No “burning desire” to study Italian literature: Motivation and procedural display in a third-year Italian course

By

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Abstract

Reading literature in a foreign language (FL) requires a learner to move beyond decoding simple meanings and phrases, to a system which privileges analysis and interpretation of multiple meanings. Furthermore, it involves the development of a more global understanding of a text's significance, which entails participation in a complex social practice, situated in cultural, linguistic, and historical traditions (Johnson, 2003). As undergraduate FL students approach the study of literature for the first time, they make the crucial transition from language study to literature study, and often find themselves unprepared to read literature and at odds with curricular goals. In this dissertation, I examine how a group of third-year Italian students attributed value to literature study, and how their values, practices, and participation in third-year Italian courses affected their access to the Discourse (Gee, 2008) of literary texts.

In this qualitative study, I employed ethnographic methods and used discourse analysis and a grounded theory approach to examine interviews with students and professors, class observations, student reading observations, tutoring sessions, study group participation, and primary documents over the course of two semesters, the first of which was used to pilot the methods and research questions. During the course of the study, students constructed a value system for Italian literature study, based on what the teacher prioritized in class and in graded assignments, while simultaneously maintaining their individual classroom identities and peer relationships. They generally considered Italian literature reading to be irrelevant to their grade, and sometimes inconsequential or detrimental to their language proficiency. With the exception of one student, whose perspective is highlighted, these students' lack of intrinsic motivation with regard to

Italian literature study appeared to be a key factor in their lack of engagement with literary texts.

Furthermore, my analysis of classroom interactions draws on the notion of procedural display (Bloome, 1989), which is described as the culturally-grounded completion of a lesson through cooperative display by both teachers and students. Student participation in two Italian literature classes served to accomplish the enactment of the lesson, but did not necessarily indicate substantive learning and textual engagement. Instead, it is proposed that student participation in these FL literature classes was grounded in the social architecture of the traditional FL literature classroom, as students created and maintained diverse social identities within a predictable context. In this way, students' participation in third-year Italian literature courses effectively limited their engagement with the text, and as a result, their ability to analyze Italian literature.

Although this study is not meant to be generalizable, it raises important issues with regard to the alignment of student and professorial goals and motivations in FL literature learning, teaching, and curricula.

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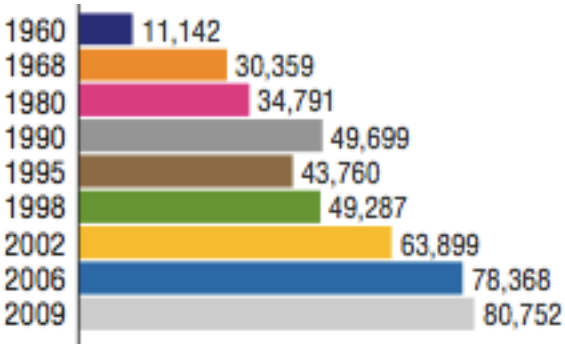
Chapter 1: Introduction

Enrollment

Italian faculty at US colleges and universities have long been concerned with issues of enrollment and promotion of the Italian major. Although there has been a relatively steady increase in enrollment in introductory (first- and second-year) Italian language courses over the past 50 years (see Figure 1.1 below), comparatively few students continue studying Italian at the advanced level (defined by the MLA report as foreign language study beyond the second year).

Figure 1.1. University-level enrollments in Italian courses in selected years (1960-2009). *Taken from Furman, Goldberg, & Lusin (2010, p.15).*



In fact, a 2009 MLA survey found that Italian had the highest ratio of beginning-level enrollments to advanced-level enrollments among the top 15 most commonly taught languages, which indicates that a relatively small proportion of Italian language students continue studying Italian beyond the four-semester language sequence. For every eight undergraduate enrollments in introductory Italian courses, only one student enrolls in an advanced Italian course (Furman et. al, 2010, p. 7).

This begs the question: Why do so few study Italian at the advanced level, despite high enrollment in beginning Italian courses? There are several possible explanations. First, it is likely that many students enroll in beginning levels of Italian to fulfill a language requirement. Thomas' (2010) study on undergraduate students' rationale for foreign language study suggests that this is the primary reason most students enroll in a foreign language class, regardless of the language. The relatively high enrollment in introductory Italian courses may therefore be explained in part by university language requirements.

Additionally, during my experience as a teacher of introductory Italian, several students told me they had chosen to study Italian due to a negative experience studying Spanish in high school, and therefore they had decided to start over at the university with a comparatively "easy" language that was similar to Spanish. Moreover, a few of my students claimed that Italian had been recommended to them by their academic advisors as "an easy A." This perception of Italian as an "easy" language was also reported anecdotally in Worth (2006) as a potential factor in artificially inflating lower-level enrollments among students who have no intention of continuing beyond the required courses. Therefore, the decision to enroll in Italian may simply be a pragmatic choice in order to most easily and efficiently complete the language requirement for another degree program.

One additional likely explanation proposed by Rifkin (2012) for why so few students continue language study beyond the four-semester language sequence may originate in the focus of upper-level foreign language (FL) courses. According to his national survey of university-level FL degree programs and students, Rifkin (2012) found that approximately fifty percent of FL degree programs were clearly focused on FL literature. He also concluded that a much smaller proportion of the student respondents of his survey were interested in FL literature study compared to the percentage of programs whose focus was FL literature. This disparity between the stated goals of FL students and their university departments may provide further rationale for the drop-off in enrollment at the upper levels of FL study.

Motivation for the study

I recount the following personal story from my own experience to illustrate what I believe to be some common concerns among nonnative students of Italian literature. These concerns include: misalignment of departmental goals and student expectations, misconceptions about students' reading capabilities, and students' lack of literacy training, especially with regard to canonical literature.

I was first exposed to the Italian language as a Mormon missionary in northern Italy from 1997 to 1999. Like many enthusiastic language learners, I worked to master my Italian language skills during this time and fell in love with the language, culture, and people of Italy. In the spring of 1999 I completed my assignment in Italy and returned to the US. Upon my return, I found myself in a situation similar to many young adults: I was halfway through a degree program that no longer interested me. While searching for a new major as an undergraduate at Brigham Young University, I began teaching first-year Italian as an undergraduate Teaching Assistant. Teaching Italian gave me greater confidence in my own language skills, and I began to consider how I might transform my Italian language proficiency into a career. So in my junior year of college, I officially enrolled as an Italian major. What I didn't understand at the time was that a degree in Italian meant a degree in Italian *literature*, and although I liked to read, I was not terribly interested in the study of literature.

Despite this obvious conflict between my interests and my chosen degree path, I thought I could be successful in an Italian literature program because my language skills were excellent. However, there were many factors that I had not taken into consideration. My language skills were based primarily on communicative competence and grammatical accuracy. I was especially proficient at conversational Italian, and worked hard to be more accurate in my writing. However, I approached literature as if it were merely an exercise in decoding the meaning of a grammatically challenging text. I was able to perform well in my undergraduate Italian literature classes by speaking often in class discussions, even though my contributions were usually only tangentially related to the texts we were discussing. I learned about Italian literature primarily from class lectures, the Internet, and secondary sources, although I actually read very little of the literature I was assigned in my classes.

Upon completing the bachelor's degree in Italian literature, I reasoned that since I had been successful in an undergraduate Italian literature program, I might be equally successful in a graduate Italian literature program. I considered myself well prepared, primarily because of my good oral proficiency in Italian. Yet, after a short time in a graduate Italian literature program, I realized that my professors' expectations were different from what I had anticipated. In preparation for each class meeting, it was expected that I uncover subtle meanings and understand the significance of each text in relationship to a canon of literature that was unfamiliar to me, in addition to reading and understanding pertinent literary criticism. It wasn't long before I realized that I could no longer "get by" using plot summaries and Internet resources. Along with my classmates, I was now expected to read—and comprehend—hundreds of pages of readings in Italian for each class meeting, a feat that seemed impossible.

I struggled to get through the overwhelming amount of readings for my Italian literature classes each week. When I found it impossible to complete a reading due to time constraints, I often skimmed it or resorted to an English translation, sometimes sharing a single library copy with other nonnative graduate students of Italian. Reading English translations was a practice that I felt conflicted about, yet it was common among my graduate student colleagues, who were faced with the same impossible situation as myself. Native and nonnative speakers were expected to accomplish the same amount of reading in our courses, and I felt woefully inadequate. I often felt frustrated to put in so many hours trying to understand the readings and still not be able to participate in class discussions about the literature I had read, despite my excellent speaking proficiency.

A few factors contributing to my feelings of inadequacy include a lack of training in FL reading, unfamiliarity with literary criticism, little exposure to nonstandard language, and a shortage of interest in literature. Propelled by frustration and unpreparedness, I quickly lost confidence in my ability to succeed in the field of Italian literature.

This experience has fueled my interest to better understand how students of Italian literature learn to participate successfully in their chosen field of study. My experience is not unlike the experiences of many other students in FL programs and I decided to focus on this situation in hopes that my research might improve the experiences of others who study FL literature.

My interest in this area is also fueled by a more global discussion about the future of the humanities. Both academia and popular media have pronounced a crisis in the humanities, as programs and departments in humanistic fields have recently seen drastic cuts in colleges and universities, both private and public. One common criticism of the humanities is that they fail to adapt in order to remain relevant in a quickly changing global society. The Modern Language Association (MLA) has addressed some of the profession's concerns in a series of reports and papers, calling for a reformation of university curricula (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, 2007; MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, 2008; Modern Language Association of America, 2009). My research aims to elucidate some of the problems students encounter in FL literature study, in hopes it might support the continuing relevance of FL literature study.

Purpose of the study

This dissertation explores the experiences of students enrolled in third-year Italian courses with a focus on literature in a well-established Italian language and literature program. The present investigation explores what students valued in Italian literature study and aims to identify where their value systems, practices, and experiences might be misaligned with the goals of departmental curricula and FL literature study in general. A better understanding of FL students' development will enable language department faculty to understand how to better support the continuing development of their students' FL literacy skills. Ideally, this will aid these students as they approach the study of FL literature.

This research hopes to inform planning and curriculum in the FL literature department in light of the 2007 MLA report and to encourage administrators to give attention to the development of the transcultural and the translingual skills inherent in FL literacy (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages). Furthermore, this investigation of literacy practices and values among FL literature students may also add to the body of research that critiques the language-literature gap in FL curricula. By describing the experiences and struggles that students encounter in the third year of the FL curriculum this project hopes to provide a better understanding of these students' situation and encourage FL faculty to better address the educational needs of this population through curriculum evaluation and development. The conclusions of this study call for a broadening of perspectives with regard to upper-level undergraduate FL curricula, including an increased focus on translinguistic and transcultural development beyond the traditional four semesters of language study.

Contribution to the field of SLA

This study contributes to the field of second language acquisition (SLA) in several ways. First, given the paucity of qualitative, ethnographic research on the continuing development of language skills in the (third- and fourth-year) FL literature curriculum, it helps fill this gap in providing a rich contextualization of this particular environment. Second, FL reading research has primarily investigated word- and sentence-level decoding using quantifiable variables such as fluency and speed. Much attention has been given to vocabulary retention and the effectiveness of variables such as instruction strategies, learning strategies, and the role of affect in L2 reading. The research reported in this dissertation observes reading instead from a post structural, constructivist perspective, looking more in depth at the social and literacy practices involved in FL literature study.

Last, very few published studies have applied the framework of procedural display to the study of foreign language and literature. Procedural display can be defined as culturally grounded participation in an activity, in this case the FL literature classroom and FL literature study. I consider the application of this concept to the research context to be one of the primary innovations of this project.

The chapter that follows is a review of relevant published literature, and is meant to contextualize this study. The research presented in the next chapter situates the present research by focusing on the bifurcation of university FL departments and on FL literacy. I then present the theoretical framework for this dissertation study, which includes a sociocultural conception of literacy (Gee, 2008) and a critical, political take on education (Freire, 1970/2005).

Chapter 2: Situating the study

I think they're doing what they think is the best to provide a course on this topic. But it's almost like you just walked off the edge of this cliff and now you're free falling into this class of advanced literature. It's a weird, indescribable phenomenon and change from what you studied prior. (Amanda, Initial Interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

Introduction

In the quote above, Amanda used a vivid metaphor to portray her participation in third-year Italian courses, whose focus is primarily literature, comparing it to the helpless lack of control one would experience after falling off a cliff. The present investigation aims to better understand the experiences of Amanda and her classmates as they began a foray into the study of Italian literature in third-year Italian courses at a large, public university.

In this review of literature, I first set the stage for the context of this dissertation study by illustrating the bifurcation of the undergraduate foreign language (FL) curriculum, since this framework lends meaning to the analysis in future chapters. I then describe recent research and theories on how to bridge the gap between the language and literature missions of university FL curricula. The final section of this chapter presents the theoretical framework that guided this inquiry.

