are considered positive and natural in the learning process.

## **Community Language Learning**

This method was developed by Professor Charles A. Curran. It was the first method in which learners are considered as clients, and the teacher acts as a counselor and translator (Demirel, 2004:44). The learners' interpersonal relations are promoted to

achieve a fluid communication through cooperation and a strong sense of community (Larsen Freeman, 2000:47).

### **Total Physical Response**

Professor James J. Asher designed this method (TPR) to help students learn a second language. He postulates that all human beings share a biological disposition to language acquisition. Therefore, the teacher is encouraged to act as a father to his students, as if they were his children. Commands and physical interaction stimulates and help students understand and practice the language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000:67). Once this stage is accomplished, learners are ready to emulate actions and reproduce language spontaneously. However, independent creative productions hardly ever occur given to the limitation of the method.

### **Communicative Language Teaching**

Also referred to as “Communicative Approach”, Communicative Language Teaching emphasizes communication as the main goal of language learning. CLT was conceived during the 1970s as a response to the great demand in learning English as a second language. Grammar was no longer seen as the starting point in language learning, but the communicative competence. Thus, dialogues in real life situations and oral production are promoted to allow students express themselves in different contexts (Cook, 2001:206). The process of learning is based on collaboration and participation between teachers and students. Consequently, the teacher provides learners with new opportunities to try and use the language. Resources include the practice of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) as they occur in real life, and the error treatment promotes awareness and re-construction.

During this time (70s-80s), new text books and teaching materials start to include literary texts in order to provide a real context for language learning. Literature broke away with the preconception that it should be studied apart, as an unsuited resource for language practice. From this period on, the inclusion of literary texts in the syllabus of the courses gave way to new methods of teaching.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **The Challenge of Literature in Teaching Methodology**

The study of literature has historically been characterized by a lack of unity and agreement regarding its didactic approach. Historical events, sociological reasons and different educational approaches have shaped the teaching of literature in the field of the Humanities, and it is not usually included in second language curriculum yet, despite literature is part of the syllabus of the university studies (Serrano Martínez, 1997; Garrido , 2001/2004). It is precisely this paradoxical situation what takes Miguel Angel Garrido to make the following statement (Garrido, 2001:18),

Y no deja de ser, entonces, paradójico y aún contradictorio, que una carrera dispuesta a formar futuros docentes no haya previsto, en ninguno de sus sucesivos planes de estudio, ni una sola materia, siquiera optativa, que ya dentro de la especialidad hiciera reflexionar a los alumnos y, en su caso, futuros profesores, sobre una cuestión tan compleja y espinosa como la didáctica de la literatura.

According to this, the teaching of literature is a relatively new area of knowledge (especially in Spain, with little recognition) which offers great interdisciplinary possibilities. The teaching of literature can be applied to almost all fields of studies and it fosters competent speakers, reflective readers, and efficient writers (Mendoza Fillola, 2003). Literature also contributes to character formation through critical and comprehensive readings (<http://www.bu.edu/education/caec/files/aboutchared.htm>). Therefore, the integration of literary texts in the syllabus of English as a second

language can be an asset for any educational system interested in the formation of competent individuals.

### **3.1 Critical Perspectives on Reading**

The aim of this section is to provide a historical background to explain the role that literature has played over the years within the academic sphere. This is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the present situation about the humanities in general and the teaching of literature in particular.

But, first of all, there are two questions that have always been a matter of discussion: *how can we define literature?* and *why should students read literature?* In the many attempts scholars and writers have made to define the term literature, none of them has truly accomplished to provide a definition as objective as to avoid any suspicious remark. A very simple but clear attempt to define the term is given by Helen Vendler in her essay “What We Have loved, Others Will Love” (1988). She explains that *“literature is a dense nest of cultural and linguistic meanings inaccessible to the casual passerby”*. She claims that teachers are responsible for promoting the pleasure of reading as a way to open doors to future debates and queries. In a way, she is invoking the teachers to see literature as a more natural human exercise, and as a fundamental step towards their teaching. She illustrates her thought with the following comparison: *“Just as a spoken language is absorbed by the ear, so written language has to be learned from the pages of writers”*. Therefore, that is just one of the many reasons why we should read. Additionally to the pleasurable activity of reading, the framing of its study gives the reader/student the chance to sense and make connections with other disciplines, other times and places... In short, literature is culture; and culture is what students seek for at school. And this very same idea is what has driven me to the initial question: what has happened to the humanities and literature over the time that our

students are less and less interested and knowledgeable about books? Let's see what was of literature in the past years, and what literature has become today.