In order to create a cohesive review of literature, it is important to provide working definitions of a few important concepts. In this dissertation, in order to be more concise, I refer to university foreign language and literature departments as FL departments, just as I also refer to university foreign language and literature curricula as FL curricula.

This investigation focuses on reading, and although I employ the concept of literacy, which traditionally includes both reading and writing, this review of literature limits itself to literacy research and theories that are directly pertinent to reading.

I choose the term *literacy* as opposed to *reading* in order to clearly associate this study with the social aspects of literacy research, as opposed to the more cognitively and linguistically oriented genre of inquiry that describes FL reading. Even though the term *literacy* has traditionally been used in reference to first language (L1) development, for the purposes of this investigation I refer to research and theories about both L1 and L2 (second or additional language) literacy, inasmuch as they apply to the FL context. Although I initially expected to focus on literacy through a critical, sociocultural lens, it became clear during the course of this investigation that functional literacy was also germane to the context of third-year FL study since students' reading proficiency was inadequate for the literary texts they were assigned.

Last, since the participants' relationships with literature play an important role in this project, it is important to provide a working definition of what is meant by the term *literature*. Ellis (1974) defines literature in terms of its lack of functional and temporal associations, and I adopt this definition to describe the parameters of literature in this study since it accurately describes the kind of canonical literature privileged in the Italian curriculum: "Literary texts are defined as those that are used by the society in such a way that *the text is not taken as specifically relevant to the immediate context of its origin*" (p. 44, original emphasis). Therefore, according to Ellis, literature includes those texts that remain relevant across time and space. Informational texts, journalism, advertisements, and popular media are not considered literature for the purposes of this inquiry, since they are not generally considered to be part of the canon of Italian literature, and are therefore not prioritized in traditional Italian FL curricula. The participants involved in this project interacted primarily with canonical Italian literature, which falls under the description of literature provided by Ellis (1974).

The language / literature divide in university FL study.

Since this analysis seeks to describe the experience of third-year undergraduate FL students, it is appropriate to include some background on the traditional trajectory of university students' formal language learning. Furthermore, because the struggles in this inquiry are closely tied to the trajectory of university FL learning, I review some common critiques of traditional university FL curricula, particularly the language / literature divide and the communicative approach to FL teaching.

Among the students I observed during this research, Amanda appeared to struggle the most with the new demands of her third-year Italian courses, which concentrated on Italian literature. In her own words, presented at the beginning of this chapter, she used the metaphor of falling off a cliff to describe her experience transitioning from Italian language courses to third-year Italian courses focused on Italian literature. This metaphor conveys her perception of losing her sense of safety and control, as she began to navigate the uncharted waters of Italian literature study. During the same interview, Amanda described some of the key disparities between her previous Italian language classes and her "Introduction to Italian literature I" class, which was the research context of the pilot study:

> All previous semesters have been TAs [Teaching Assistants]. TAs would make sure everything was understandable. [A professor]'s not going to have directions for how to read a literature piece. It's not something that can be controlled. The previous classes have been more guided, you feel like you're in fifth grade, they're holding your hand. This course is more like a college-level course, it's not elementary whatsoever and you're definitely held accountable to understand things outside of class. In the previous classes if you didn't know a word you could say, "*Cosa vuol dire*?" [What does it mean?] and they would say the word and you'd be like, "Oh, OK I get it." Now it's like a very eloquent explanation of, "Well this is what this means in reference to Dante's family or Dante's true love." It's just a whole different breadth of information compared to the basic, "Here's how you form the structure of a verb in the subjunctive." Yeah, [the professor's] teaching style is different because of the material. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

In this excerpt, Amanda alluded to several of the key differences between the language curriculum and the literature curriculum in university FL departments. Her characterization of her TAs' teaching style as "holding your hand" echoes the situation described in Worth (2006) as infantilization in the Italian language classroom, where knowledge is basic, and learning is carefully guided by TAs. Amanda contrasted her experience in Italian language classes with the "college-level" demands of her Italian literature course, where she all of a sudden felt accountable for learning material on her own. Even though she largely neglected her reading assignments outside of class, as will be discussed in Chapters 3, 6, and 7, she perceived that the kind of information privileged in her literature class was more complex, and therefore, difficult to figure out on her own.

Amanda's complaint highlights one frequent critique of university FL departments, namely the lack of continuity between the lower-level language curriculum and the upper-level literature curriculum. The language / literature divide in FL departments has been described and addressed by numerous scholars (Byrnes, 2001; Frantzen, 2001; Kern, 2002; Maxim, 2006; Maxim et al., 2013; Paesani, 2011; Scott, 2001) and has increasingly become a topic of debate, thanks to recent reports sponsored by the MLA. The 2007 MLA report critiqued the structure of university FL departments, calling for greater integration of their dual missions. This report called for a transformation of language departments to reflect "a broader and more coherent curriculum in which language, culture, and literature are taught as a continuous whole" (MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages).

Although a myriad of responses to the MLA report have been published in a number of books and scholarly journals, it is generally accepted that despite an increased attention to reconciling the language / literature divide, FL departments themselves have seen little change (Zyzik & Polio, 2008). There are several reasons which can explain why FL departments have found it difficult to adapt to the recommendations of the 2007 MLA report. First, although it is easy to advocate for change, it is much more complicated to choose an appropriate action to achieve the desired effect. Curricular change of the nature suggested by the 2007 MLA report requires dedicated collaboration among colleagues, a clear vision for the goals of the degree program, structured and revised professional development for graduate teaching assistants, and a great deal of effort (Allen 2009; Porter, 2009). Secondly, a widespread financial crisis sent markets plummeting in 2008, and this has affected funding in education, caused the shrinking or closure of FL programs across the country, and lessened the availability of resources to allocate for the restructuring of FL curricula, even though curricular change might actually increase the financial viability of FL departments in the long run. However, this shortage of financial resources, combined with a variety of other factors, including failure to allocate resources to pedagogical training, varying perspectives within programs and departments, and loosening of requirements (and thereby enrollments) for FL study, have contributed to the difficulty of implementing the ideas outlined in the 2007 MLA report.

One of the primary criticisms of FL programs put forth by this report is the division between the language and the literature missions of university FL departments. This issue was a topic of debate long before the 2007 MLA report was published. The table below, adapted from Maxim (2006), describes several of the structural differences between the dual missions of language education and literature education in FL departments, several of which were mentioned by Amanda in the previous excerpt from her initial interview. The bifurcation in FL departments outlined in Maxim (2006), and described by Amanda, is one of the key issues addressed in the 2007 MLA report.

Table 2.1. Principle Differences Between Language Curriculum and Literature Curriculum. *Adapted from Maxim (2006, p. 20).*

Language curriculum	Literature curriculum
Everyday language	Academic, scholarly language
Interpersonal communication	Analysis, formal expression, content-focus

TA-taught	Professor-taught
Language: spoken, short, simple, form-focused	Language: written, complicated, literary, original, naturalistic
Language acquisition: scaffolded, considered a step-by-step learning process	Language acquisition: may or may not be addressed, often considered to be completed

Maxim listed five characteristics that mark the separation of language and literature within a FL department. They are: the distinction between *who* teaches language (graduate student TAs or instructors) and *who* teaches literature (professors), an emphasis on *spoken* language (language curriculum) versus *written* language (literature curriculum), *short, simplified* texts (language curriculum) compared with *complex, literary* texts (literature curriculum), a *step-by-step approach* to language acquisition (language curriculum) rather than an erroneous *assumption that language acquisition is complete, finished and adequate* (literature curriculum), and finally, the *form-focused* nature of language learning versus the more *naturalistic* learning environments found in literature courses. He claimed that these characteristics describe the fundamental differences between the two missions of most FL and literature departments (Maxim 2006). Nance (2002) further described students' perplexity in approaching the FL literature classroom, where, in direct contrast to the communicative language classroom, knowledge is usually transmitted to a student audience, who are expected to passively absorb it.

Whatever the nature of the causes of this division in FL curricula, most scholarship does not seek to dissolve the two categories. For example, Scott and Tucker, editors of a volume dedicated to this very argument, state that, “we are interested instead in respecting differences while seeking unity in mission” (2001, p. xiii). Similarly, Donato and Brooks (2004) claim that, “The development of advanced language proficiency and the knowledge of literary traditions and analysis are not dichotomous educational goals. Rather, learning language and literature study are mutually constituting and supporting experiences” (p. 184).

Despite the general lack of large-scale change in response to criticisms of the language / literature divide, a few FL programs have chosen to radically restructure their curricula in an effort to foster congruency of the dual missions of their departments (Hoffman & James, 1986; Valdés, 2000). Hoffmann and James found a possible solution in blurring the line between language and literature classes, and between language and literature teachers. They found that after four semesters of FL study, students were generally unable to describe in detail, hypothesize, express and defend opinions, or carry out many other functions important to the study of literature. These researchers also realized there was little way of gauging student progress throughout the curriculum. Hoffmann and James subsequently restructured their department at Hunter College according to the ACTFL proficiency rating system, to reflect the true competencies of students after the traditional two years of language training. They reorganized literature classes to allow for differences in the linguistic preparation of students within a class, in order to challenge each student appropriately (Hoffman & James, 1986). Along similar lines, the German department at Georgetown University, spearheaded by Heidi Byrnes, has been reorganized around the principle of learners' literacy development from the first semester of language learning through upper-level courses, and provides the most prominent example of curricular restructuring (http://german.georgetown.edu/scholarship/curriculumproject/; Byrnes, 2001). For most FL departments, a radical restructuring such as that implemented by the German department at Georgetown University is not feasible (Frantzen, 2010).

Since large-scale changes in curricula are improbable, a variety of ideas have been proposed in an attempt to address their dual language and literature missions. After a careful review of literature on the language / literature divide, I have identified three general approaches that have been more widely adopted by university FL departments in response to the bifurcation of curricula:

1. Integration of literature from the early stages of FL learning.
2. Recognition and continuing support of language acquisition in upper-level FL literature curricula.
3. Introduction of a bridge course after the 4-semester language sequence.

The next section of this chapter explores each of these strategies, as they have been reported in published research.

Literature from the beginning of FL study.

The incorporation of literature in language classes has been experimented and studied for many years, with varied goals and results (Alvystad & Castro, 2009; Barrette, Paesani, & Vinall, 2010; Byrnes & ERIC, 1998; Frantzen, 2002; Jouini, 2008; Kramsch, 1985; Nance, 2010; O'Donnell, 2009; Paesani, 2005; Schultz, 2002; Stewart & Santiago, 2006; Thompson, 2008; Weist, 2004).[1] Much of this body of research promotes the incorporation of literature in beginning levels of language study under the guise of authenticity of language materials (Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000, pp. 567-568). Hiram Maxim's research presents one prominent example, which strays from the traditional inclusion of canonical literature, in favor of a popular novel in translation. Maxim (2002, 2006) reported on the integration of a full-length, translated romance novel in a first-semester language course. Though he did not discuss the long-term effects of this approach on student motivation or proficiency, his student participants responded positively to the experience and scored as well on departmental exams as students who followed a traditional form-focused program (2006, p. 30). The goal of the structured, text-centered pedagogy proposed by Maxim was to increase student literacy in the FL.

Increased literacy is not the only potential benefit associated with the inclusion of literature in the FL classroom; Scott and Huntington (2002) studied the role of literature in teaching about the target culture (C2), and specifically, which benefits could be gained by studying authentic literature. They consider cultural learning to be a necessary component of linguistic competence, and thus a crucial element of FL learning. Their empirical inquiry demonstrates that a careful integration of literature in beginning-level FL classes can foster the development of C2 competence and the ability to understand literature, perform literary analysis, and raise intelligent questions about material presented in the target language (Scott & Huntington, 2002, p. 629).

Scott and Huntington (2007) investigated how to best create an environment that would promote the interpretive mode of communication (National Standards, 2006) when analyzing FL literary texts in beginning-level FL classes. They found that students were better able to interpret challenging literary texts in a teacher-moderated, student-centered classroom which did not necessarily restrict itself to exclusive use of the foreign language. They wrote, “In our view, exposure to literary texts can serve to motivate novice learners to think critically—to engage in the interpretive mode—about compelling aesthetic and cultural issues” (p. 5).

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[1] See Paran (2008) for an extensive review of the use of literature in FL learning.

Furthermore, Barnes-Karol (2010) confirmed the notion that written texts (including literature) can also support speaking ability, which is usually privileged in beginning levels of language study:

> Conversation will be at best superficial if it grows only out of putting words together in sequences to satisfy immediate communicative needs without an appreciation of the vast cultural horizon out of which engaged communication emerges. Essential to entry into that cultural horizon is reading texts, both literary works and other types of written discourse important in the target culture. (p. 90)

Thus, incorporation of authentic texts and literature in the FL classroom both provides an opportunity for culturally rich experiences and supports the general communicative goals of the language classroom.

Although he agrees about the potential benefits of including literature in the beginning levels of FL study, Benson (2002) critiques the means by which literature is often incorporated in lower-level language courses. He criticized the pedagogical practice of professor-fronted presentation of literature in FL language courses for prioritizing the transmission of information rather than the development of skills. He argued that lecturing on literature rather than training students in literary interpretation deprives novice students of the opportunity to develop their ability to independently discover meaning in FL texts. He sustains that in order to enable students to develop the kinds of interpretive skills necessary in FL literature courses, these skills themselves must be fostered in the beginning levels:

> Certainly we want our upper-level and graduate students to be well versed in the socio-historical context of the writer and the text as well as in theories of literary criticism. In the first few language courses, however, a focus on these aspects prior to (or as a substitute for) helping learners discover what texts mean often gets in the way of open, imaginative reading and the simultaneous language learning that develops along with it. (p. 76)

Thus, Benson claimed the need for a guided, inductive approach to FL learning in the lower levels. He maintained that even advanced readers need pedagogical support in order to learn to interpret and transform meaning according to their own social and cultural perspectives.

Continuing focus on language in FL literature curricula.

Another branch of inquiry focuses instead on the need for continuing linguistic training beyond the traditional four-semester university sequence, when students' language skills are assumed to be adequate for enrollment in upper-division literature courses, by virtue of their completion of lower-division language courses. Elizabeth Bernhardt (1995) wrote about the insufficient language proficiency of many students who find themselves in FL literature classes, still grappling with the basic structures of the target language. These students are poorly served by the structure of FL literature courses and by the FL literature curriculum in general. She argued that students require continuing linguistic support in FL literature classes, rather than what she observed to be the norm of “teaching texts” rather than individualizing instruction.

In fact, one of the issues that contributes to the difficulty of addressing continuing language development in upper-level courses is the wide range of language proficiencies of students who enroll in upper-level FL courses. It is not uncommon to find both native and nonnative speakers, sometimes both graduate and undergraduate levels, enrolled in the same FL literature course. Bernhardt (1995) reported that the same requirements are often expected of all students in a course, regardless of their language proficiency. This is perhaps most clearly visible in graduate FL education, where a first-semester nonnative graduate student and a second- or third-year native graduate student might be expected to complete the same readings and assessments, even though their language proficiency and content knowledge vary greatly. This contradiction also applies to the undergraduate curriculum, where students come to the FL literature classroom from a variety of backgrounds, including high school language programs and study abroad. In FL literature courses, typically composed of 15 or fewer students, Bernhardt sees the failure to individualize instruction as an unreasonable practice (1995, p. 5).

Polio and Zyzik (2009) carried out research in introductory Spanish literature classes and found that, although both instructors and students were aware of students’ need for continuing language development, this need was not overtly addressed in their classes. Similarly, in her monograph on FL literature teaching, Nance (2010) claimed that in her experience, the expectations of students in FL literature courses were inconsistent with the students’ preparation in lower-level courses. Finally, Eigler (2009) critiqued the lack of attention to language acquisition in the FL literature curriculum, since “literary texts do not automatically provide the opportunity for fostering translingual and transcultural competencies” (p. 26).

Researchers have suggested several paradigms for the integration of language development beyond the four-semester language sequence. A few of these include a focus on stylistics and literary analysis (Berg & Martin-Berg, 2002; Weber-Fève, 2009) or humor in literature (Russo, 2006), a student-centered approach that incorporates technology (Kraemer, 2008), and a renewed emphasis on communication in the upper-level curriculum (Erikson, 2009; McLean & Savage, 2001).

The bridge course.

Many scholars and language instructors have proposed that the inclusion of a “bridge” course between the FL language and FL literature curricula might be a solution to the gap between language and literature curricula and to prepare students for upper-level FL literature courses. Proposals for a bridge course generally argue for the development of literacy skills in an intermediate-level third-year course, which should ideally precede FL literature courses (Allen, 2009; Godev, 1997).

Margaret Haggstrom (1992) made an early case for bridge courses based on her observations about students’ lack of preparation for their first semester of FL literature study. She argued that this skill is often under-developed in students as they approach their first FL literature course since the primary goal of language courses is not to prepare students for literary analysis (Haggstrom, 1992, pp. 7-8). In fact, she reported that students often have neither the linguistic nor the analytic skills necessary to succeed in FL literature classes. Both she and Francesca Savoia proposed a bridge course as the most logical solution to this problem (Haggstrom, 1992; Savoia, 2000, 2010).

Savoia attempted one such course, creating a "Theatrical Workshop" in which students worked on diction, storytelling, improvisation, writing dialogues, and analysis and performance of dramatic texts (2000, p. 512). Although no formal measures of evaluation such as data or student evaluations were provided, Savoia considered this course to be successful. She wrote,

> I believe that the students, in the course of this "Theatrical Workshop," were made aware...of certain fundamental characteristics of literature, and even of basic differences existing between genres (fiction, narrative, drama, poetry). The aim of the course, that is to increase the students' understanding of Italian language and culture, and to enhance their communicative skills as well as their appreciation of literary texts, was fully reached: the course improved the students' ability to both interact effectively in the target language, as well as read some of its literary treasures quite discerningly and fruitfully (pp. 516-7).

It should be noted, however, that although Savoia presents an overwhelmingly positive perspective, this is the author's opinion, and no evaluative or comparative data were given to support it.

The course I observed during the dissertation study, entitled "Writing Workshop," would be considered a bridge course of the sort described above, since it was intended to prepare students for the challenges associated with literature study. The professor of that course, Michele Boldini (pseudonym), was aware that his students' language proficiency was inadequate for Italian literature study, and intended his course to be a sort of preparation for future courses in Italian literature (Initial interview, February 2012). As will be discussed in Chapter 5, Boldini[2] chose to avoid addressing language structures overtly in class, in an effort to provide a sort of immersion experience for his students. Many of the students enrolled in the Writing Workshop were also concurrently enrolled in Italian literature courses, and were not aware that this class had been meant as a preparation for Italian literature study. It is actually quite common for FL departments to allow contemporaneous enrollment in bridge courses and FL literature courses, simply because requiring completion of bridge courses first would delay graduation and discourage students from completing the FL major. Therefore, I consider this nonlinear trajectory of students' FL education to be a prevalent feature of undergraduate FL study, since their enrollment choices are often governed by a number of external factors, including convenience and enrollment in other courses, rather than students' proficiency or preparation.

The relationship between communicative competence and literacy.

In recent years, the (lower-level) language curriculum has emphasized a communicative approach to FL learning, employing a focus on functional comprehension and meaning-making, and using the target language to communicate in realistic situations. In a communicative FL curriculum, learning is considered to be a step-by-step process in which learners progress along a somewhat linear trajectory from beginning to advanced proficiency and careful attention is given to learners' developing knowledge base. However, the communicative approach has been criticized for its tendency to prioritize communicative competence over critical thinking skills (Kramsch, 1993;

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[2] I have chosen to his call the participating professor in this research by his last name only, since this is how students most often referred to him outside of class.

Paesani, 2011). Allen and Paesani (2010) sustained this notion, and also critiqued the communicative approach for its de-emphasis of reading and writing (p. 122).

The type of language privileged by the language curriculum is much more simplistic, colloquial, and narrow than the kinds of language necessary for studying FL literature. In fact, the student participants in Yáñez Prieto's (2010) findings saw little connection between the spoken language they had studied in their Spanish language classes and the complex, "anarchic" language in their Spanish literature classes (p. 63). Along these lines, Halliday (2009) summarized the differences between written language and spoken language in two principal ways. First, written language is more lexically dense than oral language, yet grammatically more straightforward. Conversely, oral language is generally impromptu and involves less planning, which results in a more simple vocabulary, but a complex and grammatically intricate syntax (pp. 74-77). Second, written language is not anchored in the moment of its utterance, like spoken language, and should be able to bridge space and time (Halliday, 2009, pp. 70-71). This description of the linguistic features of written language echoes Ellis' (1974) definition of literature presented at the beginning of this chapter.

In their analysis of language use, Halliday (1978) and Hymes (1971) argued that sentences are too narrow a field to be considered a complete unit for linguistic analysis. According to their work, meaning can be better uncovered in literature by going beyond the sentence-level to include the larger context of the text (Kern 2000, pp. 18-19). Therefore, students who are only exposed to discourse at the word- and sentence-level in FL study are largely unprepared to approach paragraphs and extended discourse. Similarly, Swaffar, Arens, and Byrnes (1991) critiqued the practice of FL instruction for its focus on word- and sentence-level meaning, which does not prepare students to approach the kind of connected discourse found in FL texts. They pointed out the importance of prioritizing text-based thinking and learning in the FL classroom (Swaffar, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991, p. 29).

Compared to the simple, direct language found in a communicative (lower-level) FL classroom, the language privileged in the (upper-level) FL literature curriculum is intentionally multifarious, opaque, diverse, ambiguous, and often nonstandard. FL literature is meant to be interpreted and analyzed to reveal subtle meanings, which are often not readily apparent. Although some attention may be paid to linguistic devices in the literature itself, issues regarding students' difficulty in reading linguistically challenging texts are often not addressed directly in the FL literature classroom. In fact, even though professors may be aware of their students' inadequate proficiency, their ongoing language acquisition is rarely addressed in the FL literature curriculum (Bernhardt, 1991, pp. 181-185).

In the dissertation study, I found it to be the case that professors were aware of students' insufficient language proficiency, even though they did not overtly address it in their classes. For example, Professor Boldini, whose class I observed during the dissertation study, claimed to be aware that many of his students' Italian language proficiency was not strong enough to understand the readings he assigned. His response to the linguistic deficiency of his students was to create an immersion experience in his classroom by not allowing contributions in English, rather than addressing specific issues of language acquisition directly. Indeed, it almost seemed as if there were a conscious, unwritten understanding between students and professors that some students' language proficiency was inadequate for reading their FL texts. This idea is elaborated in Chapter 7.

Several scholars have reported students' reluctance to read literature in a FL, especially poetry, irrespective of language proficiency. Kramsch (1993) proposed that this may be due to a disconnect between a largely learner-centered communicative curriculum in the lower levels, and a focus on literature in the upper levels of the curriculum (p. 130). Melin (2010) and Schultz (1996) suggested that poetry, in particular, has often been avoided in language teaching because it doesn't follow standard grammar and syntax rules, and it is considered to be archaic, esoteric, and difficult to understand (Melin, 2010, p. 349). In an investigation about L1 poetry education among American high school students, Federici (1989) found that students felt insecure about reading poetry (p. 612). Arnold's (2009) findings confirm that although students may enjoy reading in both their native language and a FL, some are more leery of reading literature in a FL (p. 351).

Recently, some researchers have suggested that extension of the National Standards for Foreign Language Learning to the undergraduate curriculum could reshape university FL learning to broaden students' language capacities (Abrate, 1999; Arens & Swaffar, 2000; Arens, 2009; Arens, 2008; Larson, 2006; McEwen, 2009; Schultz, 2009; Swaffar, 2000; Tucker, 2000). However, the National Standards have not yet been fully integrated into post-secondary language curricula (Allen, 2009).

As suggested by the research reported in this section, I found that not enough attention was paid to learners' FL literacy development after the four-semester language sequence. This may explain some of the difficulty students face when approaching FL literature in their third year of FL study. It may also explain some of the misalignment I observed among my participants between their priorities and value systems, and those of their professors and the curriculum, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Literacy

Reading literature in a FL requires a learner to move beyond decoding simple meanings and phrases, to a system which privileges analysis and interpretation of layered meanings. Furthermore, it involves the development of a more global understanding of a text's significance, which entails participation in a complex social practice, situated in cultural, linguistic, and historical traditions. As undergraduate students approach the study of FL literature for the first time, they make the crucial transition from language training to literature study, and often find themselves unprepared to read literature and at odds with curricular goals. The abruptness of the change of pace that many students face at this juncture was illustrated by Amanda, one of the participants in this study, who compared her experience to "falling off a cliff" and "freefalling" (Initial Interview, Pilot study, October 2011).

I began this inquiry with a focus on literacy, and this framework for understanding reading was in the forefront of my mind as I prepared and conducted this investigation. Literacy can be broadly defined as the ability to read and write, has traditionally focused on L1 and immigrant learning, and has been linked to societal status and education level. Much of the published research on literacy comes from a cognitive or mental perspective, in which existing knowledge plays a central role in meaning making. Schema theory, or the schematic organization of knowledge in the mind, is one preeminent cognitive perspective on literacy that focuses on the mental organization and appropriation of knowledge (Kern 2000, p. 32). Competence arises from being able to make sense of this knowledge by understanding contexts and relationships.