Historically, social changes and evolution have always shaped the ideology of people, and consequently, their literature. Generally speaking, one can say that up to the 1960s, the world of literary scholarship was simple and clear<sup>2</sup>. Assumptions and perspectives were treated as part of a framework that held a paradigm. The classics were read and studied as universal and deep expressions of the human condition. When this paradigm underlying the literary study broke down by the end of the 1960s, questions about the role of the humanities and the function of literature started to rattle the grounds of the men of letters. In *Professing Literature*, Professor Gerald Graff provides a definition of what the educational system has been for the literary studies in relation to the academic disciplines, from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century throughout the 1960s. He states that “*A University is an accretion of historical conflicts that it has systematically forgotten*” (p.257). Thus, the study of literature appears divided from two “successive oppositions”: research investigators versus generalists, historical scholars versus critics, New Humanists versus New Critics, and so on... This recurrent process (according to Graff, 2007) started to regulate the study of literature, narrowing the boundaries of any other possible expansion. Students were taught according to their teachers' literary modes, and that provoked the student alienation from the subject matter. The lack of connection between theorists and the sociological context of the literary texts is what Graff claims as an error. He also emphasizes the fact that even though today when there is a peaceful coexistence among the different literary

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<sup>2</sup> Mendoza Fillola, Antonio (coord.), (1998) *Conceptos clave en didáctica de la lengua y la literatura*, Barcelona, SEDLL.

theoretical contributions, students feel confused among such a vast plural variety of arguments that only jeopardize their vision, without providing them with the tools for their own critical study. At this point, the question of how students should be taught literature also opens a debate among scholars and teachers. Although this issue will be analyzed later on in full detail, it is important to remark that as a cultural legacy, literary texts are subjects of alternative approaches which can be perceived as challenging conflictive rather than frustratingly confusing. Perhaps the most useful truth a student can learn is to understand the different interpretations a text can provide in relation to the world around him. The social context and ideology cannot be deprived from literary works as if “the humanities” worked independently. History, religion, philosophy, art... all of these disciplines should be taken into account when approaching a literary text.

An example of a similar proposal occurred in Germany after World War I, when a movement called *Kulturrekunde* (Stern, 1983:248) conceived the integration of history, literature, geography and language as a compelling corpus for an effective education. Later on, during the inter-war period, *Kulturrekunde* extended to the teaching of foreign languages proving to be a successful and recommendable practice.

The years of academic turmoil and theoretical production reached their highest level during the 1970s and 1980s with the advent of “theory” and the “culture wars” in the U.S.A. There are two levels of important changes: the intellectual movement and the sociological one. The intellectual movement found its roots through the new wave of Continental thought. The term “criticism” previously understood as a commentary on the craft of literary texts, taste and meaning, comes to a different context into the world of scholarship, to deal with analysis and speculation. New theoretical assumptions question hypothesis, often in a purely speculative undertaking. Theory becomes like philosophy, although it differs from philosophy in its skepticism. The theory of

literature starts by proposing doubts about most of the principles that had been the foundations of our opinions. Theory was fashionable and a matter of constant discourse. The sociological movement had previously started in the Universities, where feminism and the civil rights movements joined forces to protest for the political situation in the 1960s. Colleges and Universities increased their population more than double between 1960 and 1980. So, the years between the 70s and 80s were the years of the “tenured radicals” who, along with the Continental thought, emerged in the form new departments and fields of study in most of the universities. However, the lack of an interdisciplinary connection between departments and the dogmatism pre-established by professors, made it really difficult for students to acknowledge what they were learning. Students felt they were not part of the learning process and that would eventually draw them away from developing any critical perspective (Graff, 1987).