In recent years, the field of New Literacy Studies has reconceptualized the notion of literacy as a sociocultural practice, diverging from the measurable reading and writing skills generally intended by a lay definition of literacy (Street, 2010, p. 77). Brian Street (1984, 2010), along with noted researchers Shirley Brice Heath (1983) and David Barton (2007), developed the notion of literacy events and literacy practices. Heath (1983) described literacy events as occasions in which a text is the focus of participants' interactions (p. 386). Street situated Heath's notion of literacy events in what he called literacy practices, which are "the broader cultural conception[s] of particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing in cultural contexts" (2010, p. 79). Thus, Street and his colleagues view literacy in terms of participation in a time-, region-, and culture-specific discourse.

From a New Literacy Studies perspective, literacy development entails learning to participate in a specific discourse whose characteristics are specific to genre, language, and context. This view on literacy learning could be compared to the development of pragmatic competence, wherein competence in a particular language includes the ability to interact appropriately within its established norms. Similarly, one who displays literacy in a certain kind of discourse would be capable of interacting within the norms of that discourse. As I embarked on this research, I planned to look at how students' literacy practices with regard to Italian literature affected their participation in the discourse of Italian literature study. However, during the pilot study I realized that the student participants often disregarded reading entirely, and I therefore focused the analysis of the dissertation phase on understanding the driving forces behind their participation, or more frequently the lack thereof, in Italian literature study.

In his monograph entitled *Literacy and language teaching*, Kern (2000) parsed the notion of literacy into several strands. He suggested that FL literacy is generally conceived of as correctness and knowledge of language-specific conventions in lower-level curricula, and is not considered an analytical exercise until the upper levels of FL study. These traditional perspectives on lower-level literacy tend to exclude contextual factors, reducing literacy to a measurable outcome and failing to acknowledge the variability inherent in the numerous processes that make up literacy.

Kern (2000) argued that this static perspective on literacy doesn't work because it 1) "reifies literacy as an end product of instruction," 2) fails to consider contextual factors, and 3) emphasizes a prescriptive view on language acquisition, in conflict with the goals of the communicative approach (pp. 3-5). He provided his own definition of literacy: "the use of socially-, historically-, and culturally-situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts" (2000, p. 16). Similarly, Norton and Toohey (2002) claimed that "How a language learner interprets or constructs a written text requires an ongoing negotiation among historical understandings, contemporary realities, and future desires" (p. 115). The common element in these two conceptions of literacy is their focus on contextualization.

Kern (2000) further develops the notion of literacy in terms the ability to contextualize when reading:

> [Literacy] entails at least a tacit awareness of the relationships between textual conventions and their contexts of use and, ideally, the ability to reflect critically on those relationships. Because it is purpose-sensitive, literacy is dynamic—not static—and variable across and within discourse communities and cultures. It draws on a wide range of cognitive abilities, on knowledge of written and spoken language, on knowledge of genres, and on cultural knowledge. (p. 16)

This perspective considers literacy to be dynamic, based on a combination of cognitive abilities, knowledge, and relationships, and is especially relevant to FL literacy development. When learning to read in a FL, learners must develop the ability to contextualize their readings, and must therefore learn about the contexts in which they have been positioned and understood.

Kern (2000) described the literacy inherent in (and pertinent to) FL curricula in two ways: first, in terms of "the transmission of cultural knowledge and the development of aesthetic appreciation, literary sensibility, and a cultivated spirit" (p. 3). This view on literacy was described by Flower (1990) as receptive literacy, or the ability to process information, facts, rules, and instructions. Receptive literacy is often called functional literacy, as it enables one to function in society.

The second type of literacy Kern (2000) identified as relevant to FL curricula, critical literacy, is the development of analytic skills and critical thinking (p. 3). Flower (1990) (as cited in Kern, 2000, p. 33) conceptualized critical literacy as, "the ability to think about and through written texts: to read not only for facts but also for intentions, to question sources, to identify others' and one's own assumptions, and to transform information for new purposes." Patrikis (2003) proposed that it is precisely this process of interpreting a text that presents the greatest challenge to FL literature students: "The primordial difficulty of every student [is] to move beyond token-for-token processing to analysis and the understanding of the multiple meanings of a text, to progress from mere decoding to rich interpretation" (p. 2). The analysis in this dissertation, especially in Chapter 7, focuses on a critical perspective on FL literacy, even though the student participants were more likely to focus on their own receptive literacy as they struggled through linguistically challenging texts.

Reading culture and reader response theory.

The notion of "reading culture" is particularly relevant to understanding how literacy functions in a FL literature curriculum. Johnson (2003) defined reading culture as "a social rather than an individual phenomenon, one that develops over time, with deep roots in the traditions of a given society" (p. 9). He used this term to describe the inherent contextual grounding necessary when reading literature from a specific time or place.

In the context of this inquiry, it is important to take into consideration the differences between the reading culture in an Italian context versus that in an American context. Scholars of Italian literature have been producing commentaries and academic debate on Italian literature for hundreds of years, and reading literature is therefore deeply rooted in an established, authoritative tradition.

The reading culture in the American context, on the other hand, embraces the individuality that is characteristic of American culture as a whole, and has been strongly influenced by Rosenblatt's (1938/1995) concept of reader response theory. Rosenblatt (1938/1995) asserted that, "Contextual information is no more than 'useless baggage' if the student is not trained to discover and create personal meanings in literature" (p. 57). Thus, this theory prioritizes a reader's unique perspective and understanding of a text over an authoritative canon of literary criticism and contextualization of literature. Bloome, Harris, and Ludlum (1991) described reader response theory as a sociocultural response to text, in which each reader brings their own history, experience, and knowledge to bear in reading a particular text. Since each person brings a unique set of experiences and understandings to the reading of the text, it is expected that readers' responses to the same text will be quite varied (p. 15).

Given this understanding of reader response theory, its prevalence in American reading culture, and its relative absence in Italian reading culture, it is easy to see how American students might not be adequately prepared for a foray into Italian literature study, which is often grounded in a very different sort of culture. Although scholars' and professors' approaches to Italian or American literature study will vary greatly in practice, there is a definite disparity between American students' literary training and the expectations of a FL program, which is grounded in a literary culture that valorizes a different set of ideas from those to which American students may be accustomed.

FL literacy development.

The investigation presented in this dissertation focuses on how literacy functions in the third year of a FL curriculum. Empirical research in FL literature study generally falls into the following categories: L2 literature pedagogy and teacher development (Bernhardt, 2001; Crane, Liamkina, & Ryshina-Pankova, 2003; Mills, 2011; Mills & Allen, 2007; Swaffar, 2000), the relationship between L1 and L2 reading ability (Fecteau, 1999; Linde Lopez, 2008), interactional discourse about literature (Donato & Brooks, 2004; Mantero, 2002, 2006; Yuksel, 2008), and the function of literature in supporting advanced L2 learning (Barnes-Karol, 2010; Byrnes & Sprang, 2003; Berg & Martin-Berg, 2002).[3]

Research on FL literacy typically focuses on the undergraduate curriculum, often centered at the language / literature divide, where there has traditionally been a distinctive mismatch between curricular expectations and student preparation (Byrnes & Sprang, 2003; Kern, 2003; Swaffar, 2003). Swaffar (2000) claimed that the FL curriculum often fails to provide targeted instruction in reading strategies, which has led to a prevalent deficiency in student preparation to read literature: "Relatively few teachers of any language teach textual strategies, the very nuts and bolts of sophisticated literary interpretation, to unlock the meanings of words and sentences" (p. 130). Swaffar (2000) further suggested that students are unprepared for the linguistic nuances inherent in literary texts, such as tone, register, and discourse structure (p. 130).

Noting that no studies had previously been conducted in L2 reading involving FL learners enrolled in literature courses in universities in the United States, Fecteau (1999) conducted her own research which explored the relationship between L1 and L2 reading skills among students enrolled in an introductory French literature course (p. 476). Fecteau found L1 reading recall and inferencing ability to be significantly correlated to the same skills in L2 reading (pp. 484-486). However, she also discovered no significant relationships between L2 proficiency and L2 reading recall and inferencing skills, among participants with similar L2 preparation (1999, p. 488). Linde Lopez's (2008) results also showed that L2 competence could not be used to predict L2 reading competence (p. 195).

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[3] See Paesani & Allen (2012) for a detailed review on the interesection of language, literature, and culture in the upper-level curriculum.

Together, these findings suggest that communicative competence, which is the focus of most (lower-level) university FL curricula, may not necessarily be correlated to literacy skills, and therefore, may not prepare students for FL literature study.

Similar research supporting the correlation between L1 and L2 literacy has been conducted recently in ESL reading among high school students in the United States. Menken's (2008) investigation into high school level bilingual ESL programs found that students who continue to develop literacy skills in their L1 performed better on standardized tests in English than those students whose L1 literacy was not supported by the curriculum. However, despite recent studies that confirm the links between L1 and L2 literacy, FL departments and programs have failed to support the development of these skills in their students.

Donato and Brooks' (2004) and Mantero's (2006) contributions are among the few studies to investigate the FL literature classroom. Their research focused on learners' developing speaking proficiency in the FL literature classroom, and examined primarily classroom discourse and uptake. Donato and Brooks (2004) found the focus of FL literature classrooms to be on content (literature), with language serving as a facultative skill. Furthermore, Mantero (2006) argued that dialogue centered around the FL text itself supports the development of literacy skills in FL learners.

Bernhardt (2001) aptly described the state of FL literature learning by illustrating the disparity between what students are asked to do and what these students actually know how to do. She highlighted the fact that when students struggle with unfamiliar linguistic and cultural concepts in FL texts, which cause comprehension difficulties, this struggle is often interpreted by instructors to signify a need for more grammar instruction (pp. 196-197). Bernhardt suggests, however, that grammatical knowledge is not the key to facing the plethora of challenges inherent in a FL text. In research on the challenges inherent in reading FL texts, Chu, Swaffar, and Charney (2002) found that both topic and rhetorical conventions influenced high school EFL students' reading comprehension. Traditional language instruction, however, generally does not focus on rhetorical strategies, such as how language might be organized to emphasize or contrast ideas, and thus FL students often lack this key linguistic preparation, which might help them uncover meaning in FL literature.

Theoretical framework

In this section I outline Gee's perspective on sociocultural literacy and Freire's ideas on political consciousness in education. These two theories provide the framework for much of the analysis in this dissertation.

Sociocultural perspectives on literacy

Much of the recent research in second language acquisition has prioritized a sociocultural perspective. Lev Vygotsky's work in child development provides a basis for social perspectives in language acquisition research. Vygotskian theory proposes that literacy "is not the personal, idiosyncratic property of an individual, but rather a phenomenon created by society and shared and changed by the members of that society" (Kern 2000, pp. 34-35).

Many scholars have envisioned literacy through a sociocultural and a poststructural lens. James Gee looked at the social practices involved in literacy, focusing on the Discourses to which they belong. He defined (capital-D) Discourses as "ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities (or 'types of people') by specific groups of people" (2008, p. 3). In this view, individuals must master a Discourse to gain full access to a particular group. In terms of FL literacy development, I argue that this entails learning to interact with FL literature in a way that is similar to those who are considered literate in the FL community. Gee explained the relationship of literacy to social practice as follows:

> [First,] if you want to know how reading and writing work, don't look at them directly and in and of themselves. Rather, look directly at specific social practices in which specific ways of writing and reading are embedded. Furthermore, look at how specific ways of reading and writing, within these social practices are always integrally connected to specific ways of using oral language…
>
> [Second,] literacy is not first and foremost a mental possession of individuals. Rather, it is first and foremost a social relationship among people, their ways with words, deeds, and things, and institutions. Literacy is primarily and fundamentally out in the social, historical, cultural, and political world. It is only secondarily a set of cognitive skills, which subserve literacies as social acts in quite diverse ways in different contexts (pp. iii-iv)

This perspective on literacy as a Discourse embedded in social practice (rather than a cognitive skill) serves as the primary theoretical framework for understanding and identifying literacy in this analysis. Gee extended his perspective on literacy to describe what a sociocultural approach to the acquisition of literacy might look like:

> A way of reading a certain type of text is acquired, when it is acquired in a "fluent" or "native-like" way, only by one's being embedded (apprenticed) as a

> member of a social practice wherein people not only read texts of this type in this way, but also talk about such texts in certain ways, hold certain attitudes and values about them, and socially interact over them in certain ways. (2008, p. 44)

The excerpt above provides an excellent model for apprenticeship into a field of study, and as I planned this research, this notion of apprenticeship in FL literature education was also at the forefront of my mind. I anticipated that the way students approached both their Italian literature courses and their Italian literature texts might shed light on why Italian literature failed to engage their interests. These concepts of literacy, apprenticeship, and Discourse are reflected in the research questions for this investigation, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Political consciousness in education.

The second main theory that guided analysis in this dissertation research was the notion of *conscientização* [political consciousness] proposed by Paulo Freire in his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire critiqued traditional models of education using the economic metaphor of a banking system:

> The scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. (1970/2005, p. 72)[4]

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[4] Originally published in Portuguese in 1968, translated in English in 1970.

Freire’s portrayal of the traditional model of education, perhaps most apparent in university classes based on lectures and standardized exams, can easily be extended to the FL literature classroom. FL literature is often presented to students in university courses through a teacher-centered lecture, with little input or interaction on the part of the student. Fecteau (1999) described the incompatibility of this method of instruction with students’ learning, positing that “the traditional ‘transmission model’ of literature teaching does little to foster direct engagement with the text or to develop students’ literary competence” (p. 475). According to this transmission model of literature teaching and learning, students are expected to reproduce the historical, cultural, and linguistic facts presented by the teacher, in order to succeed in their university course. Although this model of learning may not be characteristic of FL literature instruction in all institutions and contexts, it is often the method of formal instruction employed at the beginning and intermediate levels of FL literature study. Only later, in the last stages of apprenticeship into the field of FL literature, comprised of the final years of graduate education, are students expected to produce original, interpretive, reflective thought about the literature they study.

Freire proposed a take on literacy that is grounded in both context and individual interpretation, and suggested that critical reflection on how language represents our world is a key part of literacy. Therefore, literacy itself can be considered a form of political consciousness leading to critical examination of power structures and relationships in society. He described the dialectal relationship between literacy, context, and self:

> Reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world.... In a way, however, we can go further

> and say that reading the word is not preceded merely by reading the world, but by a certain form of writing it or rewriting it, that is, of transforming it by means of conscious, practical work. For me, this dynamic movement is central to the literacy process. (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 23)

Therefore, in Freire's view, literacy involves much more than appropriating meaning to words and phrases. It involves a revolving examination of the text and the culture that produced it. Therefore, literacy can be considered both:

> "critical" in the cognitive sense of Flower, involving the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information and ideas presented within the textual system; and (2) "critical" in the social sense of Freire, involving evaluation of the textual system itself in relation to societal ideologies and values: a stance that involves problematizing of both textual and social realities. (Kern, 2000, p. 37)

This Freirean take on literacy and education provides the principal frame for the data analysis that will be presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

Conclusion.

In this chapter, I have situated the present inquiry among those who critique the lack of cohesion between the second and third years of FL study for its negative influence on the literacy development of FL learners. The research in this dissertation is informed by a sociocultural perspective on literacy, and the importance of learner involvement in the creating of meaning, as proposed by Freire's model of political consciousness in education.

The following chapter will describe a semester-long pilot study which was conducted immediately prior to the dissertation research.

Chapter 3: Pilot study

Introduction

The main goal of the pilot study was to test the research questions, the methods, and the analysis to be used for the dissertation study, which will be elaborated in greater detail in Chapter 4. The participants in this pilot project were similar to those in the dissertation project, which took place during the following semester. They were undergraduate students of Italian literature enrolled in third-year Italian courses, as defined by their university curriculum. The three research questions[5] that guided the pilot study were: 1) What do advanced students of Italian literature value in literary texts and how do they construct this value system?; 2) What are the literacy events and practices employed by advanced students of Italian literature to access and create meaning in a literary text?; 3) How does participation in a beginning literature course affect advanced students' access to the Discourse[6] of an Italian literary text?

In this chapter, I describe the context of this pilot research, and introduce the three focal student participants and their professor. It is important to note that two of these focal participants, Jared and Amanda, also participated in the dissertation phase of this study.[7] Next, I briefly respond to the research questions, before presenting two thematic sections. The first thematic section investigates the focal participants' practices and attitudes in reading Italian literature, and the second examines Amanda's value system with regard to Italian literature learning in general. This chapter concludes by evaluating the research questions and methodology employed in the pilot chapter, and explains the resulting modifications for the dissertation phase of this research.

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[5] These research questions are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4, along with the subsequent revisions made to them during the dissertation study.

[6] Gee (2008) defines Discourse, with a capital "D" in simple terms as "ways of being in the world," or "socially situated identities" (p. 3). The notion of Discourse was described in further in Chapter 2.

[7] The other focal pilot participant, Holly, completed the requirements of the Italian major during the pilot project, and was not enrolled in Italian courses during the dissertation phase.

Description of the pilot research setting

The pilot study included 22 students, one professor, and one tutor[8] who participated in an Introduction to Italian literature I course, covering Italian literature from roughly the medieval period to the Enlightenment, during the Fall 2011 semester. The students who participated in data collection were all enrolled full-time at a large research university, referred to in this dissertation as Big State University (BSU), and had successfully completed at least the equivalent of four semesters of Italian language instruction. Several had participated in study abroad or taken conversation and culture classes beyond the four-semester language sequence prerequisite for enrollment in Introduction to Italian literature I. At least one student had completed a graduate-level seminar in Italian literature prior to enrolling in this class. Most of the enrolled students had either declared an Italian major, or were planning to pursue either a major or a minor emphasis in Italian literature. None of the students were native speakers of Italian, although a few students in the class had learned some amount of Italian in their homes, and could be loosely considered heritage learners of Italian.

The table below summarizes the methods employed in the pilot phase of this research. Detailed descriptions of the methodologies employed in both the pilot and the dissertation studies can be found in Chapter 4.

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[8] The tutor was not involved in the class itself, but met regularly with one of the focal student participants, Amanda, who invited me to observe their tutoring sessions as part of this project.

Table 3.1. Table of methods for pilot study (September 2011-December 2011)

Method	Time period	Content
Professor interview (initial)	Sept 2011	- teaching experience - description of current course - expectations of students - importance of curriculum in literature study Audio recorded
Class observations	Sept 2011-Dec 2011	Video recorded
Focal student interview (initial)	Nov 2011	- background characteristics - how students prepare readings for class - importance of curriculum in literature study Audio recorded
Reading observations	Nov 2011	Video recorded
Primary documents	Dec 2011	- syllabus - class emails and teacher/focal student correspondence - focal students' readers - focal students' exams and assignments
Confirmation checks with professor and focal students	Dec 2011	Audio recorded

Professor Maria Ferraro.

The professor[9] of Introduction to Italian literature I, Maria Ferraro (pseudonym), was a professor at BSU, and had been teaching there for just a few years. She had taught all levels of Italian language before being hired, but had never taught Italian literature before her current position. Her students addressed her by her first name, Maria, and that is how she will be referred to in this research as well, in order to reflect the way in which students' addressed her.

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[9] The tenure status (as well as other important descriptive details such as native speaker status) of the professors described in this research is purposely not included here in order to protect these participants' identity.

Her enthusiasm about literature was obvious, and it was clear to students that she enjoyed the readings she presented in class. During an interview, Maria described how she saw the importance of literature in an academic system, which increasingly favors science and math: "Science may save the world, but poetry will save the world's soul" (Initial interview, Pilot study, September 2011). She felt grateful to have been educated in Europe, where she claimed to have received a more thorough education in literature than is generally provided in US schools.

Maria had received no formal training in teaching literature, although she had attended university workshops on language teaching and panels on literature teaching at scholarly conferences whenever possible. She said that her teaching style had been strongly influenced by the examples of her own professors, both positive and negative. She claimed that teaching was a common topic of conversation amongst her friends, and that she considered her friends' experiences and ideas important to her own formation as a literature teacher.

During her first few years as a university professor, Maria had found the need to modify the expectations she had of both undergraduate and graduate students, something which appeared to be a point of conflict for her. When she started teaching literature, her expectations were much higher, but she had since lowered them considerably based on her observations about her students. Maria described her expectations, and how they had changed, in an interview at the beginning of the semester:

> It also has to do with my expectations of the work that students do at home, because I always expect them to have read the text, to have gone online, to have read the extra materials I've suggested. And then I became aware that is not the

> case either. There was a lot of, I don't know, disappointment, to be honest, but I'm dealing with it. I'm still dealing with that actually. So that is, I guess, the main thing I would say. My approach to teaching has changed with respect to the situation. I tried to adapt to the situation. I tried to have them adapt to my situation, but that is very hard so I'm just trying to walk the line (Initial interview, Pilot study, September 2011).

Maria went on to say that it wasn't only students' class preparation that disappointed her, but she was also surprised at students' lack of background knowledge. It seemed to her that students were more interested in the easy entertainment of lowbrow action movies than the aesthetic and intellectual stimulation derived from poetry. Maria continued to struggle to find a balance between student interest and preparation in literature, and her own expectations.

Introduction to Italian literature I class.

The class I observed was held in a room with three long tables. Maria stood at the front of the class, next to an overhead projector that she rarely used. She conducted her class in a traditional lecture format, and the majority of class time was spent discussing the assigned literature in great detail. Her class was conducted entirely in Italian. For each reading, Maria began with some general display questions, to evoke students' knowledge about the context of the literature. She would then slowly read each line and clarify any difficult parts by paraphrasing them in modern Italian. She frequently asked students to volunteer the meaning of difficult words to the class in an attempt to evoke student participation, but most of the time no one would respond to her questions which were directed to the whole class. Maria often left long, uncomfortable pauses in her lecture, as she waited for a student response. When no one volunteered, she would often try to scaffold the question by providing a hint, followed by another long pause. Occasionally, a student would attempt to provide a definition or explanation, but oftentimes they were not able to provide an acceptable answer. In the end, Maria would almost always provide the answer or definition herself.

Maria also tried to evoke student participation by dividing the students into groups in class based on where they were sitting, and assigning each group a section of the reading to present to the rest of the class. She would then give students 20 minutes to discuss their portion of the reading in these small groups before presenting it to the class. As students worked in small groups, she would circulate around the room to monitor their work and answer questions. Many students asked questions during this time, primarily about the meaning of unfamiliar words in their texts. I observed that a few groups focused on the assignment during class, while the majority of these groups spent the time chatting in English, discussing their texts only when Maria was near enough to hear them. As these groups later attempted to summarize their section of the reading for the class, Maria would ask each group leading questions, to fill in important information the students often missed.

Although I requested a syllabus several times, I was never able to actually get one from either the professor or the students. Maria told me that she had posted a syllabus on the class course management website, but neither I, nor the students, were able to locate an electronic copy. Of the three focal students, only one claimed to have the syllabus, but she did not refer to it regularly. At the end of each class period, Maria would announce the reading assignment for the next class meeting, and most students would rely on this information given in class for their preparation, rather than the reading schedule outlined in the syllabus.

Class assignments included an in-class midterm exam, a final take-home exam, two brief biographical assignments on Dante and Boccaccio, and a poetry reading at the end of the semester. Brief student presentations on self-selected topics were also scheduled throughout the semester.

After observing the class for several weeks, I recruited three students to serve as focal participants for this pilot study: Holly, Jared, and Amanda (pseudonyms). As focal participants, these students agreed to participate in data collection procedures outside of the classroom, including interviews, observations of their reading of course materials, and providing their class materials for use as primary documents in this research. I chose these three students in an attempt to represent a variety of perspectives, based on my observations about their participation in class and their interactions before and after class with other students.

Holly.

Holly was in her senior (last) year at the university, and was triple majoring in German, History, and Italian. She had recently taken the LSAT and was in the process of applying to prestigious law schools all over the country. She was a full-time student, and worked part-time on campus. Holly was an officer in the Italian club, and worked closely with the faculty advisor, Maria, who also happened to teach the Introduction to Italian literature I course.

Holly initially chose to attend BSU because of the positive reputation of the German department, since she had studied German for several years in high school and had planned to continue. She enrolled in an introductory course in German literature during her first semester at BSU and also enrolled in beginning Italian language, primarily due to personal interest. Even though Holly didn't anticipate using Italian language or literature in the future, she decided to major in Italian because it didn't require too many additional classes. After taking the first two semesters of Italian language, she was comfortable enough with her proficiency to skip the third semester, and enroll directly in fourth semester Italian. This allowed her to begin enrolling in upper-division courses one semester earlier than her cohort. In her fourth semester at BSU, she enrolled concurrently in classes in advanced composition and conversation, introduction to Italian linguistics, and the second half of the two-semester sequence of Introduction to Italian literature classes. The following year, she enrolled in a graduate-level literature seminar on renaissance literature, and then spent a semester abroad in Italy.

Although Holly was enrolled in Introduction to Literature I, it was, in many ways, a review for her. She was glad it worked out for her to take this course after having more exposure to Italian literature, rather than taking it directly after fourth-semester Italian. When asked why she was taking this course, she said, "I've always wanted to read some of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio in the original Italian. It's a requirement [for the Italian major] but I would have taken it even if it wasn't, especially with Maria teaching it. I really like her" (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011).