### **3.2 Literature and Education**

As it has been exposed before, the main difficulty that lies in the combination between literature and education appears in the teaching model that the educational institution has adopted in order to approach the teaching of literary texts. Such complexity was openly considered by Roland Barthes when he explained that the real education of a reader should be from a critical viewpoint, instead of dogmatizing about interpretations. For him, the setting of a definite relationship between teacher-student and the teaching of literature was not possible. The problem rising from institutions, where rules must be followed, seem to collide with Barthes’ basic principles of reading literature. However, Bordieu analyzes this issue and concludes that for a successful teaching of literature, the teacher should be fully aware of his social component in a reflexive analysis of his own preconceptions. According to Bordieu, the real importance of the teaching of literary texts lies in the sociological process of how it was

constituted, rather than in the different theories about interpretations. (Bourdieu-Wacquant. 1995: 24-72). The same emphasis on the sociological links that cannot be detached from texts is shared by Gerald Graff. In *Professing Literature*, Graff dissolves the barrier between the socio cultural appraisal and the literary theory, by arguing that a certain dose of philosophical realism should be linked between literary texts and life. In that respect, for Graff, teachers are the fundamental tools to reestablish a sensible contextualized teaching of literature without alienating his students from literary theory and its implications.

The Italian critic Remo Ceserani in his article “How to Teach Literature” reviews several historical models, some of them still present in secondary and superior education nowadays (Ceserani, 1986). In the first place, he considers the model derived from the humanist approach in which literature was read as a faithful testimony of the beauty, the truth and the good. It could only be appreciated by a selected number of readers who were in clear contrast with the majority of the population. These elite could read and appreciate the beauty of literature. In the second place, Ceserani exposes the historicist model that provides the reader with a complete account of historical facts, intellectual movements, culture and social changes. At this point, Ceserani wonders if any of these models are suitable for adolescent or college students who need a comprehensive education that promotes “el desarrollo amplio, creativo y libre del imaginario” (Ceserani, 1986: 92). He then proposes to return to the literary text itself, to discover through a close reading what the text can offer us, readers.

In relation to the historicist model of teaching literature, Miguel Angel Garrido argues that (Garrido, 2001:343),

El presunto fracaso de la enseñanza de la literatura (...) reside no tanto en la puesta en práctica de métodos errados como en la confusión manifiesta entre la formación literaria y el aprendizaje de la “historia literaria”. La literatura es, antes que

cualquier otra consideración, el texto literario; su enseñanza ha de ir, pues, encaminada al entusiasmo de descubrir la aventura de leer. El alumno aprenderá así que la literatura es vida, pero vida intensificada connotativa y simbólicamente a través del lenguaje; por tanto, habrá de ser fundamentación y adquisición de experiencias antes que acarreo de datos “sin sentido”. Éste sería el verdadero conocimiento y la adecuada finalidad, en la escuela, del hecho literario: descubrir, conocer e interpretar el mundo por medio de la creación literaria.

This situation has inspired some Spanish authors to write books questioning the approaches to the teaching of literature, its function and necessity within the university curriculum (Serrano/Martínez, 1997; Mendoza Fillola, 2003). Other academics go beyond the didactic concern, and deal with the basic questions of what, how and why to teach literature (Garrido, 2001), and others simply justify its inclusion in native and foreign language education (Romera, 1997). However, all of them share the same concern about the current situation within the academic world and the teaching of literature. In general, they appeal to the teachers and professors to change their mentality and start considering literature as a dynamic activity rather than a static accumulation of knowledge.

The cultural model that Ronald Carter and Michael Long propose include some of the most important aspects in the formation of an individual (Carter and Long, 1991:2),

Literature expresses the most significant ideas and sentiments of human beings and teaching literature represents a means by which students can be put in touch with a range of expression - often of universal value and validity - over an historical period or periods. Teaching literature within a cultural model enables students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space and to come to perceive tradition of thought, feeling, and artistic form within the heritage the literature of such cultures endows.

For Carter and Long, student participation in the reading process is an essential part of the “personal growth model”. To grow through literature implies to acquire a better comprehension of the world around us and how we function in that world. At that point, Carter and Long make a difference between the literature for study and the

literature as a resource (Carter and Long, 1991: 3-4). The study corresponds to the idea of knowledge *about* literature, and the resource goes with the concept of knowledge *of* literature. Literature for study includes the knowledge of the methods, theory and specific vocabulary to talk about literature. They understand this is necessary to be competent in philology studies in relation to the historical, social and ideological context. However, they regret the disconnection existing between this study and the knowledge *of* literature, as they expose in the following paragraph (Carter and Long, 1991: 3-5)