Holly described her Italian proficiency as very good, even if she admitted that she sometimes struggled with speaking and claimed to feel most comfortable reading and writing in Italian. She identified her biggest challenges in reading literature to be the archaic language and at times the sheer quantity of reading, although she said the quantity of reading in this Introduction to Italian literature I course was not a struggle.

Since Holly had already taken several FL literature classes, she felt she knew what to expect going into Introduction to Italian literature I that semester. When she signed up for the course, she had expected class readings to consist of difficult medieval and renaissance texts, and explained that she had been interested in reading these important works. She reported her experience in this class as enjoyable and productive in helping her learn about Italian literature. About her professor, she said, "I think [Maria] does a really good job of kind of walking us through things. She's very, very patient and I think that's helpful too. She asks us questions that are designed to help us get to what the author is saying. And I think that's helpful" (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011). Holly believed her reading proficiency had improved somewhat during the semester she was enrolled in Maria's class. She described this increase in proficiency as an overall decrease in the amount of effort it takes her to read and understand written Italian.

In the classroom, Holly sat towards the front of the room. She very rarely missed classes, and volunteered to speak in class more often than most students. Before and after class, Holly would often speak with her neighboring classmates about topics not related to Italian literature. Maria would occasionally speak to Holly briefly before or after class, regarding Italian club matters. One day, I heard Maria say "*bravissima*" (very good) to Holly at the end of class as she returned her graded midterm exam, although I did not hear Maria offer praise to any other student in the class.

Holly was one of a couple students who kept a laptop out and open on her desk during class lectures, even though she often covered the keyboard with her text. She would occasionally look up a word in an online dictionary during class and she took notes often during class, both directly in her text and in a separate notebook.

At the beginning of the semester, I had formed an assumption that Holly read all assigned texts before class, based on her participation in class and her comments to me. However, I later discovered this was not always the case. For example, one day, after Maria divided the class for small group work, I noticed Holly chatted in English about plans for the weekend with her group during the 20-minute preparation time. When we met the next day for a reading observation, she said she had only briefly skimmed the passage before class. During our meeting she read the section she had been assigned more carefully, and referred to an English translation online to be sure she had understood. I noted that she did not read the entire text, but only the section her group had been assigned to present. Despite this observation, I still believe she read more consistently and more carefully than most of her classmates, since she was often prepared to offer more substantive comments on the literature during class than her classmates.

Jared.

I had originally intended to ask a different male student in the class to participate in my research, since I had observed him viewing translations of poems on his laptop during class and found that intriguing. Because of my position in the back corner of the room, I couldn't see him very well, so I didn't have a clear picture of what he looked like. As it turned out, this other student was often absent, so much so that I mistook Jared for him, and mistakenly invited Jared to participate in my research. This mistake turned out to be fortuitous because in the end, I found Jared's perspective to be quite interesting, and was glad that he was willing to participate in this research. In addition, he decided to continue in the dissertation research the following semester.

My first impression of Jared was of a quiet, shy student who seemed interested in his studies, but perhaps not entirely engaged. He tended to sit in the back corner of the room, rarely spoke with classmates, and never volunteered to speak in class. During the pilot study, he was in his third year at the university, and anticipated it would take him at least two more years to graduate. He had not yet declared a major, but planned to major in Italian, because, "I don't see a major in any language to be a bad thing" (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011). He also planned to add a second major, yet to be determined. Encouraged by his parents, he had initially begun an engineering major in his freshman year, but later decided he wasn't interested in engineering and subsequently moved away from that idea. His process for deciding on a major thus far had been to take classes in different fields, such as economics, philosophy, and psychology, and at the time of this research, he had not yet found a field that sufficiently interested him. He was a full-time student and also worked part-time in a campus computer lab.

Jared had found that he had room in his schedule during his freshman year, so he decided to take a beginning language course. He recounted having a negative experience with Spanish in high school, and had wanted to start over with a new language. He enrolled in Italian for fun, rather than to fulfill a university requirement. After completing the fourth semester of Italian language (May 2011), Jared enrolled in Introduction to Italian literature I, concurrently with an advanced composition and conversation course during the following semester (September 2011). He considered himself most proficient at listening and writing, and said he struggled most with reading.

Thus far, Jared had taken an Italian class every semester since he first enrolled in the university. He thought of his Italian classes as recreational, rather than academic:

> I figured they're something other than the main studies I'm going for, so it's kind of refreshing not to do those sorts of things all the time. Like in high school I had a couple of music classes which were kind of, you go in, enjoy it, instead of being pushed to do your best all the time. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

Jared considered his Italian classes to be less rigorous than his science or math classes, primarily because the material was more basic. However, he considered Introduction to Italian literature I to be less recreational than previous Italian classes, since there was so much reading to do. He said that, even though he may not enjoy it as much, he would continue pursuing an Italian major regardless, since he had already invested five semesters studying Italian. He hoped to study abroad in Italy before graduating, but didn't have specific plans to do so.

Jared rode a bicycle to class and always arrived to our research meetings with one leg of his jeans rolled up from his bike ride. He always arrived to the classroom after most students were already seated, and would take his usual spot in the back corner, near the exit. I rarely observed him speaking with other classmates, and he appeared to be quiet and shy. I never observed him speak in class, which indicates that he was less likely than others to ask questions of the teacher or volunteer answers in class. In fact, he lost his syllabus near the beginning of the semester, yet never approached his teacher or his classmates to seek out a replacement.

Jared considered his language ability to be “less than adequate” and thought that more than half the class prepared class readings better than himself. He thought the most successful students—those who spoke often in class—had a much higher proficiency than he did, primarily because they had spent time in Italy. He estimated that they spent the same amount of time preparing as he did, yet came away with a better understanding of what they read:

> Time-wise, I’m thinking they probably spend the same amount of time, but they probably have a better idea of what’s happening in the selections because they can understand more and they don’t have to look up as much. So I have to do more work to understand it at the level they do. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

Jared’s experience studying Italian literature during the semester of my observation was quite different from his previous Italian classes. He claimed this was because his literature course required the most intensive reading he had encountered in Italian thus far, and that the old Italian found in the literature they were studying was “not fun to read” (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011). At the end of the semester, Jared concluded that he strongly preferred reading modern Italian literature, based on his previous experience reading a novel in his fourth semester class.

Jared was initially hoping that the Introduction to Italian literature I course would help him improve his reading and writing proficiencies, and overall increase his comprehension of Italian. He hoped to increase his proficiency by “paying attention, and just brute force, going over it again and again, just learning through experiencing it” (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011). Jared saw the purpose of studying Italian literature to be primarily to provide him with a historical introduction to Italian language. At the end of the semester, he agreed that the course had provided him with a decent background in early Italian literature, and also that he was able to get more meaning from the text than previously.

Jared was somewhat guarded, perhaps due to his shyness, and it was difficult to gauge his preparedness in class. He missed several classes, but when he did come, it often appeared that he had not read the text since he often didn't bring his text or refer to it during class discussion. Jared was quiet when he worked in small groups, and would generally spend the time reading his text (when he had it) instead of discussing it with his classmates. He never spoke when it was his group's turn to present a passage.

Amanda.

I noticed Amanda during my first observation of her class. I happened to sit in the far back corner that day, directly behind her. She had a bag of goldfish crackers on her desk, which she ate sparingly, one at a time, throughout the entire class hour. During that class period, Maria divided the students into small groups, ostensibly to prepare a section of a poem to present to the class. Amanda's group gathered right in front of me. I observed as this group of four young women discussed upcoming class projects and deadlines, the illegibility of their text, and their plans for the weekend. All the while, Maria was circulating among the students, and each time she came near Amanda's group, one of the girls in the group would ask the meaning of a word in the text, feigning active participation. Amanda chatted willingly with her classmates, but when Maria approached, she appeared to be intently reading her text, and would not look up.

Just like Holly and Jared, Amanda started studying Italian during her first semester at the university. She had visited Italy with her family as a child, and had always wanted to learn the language. Her primary major was special education, and she decided that since she had invested four semesters in Italian language, she might as well add a major in Italian, since it didn't entail too many additional credits. She had not yet declared an Italian major but was planning to do so. Like Jared, she enrolled in Introduction to Italian literature I after completing the fourth semester of Italian language. She was a full-time student and had three part-time jobs: she worked at a retail store in the mall, tutored elementary school students, and worked several hours a week as a nanny for a local family. Amanda realized she needed some additional support to succeed in her Italian class that semester, and met with a tutor regularly for two to eight hours per week, throughout the semester.

Amanda valued speaking proficiency above the other skills, which reflects her extroverted and friendly personality. She had felt confident in her proficiency up until this point, although she now found it hard to compare herself with the more vocal students in the class, many of whom had studied abroad. She expressed frustration with the difficulty of understanding her professor in Italian, since this had not been an issue in her previous Italian classes. Although Amanda struggled with listening proficiency, she ascribed her difficulties to Maria's "formal" and "eloquent" way of speaking, which was different from the kind of language her Teaching Assistants (TAs) had used during her first four semesters of Italian. Occasionally, Amanda brought her computer to class to look up words that Maria mentioned in class, but she said that instead of helping her understand, the computer distracted her from class discussion. By the time she was able to look up a word, the class had moved on, and she found that using her computer inhibited her ability to participate.

Although she claimed that she was most interested in developing her speaking proficiency in Italian, Amanda considered writing in Italian to be easier than speaking, listening, or reading, since writing allowed her to take more time to plan out what she wanted to communicate. She said reading in Italian used to be more comfortable for her, but had become more difficult during the semester, as she struggled to read Italian literature with more complex structure, syntax, and vocabulary:

> We're not just reading simple sentences like "I went outside" anymore. It's like knowing euphemisms and phrases that don't necessarily translate directly so you have to improvise. So that's like a kind of everyday up and down with me. Some of this story I could just breeze through and some I knew like two words, I had no clue what the entire paragraph meant. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

Amanda's self-described difficulties in reading for this literature class included both word-level comprehension and understanding major themes in her texts. She described her own Italian vocabulary as stagnant, and thought she needed to improve the more formal register in her Italian proficiency. It is surprising that she didn't feel her vocabulary was improving through reading, since much SLA research considers vocabulary development to be supported by L2 reading.[10] Perhaps Amanda's perception was based more on an increased awareness of the variety and complexity of the kind of nonstandard vocabulary found in her Italian literary texts, rather than on a realistic assessment of the state of her proficiency.

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[10] See Hulstijn, Hollander, & Greidanus, 1996, pp. 327-328, for a review of literature on vocabulary gains due to L2 reading.

Over the course of the semester, Amanda developed an increasingly negative relationship with Maria. She attempted to ask Maria for help during office hours but didn't receive the kind of support she had been hoping for. After performing poorly on exams throughout the semester, Amanda completed an extra credit assignment near the end of the semester, in which she copied a paragraph directly from Wikipedia, including hyperlinks, without citing her source. Maria confronted her via email about the apparent plagiarism, and over the course of several messages, Amanda claimed to have been unaware that her actions were not appropriate. She later recounted the exchange of emails to me, her tutor, and other classmates by positioning Maria as antagonistic and "out to get her."[11]

Much of the analysis of the pilot research that follows will center on Amanda for a variety of reasons. Of the three focal participants in this pilot project, Amanda was the most vocal in expressing her views, and she shared her perspective freely. Since she invited me to observe meetings with her tutor, which took place off campus at a local coffee shop, I was able to develop a more personal rapport with Amanda. Holly and Jared were more guarded, perhaps due in part to their introverted personalities. Moreover, Amanda's case illustrates most adeptly some of the challenges in FL literature learning.

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[11] It should be noted that Amanda's relationship with and perception of Maria should not be considered to be representative of her classmates. Holly, for example, maintained a positive relationship with Maria, and said she enjoyed Maria's classes. Furthermore, Stacie, who was enrolled in the class I observed during the pilot study and later participated in the dissertation study, had taken a previous class with Maria and said she enjoyed taking classes with her.

Analysis

In the analysis of the pilot data, I focused primarily on emergent themes relating to the three research questions: 1) What do advanced students of Italian literature value in literary texts and how do they construct this value system?; 2) What are the literacy events and practices employed by advanced students of Italian literature to access and create meaning in a literary text?; 3) How does participation in a beginning literature course affect advanced students' access to the Discourse of an Italian literary text?

I found that the answers to all three questions overlapped a great deal. The ideas raised by Question 2 (What are the literacy events and practices employed by advanced students of Italian literature to access and create meaning in a literary text?) could largely be ascribed to students' value systems (Question 1), which in turn had a strong influence on how participating in the Italian literature curriculum affected their learning (Question 3). In fact, it became apparent to me that students' value systems were truly at the core of all three questions. I briefly summarize my observations regarding the first and third research questions in this section, before presenting two thematic sections: one that responds directly to the second research question, and another that explores Amanda's relationship to Italian literature more in depth.

Pilot Research Question 1 (What do advanced students of Italian literature value in literary texts and how do they construct this value system?).

The focal students varied greatly in terms of what they valued with respect to Italian literature. Holly was interested in ideas and emotions she found in medieval literature that were still relevant today. Her drive and interest may have been of a personal nature, but her development and practices as a student of FL literature had been shaped and developed over several semesters of FL literature study. The close relationship she had nurtured with her literature professors gave her a level of access and support that most students lack. I suspect that her value system coincided with that of the Italian literature program since she was motivated to study Italian literature out of personal interest. For example, Holly genuinely enjoyed being able to understand themes such as humor in the medieval literature she read (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011).

Jared was primarily focused on trying to understand the basic meaning and importance of his assigned texts. Each time I asked him about what he hoped to get out of reading literature, he responded that he wanted to "take meaning from the text." He explained this to mean a general understanding of a piece of literature and what makes it important. Although he made very few notes in his text, nearly all the notes he wrote were translations of words, which he likely copied in his notes during class. He seemed to validate the information presented in class as the most valuable, and based on his comments during our interviews, he considered himself incapable of arriving at this kind of general meaning on his own, and preferred to be told by his professor what was important in his Italian literary texts (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011).

Similarly, even though Amanda found the ideas presented in class to be of primary value in literature, she struggled so much with both motivation and the linguistic demands of the difficult readings that she was unable to move beyond a literal translation of words and phrases. Katz (2002) described this approach to understanding merely the simple meanings of words as a limited perspective on literature, which reveals only a small measure of its meaning (p. 159). Both Jared and Amanda struggled to arrive at even a basic understanding of the words in their texts, and as such, had a very limited grasp on the meaning of the literary texts they had read.

Furthermore, Amanda also distanced herself greatly from the kinds of knowledge that she perceived to be valued in her class and she largely rejected Maria's authority, even though she considered Maria to be an ideal scholar of Italian literature. Similar conclusions were presented in Worth (2006), when students were found to resist certain discourses and classroom norms proposed by their TA in an introductory Italian language class. In fact, Amanda's resistance might have been primarily aimed at Maria's teaching style, which may, in turn, have been a method of compensating for her own difficulties succeeding in the class.

Pilot Research Question 3 (How does participation in a beginning literature course affect advanced Italian students' access to the Discourse of a literary text?).

Regarding the third research question, I found that students' access to the Discourse of a literary text was tied more strongly to their personal interest in the material than by their participation in the course. Perhaps increased participation would have sparked greater interest in Jared and Amanda, which might have driven them to spend more time and effort reading for class. Although Holly's participation in the Introduction to Italian literature I course made her more comfortable talking and writing about literary texts, Amanda's confidence and ability to succeed seemed to have been shattered. Amanda appeared to be more interested in learning facts about literature than in reading and understanding the literature herself. In fact, both Amanda and Jared admitted in their final interviews of the pilot project that they were reluctant to read the kind of literature assigned in Introduction to Italian literature I on their own. Although

Jared recognized the significance of Italian literature in learning about Italian culture and history, he thought he would understand very little if he were to attempt to read it without a class.

"People aren't prepared": Reading practices and attitudes about reading.

Literacy practices employed by focal students.

Weber-Fève (2009) described several activities that "good readers of literature do", both inside and outside of the classroom. These activities include pre- and post-reading activities, guided interaction activities, interpretive tasks, and annotating texts (p. 457). Although guided interaction activities and interpretive tasks are generally part of classroom learning, they were not employed by either the professor or the focal student participants in the class I observed for the pilot research. Only one participant, Holly, appeared to do some pre-reading activities, such as reading introductory material or looking up general information on Wikipedia, although she did not do so consistently. She was also careful to read the footnotes along with the text. All three focal participants annotated their literary texts, even though these annotations were primarily made during class lectures, and the majority of these annotations being English definitions of words they either discussed in class or looked up in a dictionary. This is consistent with Hanauer's (2001) research among university EFL students, in which he found that 95.94% of his participants' statements during small group discussion of poetry focused on on-line construction of meaning (p. 316). Similarly, in the present research, students appeared to be focused overwhelmingly on understanding simple meanings in their texts, based on the basic annotations and translations which made up most of their notes.

In the next section, I describe in greater detail how Holly, Jared, and Amanda approached their readings, and I explore the means by which they learned about and read Italian literature.

Hulstijn, Hollander, and Greidanus (1996) performed an empirical study among advanced university students of FL literature and found that their participants only looked up twelve to fifteen percent of unknown words in a dictionary, and students who read texts that included marginal glosses of unknown words performed twice as well on subsequent vocabulary tests (p. 334). This suggests the importance of providing a vocabulary-based scaffold to students reading FL literature. In the absence of marginal glosses and vocabulary-based scaffolds, all three student participants in my pilot research relied heavily on online dictionaries as they read, and would not attempt to read without access to a dictionary. Even so, they found it difficult to find the meanings of the antiquated words they found in the medieval literature they were reading. Amanda and Jared found this experience to be particularly frustrating and eventually gave up trying to read their texts outside of class.

All three participants denied the usefulness of reading an English translation; however, they all relied on English translations to confirm the meaning of what they read in high stakes situations, such as before presentations or exams. They seemed to value English translations more highly when they knew they might be held accountable for understanding the reading. I wondered if this bias against online translators might have been fostered by their teaching assistants or professors in previous semesters. None of the three considered literary criticism or anthologies to be of great use in understanding literature, which is to be expected at the introductory level. Even though Maria believed students should be able to find valid external resources to help them understand the text (Initial interview, Pilot study, September 2011), none of the focal participants attempted to consult outside sources. Only Holly tended to look more closely at the structure of the text, in order to discover meaning, especially in poetry. Jared and Amanda, on the other hand, were increasingly reluctant to attempt reading on their own, as they didn't consider their resources and abilities to be adequate to help them understand the text.

(How much) do students really read for class?

The three students I observed differed greatly in their preparation for class, and their preparation also changed over the course of the semester. Although all three students made earnest efforts to prepare for class during the first several weeks, their preparation decreased drastically toward the end of the semester.

Both Holly and Jared initially claimed to go through their readings twice in preparation for class, although I wonder how often they actually did so. Jared did not have a copy of the syllabus, and when we met for a reading observation, he wasn't sure which sections of their text they had been assigned to read for the next class. It is likely that Holly was somewhat more diligent in her preparation for class, since she often volunteered substantive contributions in class about the readings. However, as noted earlier in this chapter, she admitted during one of the reading observations that she sometimes only skimmed through the readings quickly before class.

Amanda, on the other hand, had no qualms about admitting that she usually did not read for class. As it was not possible to decipher between students' annotations made while reading outside of class and those made during the lecture, I cannot reliably say how many of students' annotations reflected their personal reading, and how many reflected ideas brought up in class. However, it was apparent that at least some of Holly's annotations were made prior to class, as it was evident during class observations that she sometimes referred to annotations she had already made in her text or in her notebook when making comments in class. By mid-semester, both Jared and Amanda had concluded that reading before class was irrelevant to their ability to participate in class and to understand the material for upcoming exams. In Amanda's words: "People aren't prepared. You don't even have to read the poem to know what's going on, you can just read a quick synopsis online. But people weren't even doing that anymore" (Final interview, Pilot study, December 2011).

Amanda.

Amanda rarely approached readings from class without help from her tutor. In fact, she often had trouble identifying which sections of her text she was supposed to read for each class meeting. At the beginning of the semester, she attempted to read a few assignments with her tutor, since she struggled to read the texts on her own. When Amanda did attempt to read the text on her own, she felt the need to understand every word, and she translated mentally as she read. She expressed frustration several times during reading observations or during her tutoring sessions, when she tried to look up a word she didn't recognize, only to find it was not in the dictionary because it was an antiquated or nonstandard word or spelling. Toward the end of the semester, Amanda felt that reading for her literature class was less and less of a priority, so she stopped trying to read or understand assigned texts outside of class. She commented that it took too much time to go through the readings with her tutor, so she preferred to dedicate the tutoring hours to completing written assignments for another Italian class she was taking (Final interview, Pilot study, December 2011). She reasoned that reading on her own, outside of class, was not important to her grade, since Maria would go over all the important details in class.

Reading Italian literature proved an arduous and, at times, impossible exercise for Amanda, and she preferred to avoid it when possible. It became apparent that social connections with her classmates and tutor were important to Amanda, and she did not want to be seen as a poor student. She frequently complained to her classmates and her tutor about the class, the professor, and class assignments. When speaking with her classmates, Amanda dismissed her assignments for a variety of reasons: She was too busy, didn't care about the class, had difficulty reading the illegible copies provided by her professor, and the professor didn't value her opinions on the readings.

One of the reasons Amanda claimed reluctance to read was due to the formatting of the text in the class reader. All readings for the class were found in a course reader, prepared by Maria prior to the start of the semester. Maria had compiled an assortment of photocopies into a reader by choosing editions of texts that she considered to have the best footnotes rather than relying on an anthology of Italian literature, since they often did not include what she considered to be the best footnotes for each reading. Amanda complained that both the lack of organization of the reader, and the blurriness of the photocopied text made it difficult for her to read. Regarding the format of the reader, Amanda said,

> Actually the way it's formatted for me it's really difficult. I was thinking to myself, "I wish that this reader for this course had like a tab divider for each work that we're reading," because it gets very confusing because, I get why they're

> together, they're similar in theme or in context in the time period, but it's almost like things slew together, like I almost forget like, "wait, we're on a different poet, we've moved to a different style of poetry." It gets very, very confusing to me. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

Since I had overheard Amanda complain about the clarity of the photocopies in class during one of my observations, I asked her later why she had described them as illegible. She responded:

> Yeah, there's a lot of times where [Maria] will even print out something that's in our reader because it's not good enough. It's not legible in the reader sometimes. Which is fine but then it's like we're confused because we don't realize that the handout is the same thing that's in the reader, just the reader might have it in a more compact style or it might have the diagrams of Dante's inferno in it. It was not… it was hard. It's difficult enough to understand going from poem to poem, but to have it jumbled like that it drives me nuts, it's super difficult. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

Although I agreed with Amanda that the quality of the photocopies made her texts difficult to read, I got the impression that these complaints may have been primarily rationalizations for Amanda's failure to read, rather than legitimate obstacles to her reading. I make this claim because even when the texts were clear enough for her classmates to read, or when Maria distributed a new copy of a text that was illegible in the course reader, Amanda still did not read them. Regardless, the frustration Amanda expressed about the questionable quality of the photocopied reader further illustrates her tenuous relationship with her Italian literature texts.

Jared.

Similarly, Jared admitted toward the end of the semester that he only sporadically read the assignments for class, although he did go through them before exams. Occasionally he would use an online translator to figure out the meaning of a longer section of text, since he claimed that even a poor translation could be quite beneficial to his understanding.

Jared provided two main reasons for limiting how much he would attempt to understand the readings on his own outside of class: First, since he knew Maria would go over the reading line by line in class, he felt less pressure to try to understand it on his own. Second, he thought it would take a lot more time and effort to significantly improve his understanding of the literature. In the quote below, Jared explained that he considered 40% comprehension of his Italian literature texts as a point of diminishing returns, after which he would need to put in comparatively much more effort to make small gains in understanding. Overall, Jared didn't feel pressure to understand the readings completely, as can be seen in his own words:

> I go for like 40% comprehension, pretty much, because a lot of it is explained in class. And I figure that most of the time if I go for almost understanding it completely, that's a *lot* of work. Because it is like poetic literature, which means there are a lot of implied meanings. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

Furthermore, Jared was reluctant to spend a lot of time reading Italian literature on his own, since he could potentially misunderstand the meaning of the text: "There's always the chance that I might interpret things incorrectly, so I would have to go back in my mind and fix it" (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011).

During our final interview, I asked Jared what he thought it would take for him to understand more. He replied that he would need more experience and more time, and perhaps a different approach to reading literature, although he couldn't think of any way to vary his approach. He thought having an English translation would help him understand Italian literature better, especially for older literature (Final interview, Pilot study, December 2011).[12] He occasionally used online sources to access poems in translation, however not often. For example, as he prepared for an in-class presentation, he read a translation of a Petrarchan poem online, to confirm that he had understood it correctly. Jared considered English translations to be the most useful tools to understanding Italian literature, and thought he would be much more likely to remember details about a reading if it were in English, rather than Italian (Final interview, Pilot study, December 2011). However, even though Jared considered English translations to be very helpful, he claimed that he rarely consulted them, because he did not spend much time reading the assignments in the first place. This indicates that he was not invested enough in understanding his readings to make the effort to look up a translation.