Knowledge *about* literature means accumulating facts about literary contexts, dates, authors, titles of texts, names of conventions, literary terms, etc. It can easily become knowledge for its own sake and does not automatically lead to a more responsive reading or to a fuller interpretation of a text. Courses which involve extensive *surveys* of literary history, and teaching methods which rely substantially on lectures, may help students to pass the required examinations but they do little to develop literature for the resources of the majority of individual students. Such methods of presenting literature are information-based and transmissive in operation with the facts or information transmitted to the student in a form to be remembered and conveniently recalled when required (usually for purposes of examination). There is usually little concern with how to use such information to read literature for oneself and to learn how to make one's own meanings. The outcome for students is that they come to rely on authorities *outside* themselves, whether in the form of the teacher or in the form of histories of literature or books of literary criticism. Students with good memories do well under such a system. (...) Knowledge *of* literature is perhaps better expressed in terms of pleasure and enjoyment rather in terms of the accumulation of facts, however valuable those facts may sometimes be. The teacher who wishes to impart knowledge *of* literature aims to impart personal pleasure in reading literary texts and is likely to select teaching methods which lead to active involvement in reading particular texts rather than to a passive reception of information about the texts.

Therefore, the teaching of literature is an essential part of education, not only for the vast amount of different knowledge that can offer students, but also as part of character education in the construction of well-formed individuals. In that sense, Kurt Spang believes that,

Por este motivo no debe faltar [la literatura] en ningún nivel de formación y debería ser acompañante permanente de cada uno. Estoy convencido de que una parte

de la miseria de formación y cultura que experimenta el mundo en estos momentos se debe a la falta de lecturas, sobre todo de obras literarias. Leer obras literarias significa, por tanto, además de saber navegar con conocimiento de causa en el propio idioma, hacer mundo de una forma cómoda y beneficiosa. La lectura nunca es un mero adorno o un vano pasatiempo prescindible, sino alimento indispensable, e irremplazable para la supervivencia del individuo, de la sociedad y de la cultura. Una sociedad que no lee se condena automáticamente al anquilosamiento y al lento suicidio<sup>3</sup>

This reflection will take us to the following section where the importance of literature as a means to develop critical thinking and ethical values is closely related to the new educational plans that intend to promote human values and competence in life.

### **3.3 Literature and Character Education**

The development of character education has historically been and still is an essential part of the education of students in general (Berkowitz and Fekula, 1999; Dalton, Russel and Klein, 2004; Lickona, 2004; Savater, 2005). Educators, thinkers and theorists from Aristotle to Lickona have supported character development as an integral part of educational goals. According to Guariglia<sup>4</sup>, between the years 1920 and 1960 there was a progressive disappearance of the teaching of a normative ethics, which caused a crisis in the education of human values within the school sphere. It will be at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, with the works of John Rawls and Jünger Habermas when a new renaissance in ethics would shake the grounds of character education at schools. As Savater explains, in Spain, after the years of Franco, the teaching of human values was something only religious institutions would care for; so the lack of a coherent education in ethics was an alarming fact.

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<sup>3</sup> Spang, Kurt, (1999) *Hablando se entiende la gente*, Madrid, Iberoamericana.

<sup>4</sup> Guariglia, Oswaldo y Savater, Fernando. Online resource:  
<http://www.educ.ar/educar/site/educar/reflexiones-sobre-etica.entrevista-al-doctor-en-filosofia-osvaldo-guariglia.html> ; [http://www.analitica.com/bitbliblioteca/savater/education\\_etica.asp](http://www.analitica.com/bitbliblioteca/savater/education_etica.asp)

“...la educación está ligada íntimamente a la ética; ésta es una cuestión más que todo de educación, no es una cuestión de dedicarse a hacer grandes reflexiones entre las personas adultas, que si no han sido educadas en los valores fundamentales, es muy difícil que luego vayan a descubrirlos por sí mismas cuando están cayéndose de viejas.”<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, other educators, philosophers and scholars have openly declared that education embodies an ethical undertaking (Berkowitz, 2002; Carr, 2005; Spang, 1999) which cannot be avoided or ignored by the institutions responsible of education.

So, the two questions that this chapter aims to answer are: *why is it important to consider character education as a fundamental complement for academic assessment? How can literature help students become better thinkers?*

### **3.3.1 Why do students need character education?**

Character education is one of the most important tasks schools, families, and communities have to deal with in order to provide a good climate in our multicultural society.<sup>6</sup> Character continuously develops throughout the demonstration of our ethical and moral qualities in our critical responses, attitude and behavior towards other people. To deny, ignore or simply leave this responsibility in hands of educators without any common guidance is what has proved to be ineffective in the present educational system.<sup>7</sup> Thus, it is important to enable students to build and develop character and competence in order to construct a solid social framework with competent citizens.

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<sup>5</sup> Savater, Fernando. Discurso en la Universidad Simón Bolívar. Online resource:

[http://www.analitica.com/bitbliblioteca/savater/education\\_etica.asp](http://www.analitica.com/bitbliblioteca/savater/education_etica.asp)

<sup>6</sup> See William Damon's *Greater Expectations: overcoming the culture of indulgence in our homes and schools* (Page 143). Online resource: [http://books.google.com/books?id=-NpszMQNF7MC&pg=PA288&lpg=PA288&dq=greater+expectations,+damon&source=bl&ots=jiNzJF6Gg&sig=G6VdmHKEM6ojXi0G7noEyFBOQvE&hl=en&ei=4SXvTdy0JomohAfh49ScCQ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CCKQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=-NpszMQNF7MC&pg=PA288&lpg=PA288&dq=greater+expectations,+damon&source=bl&ots=jiNzJF6Gg&sig=G6VdmHKEM6ojXi0G7noEyFBOQvE&hl=en&ei=4SXvTdy0JomohAfh49ScCQ&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=3&ved=0CCKQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q&f=false)

<sup>7</sup> Fernando Savater (1997). *El Valor de Educar*. Ariel. Barcelona.( See pages: 32, 47, 67)

One of the misconceptions and common mistakes associated with the idea of character education and human values derives from the institutional belief in avoiding dogmatism and doctrine at school. Therefore, educational institutions fear to establish a common core in character education and promotion of human values, even though – paradoxically- it is demanded by the annual Study Plans and Programs.<sup>8</sup> Dogmatism and doctrine has little to do with a constructive education in character and human values. The basic principle for any kind of education is to “*help people become smart, and to help them become good*” (Lickona, 1993). Of course, character education is “*broad in scope and difficult to define*” (Otten, 2000), but it conveys ethical knowledge, reasoning and emotions which, eventually, is what makes us individuals and prospective educators. As it is clearly stated in the educational program designed by La Junta de Andalucía, the following principle considers,

El proyecto de la OCDE denominado Definición y Selección de Competencias (DeSeCo) define la competencia como la capacidad de responder a demandas complejas y llevar a cabo tareas diversas de forma adecuada. Supone una combinación de habilidades prácticas, conocimientos, motivación, valores éticos, actitudes, emociones y otros componentes sociales y de comportamiento que se movilizan conjuntamente para lograr una acción eficaz.<sup>9</sup>

According to this statement (for further details on the competences related to the arts and human values, visit the web site; PDF, pages 13-15) the educational institution is responsible for guaranteeing an integral formation of students. In 1987, Ernst L. Boyer<sup>10</sup> wrote a report entitled “ College: The Undergraduate Experience in America”,

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<sup>8</sup> See “Las Competencias Básicas”, Junta de Andalucía-

[http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/www/portal/com/bin/europa/Contenidos/Documentos/bo\\_rrador\\_ed\\_ciudadania\\_02/1149769624442\\_marco\\_y\\_descripcion\\_comp\\_basicas\\_6\\_jun\\_06.pdf](http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/www/portal/com/bin/europa/Contenidos/Documentos/bo_rrador_ed_ciudadania_02/1149769624442_marco_y_descripcion_comp_basicas_6_jun_06.pdf)

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[http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/www/portal/com/bin/europa/Contenidos/Documentos/bo\\_rrador\\_ed\\_ciudadania\\_02/1149769624442\\_marco\\_y\\_descripcion\\_comp\\_basicas\\_6\\_jun\\_06.pdf](http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/www/portal/com/bin/europa/Contenidos/Documentos/bo_rrador_ed_ciudadania_02/1149769624442_marco_y_descripcion_comp_basicas_6_jun_06.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.worldcat.org/title/college-the-undergraduate-experience-in-america/oclc/648325324?title=&detail=&page=frame&url=http%3A%2F%2Fbooks.google.com%2Fbooks>