Therefore, I propose that a fourth reason to explain Jared's reluctance to read Italian literature is that he was simply not interested in Italian literature. As discussed earlier in this chapter, his approach to his university education bespoke a personal philosophy of pursuing only endeavors that catch his interest. Although he had a positive association with the language, and described learning Italian language as fun, Jared had a loose connection to majoring in Italian, because of his lack of interest in Italian literature

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[12] Jared's positive association with English translations of his literary texts should not be confused with his stated rejection of online translators (i.e., Google Translate).

(Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011). I believe that this lack of interest is the primary reason why he made little effort to read and understand his Italian literature texts.

Holly.

Holly's experience was different from that of Amanda and Jared because she enjoyed reading Italian literature, especially poetry. She expressed a sense of accomplishment at being able to perceive emotion and humor through Italian literature that had been written so long ago (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011). She said she was considering reading the *Divine Comedy* during the summer, for personal satisfaction and edification. She claimed to enjoy reading poetry and trying to work out the rhyme scheme or meter on her own, and also attempted to contextualize the work in her mind as she read. I observed her come to class with annotations on both content and rhyme scheme, which she often shared during class discussion. Of the three pilot study student participants, Holly was the only one to volunteer answers, comments, and questions during class. Indeed, she presented herself in class as an organized, prepared student, always actively engaged in class discussion. Her attention to detail as she prepared readings was driven by her personal interest in the subject matter, and her class participation supported her classroom identity as a successful student of Italian literature.

Although Holly considered herself to be a successful reader, she was aware that many of her classmates did not read the assigned texts. She thought most students' greatest difficulty in reading Italian literature might be the presence of unfamiliar words, particularly when dealing with early Italian literature, since these words might not follow standard Italian spelling and grammar. She described this nonstandard spelling especially in terms of words that were "cut off," such that the final letter or letters of the word were missing, which made them difficult to decipher. Holly reaffirmed that motivation and students' ability to understand the "big picture" may go hand-in-hand: "Some people don't like literature and have to take the class. If you have a hard time seeing the themes or understanding what they're trying to say, if you have a hard time seeing it at all, it makes it difficult to read" (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011).

In Holly's opinion, the Introduction to Italian literature I course didn't require students to truly develop their understanding about literature: "This kind of literature class, you can take it wherever you want to go with it. I think if you don't really care, if you just want to get it done, in the end you'll have a grade on your transcript and be done with it" (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011).

Thus, even though this was not Holly's own perspective, she recognized that many of her classmates didn't care about Italian literature. Indeed, distaste for Italian literature was a strong theme in Amanda's experience. She contrasted Maria's perspective on literature to her own perspective, as a student:

> As a scholar and a professor of Italian, she treats it like her baby, it's like her developing love for something. So she's constantly evolving her knowledge of it and her interest. Whereas a student is just like, "get me through the semester and gimme my three credits and let me move on. And if I really love it, I'll continue caring, and if not, I'm gonna go take a class on film, because it's taught in English." (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

In the excerpt above, Amanda described the purpose of her Introduction to Italian literature I class from a more pragmatic point of view: she considered it an obstacle to overcome in pursuit of a degree in Italian. She presented her perspective as representative of that of the majority of students in her class, and suggested it may, very well, represent the motivation of many students who enroll in this type of class:

> Students aren't taking classes because they have this burning desire to study Italian literature. It's because "I want an Italian major, and this just happens to be one of the classes, and maybe I love the culture class and I love the class about Italian cinema, but I hate reading, and I don't like it." So a student doesn't have that drive or passion like a scholar does. That is their passion and I totally see that in Maria and I totally get why she's so into it and into the history and everything. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

In fact, Amanda openly admitted her lack of interest in Italian literature, and she realized that this was one of the primary reasons for her struggle in this class. During her fourth semester Italian language class, she read an entire novel, *Io non ho paura* [I am not afraid] by Niccolò Ammaniti, and this had been an important accomplishment for her. In the excerpt below, Amanda referred to that novel and described the difference between reading it and reading the kind of literature required by her literature course:

> A lot of the literature stuff we're reading is so beyond what I'm interested in, so even if I can get an idea of it, I can't conceptualize what this could mean poetically. Like I can understand what each word means, but in poetry like this it doesn't mean anything because you have to interpret it in a way that you don't have to interpret a book about a kid who's kidnapped. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

Here, Amanda's description of the distinction between reading the literary texts assigned in Introduction to Italian literature I and the Italian texts she had read prior to this experience reveals her understanding about how one must read a novel differently from a medieval poem. Amanda knew that to understand a medieval poem, one must be able to go beyond surface-level interpretation, to reveal deeper meanings and themes in the text. I don't believe Amanda expected to attain this kind of understanding of the literature she read, largely because it was not required in order to succeed in the class.

"How to listen and pay attention in class": Amanda's construction of Italian literature learning.

Nance (2002) described students' perplexity in approaching the FL literature classroom, where, in direct contrast to the communicative language classroom, as was described in Chapter 2, knowledge is often transmitted to a student audience, who are expected to passively absorb it. This traditional model of FL literature education has been described by Paulo Freire, using an analogy which compares education to the banking system, where the following occurs:

> The scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is the people themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. (1970/2005, p. 72)[13]

Elements of Freire's traditional model of education, perhaps most apparent in the university classroom based on informational lectures and standardized exams, can be easily found in the FL literature classroom, where FL literature is often presented to students through a teacher-centered lecture, with little input or interaction on the part of the student. Fecteau (1999) described the incompatibility of this method of instruction, positing that “the traditional ‘transmission model’ of literature teaching does little to foster direct engagement with the text or to develop students’ literary competence” (p. 475). Students are then expected to memorize and repeat (often expressed using the visual metaphor of regurgitation) the historical, cultural, and linguistic facts presented by the teacher, in order to succeed in their university course. Although this model of learning is certainly not characteristic of FL literature instruction as a whole, it is often the method of formal instruction during the initial levels of FL literature study. Only later, in the last stages of apprenticeship into the field of FL literature, are students expected to produce original, interpretive, reflective thought about the literature they study.[14]

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[13] Originally published in Portuguese in 1968, English translation published in 1970.

Indeed, this idea that students must “regurgitate” material from class lectures was reinforced in Amanda’s mind when she contacted Maria for help in early October. Amanda was worried about an upcoming midterm exam, in part because she had been unable to understand the texts and wasn’t sure what to study, so she approached Maria during office hours. Amanda reported: “I tried to be straightforward, I went to her before the exam and said ‘I feel like I’m drowning, I feel like I don’t get it, what can I do?’ And that’s when she said, ‘go over your notes, go over what we do in class, you’ll be fine.’” (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

It is evident that Amanda was aware that she was struggling in class since she attempted to get help, even if her concern was more about her grade than about her understanding of Italian literature. Based on Maria's response, Amanda understood that the answer to doing well in the course lay in being able to reiterate what Maria said in class, rather than in discovering meaning in the texts on her own. It was clear as Amanda referred this experience to me in the interview that it was intended as a criticism of Maria, who in Amanda's opinion was not as forthcoming in providing assistance as the TAs for her previous courses had been. I postulate that Maria's real intention was to reassure Amanda that even if she had not been able to understand the reading on her own, all of the important points would be covered during class discussions. However, this interaction reinforced Amanda's opinion that it was not important to read the texts on her own.

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[14] The expectation of original, interpretive, or reflective thought is closely tied to the notion of reading culture, which is described in Chapter 2.

It was obvious throughout the semester that Maria attempted to engage and involve students by asking a lot of questions in class, possibly in an effort to share the position of knowledge-bearer with her students. However, students generally chose to listen passively during the lesson, opting instead to focus their attention on taking notes on what Maria said in class. In so doing, they voluntarily subdued their own agency. The concept of agency was defined in Duff (2012) as "People's ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals leading, potentially, to personal or social transformation" (p. 417). Positioning learners in an active role, in which they exercise agency during the learning process is a central theme in Freire's (1970/2005) concept of political consciousness.

I believe the students in this class dismissed their own agency in their Italian literature class for a number of reasons. First, most of the students were intimidated by the language proficiency of a few students who had spent time abroad. The students who had not studied abroad were further silenced by Maria's seemingly high expectations and overt negative correction, which solidified Maria's authority in the classroom. This led students to believe that there was a discrete set of right answers, which were inaccessible to them through individual reading and study. They therefore positioned Maria as the sole gatekeeper of knowledge, and themselves as receptacles of that knowledge, leading them to largely "file away" their own abilities, interests, and perspectives (Freire, 1970/2005).

Although she never spoke in class or volunteered answers, Amanda was keenly aware of the frequent silences in class after Maria asked a question. Even though Maria intended these moments to give students an opportunity to participate, students like Amanda rejected the idea of participation because they didn't feel capable of providing the "right" answer in a framework where this discrete set of right answers was not in students' immediate reach, as is evident in the following quote:

> I think a lot of the times people have issues participating in general because there's this fear people have of being wrong, being embarrassed, being shut down. I mean you have one bad experience with answering a question and someone laughs at you, and you never want to do it again. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

Since Amanda was not confident that she could come up with the "right" answers on her own, she preferred to save face by not participating. In doing so, she also supported Maria's position as the possessor of knowledge, as she sat back and passively absorbed the ideas Maria presented in class. Amanda returned to this same thought at the end of the semester, when I asked her about participating in class:

> Often when people try to respond in class, [Maria] responds, “uh... no. Not really, no.” So I think it was discouraging to try and interpret the text because if it didn’t go along with her interpretation, she considered it wrong. (Final interview, Pilot study, December 2011)

It was clear that Amanda had picked up on the negative feedback Maria had sometimes given in class, which dissuaded her from hazarding a hypothesis in front of the class. I had noted this kind of direct negative feedback while observing class, although I’m not aware if it was ever directed at Amanda. Although she recognized Maria’s attempts to encourage participation, as shown in the previous quote, she said she didn’t participate because of the risk of being told she was wrong in front of the class.

Thus, Amanda and Jared fell squarely into this category of students who expected to passively absorb information in their Introduction to Italian literature I class. Both found themselves lacking in confidence in their language abilities, especially in comparison to the few vocal students in class. Amanda often compared herself to other students in class, recognizing that students who had spent time in Italy had a distinct advantage over students who, like her, had only recently completed the required four semesters of Italian language study. She reported observing in class that the more vocal students’ language ability was beyond her own capacity:

> This year I feel like I’m at a standstill compared to some speakers. I think mainly because some speakers have studied abroad in Italy and have gone to universities there where there are Italian-speaking professors and surrounded by people. Right now it seems like I’m like failing in proficiency compared to where other people are at this level of class. But there are some people too who are at the

> same level or lower than I am but they don’t speak out in class so it’s hard to tell where I am proficiency-wise in comparison. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

Although Amanda described herself as successful in her previous Italian classes, where there may not have been such a variance in language proficiency among students, she now described herself as “failing in proficiency.” The only measure of language proficiency Amanda had been exposed to was the somewhat arbitrary grouping of students by the curriculum, according to how many Italian courses they had completed. She complained that her proficiency had not improved during the semester because she had less opportunity to practice speaking in her Introduction to Italian literature I class compared to her previous Italian classes:

> I think that my proficiency has somewhat plateaued at this point because I just think the class where I am now, there’s just not a lot of conversation. We used to have classes where it was those awkward exercises where you pick a partner, spend five minutes, and discuss this. Yeah, it was weird but you would actually practice talking to someone whereas now it’s kind of like: teacher asks a question, one person answers. You don’t have an ongoing dialogue consistently throughout. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

Although conversational proficiency was likely not meant to be the focus of Introduction to Literature I, it seems Amanda expected it to play a larger role in the class. Furthermore, she may have been accustomed to a communicative approach during her first four semesters of Italian courses, in which grades were based in part on oral communicative ability. However, in this Introduction to Italian literature I class, communicative abilities were not directly addressed, and communicative competence served merely as the tool through which students understood and produced information about Italian literature.

Indeed, even though communicative competence was not a focus of the class, Amanda felt that her inadequate proficiency interfered with her ability to understand Maria's lectures. Interestingly, Amanda demonstrated her awareness that Maria's speech reflected a genre of communication that was more difficult to understand, compared to the more simplistic language she had been exposed to in her language classes:

> With [Maria] it's different because she has a very eloquent way of speaking. And that's how she is, she's very formal, eloquent in her speaking, so it does make it difficult to catch on a lot of the time. Sometimes she'll say "what does this word mean?" and no one really knows, then she'll say another word for it that's a synonym and you'll be like, "what the heck is that word?" I still don't know. Because it's still a very formal or antiquated form of the word. That can be very difficult. So I still don't know. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

Amanda especially struggled with the sophistication of the vocabulary used by Maria in class, and seemed to reject this sophistication as unhelpful to her learning. She contrasted the struggle to understand unfamiliar words in her literature class to the kind of language she had experienced in her previous Italian language courses:

> In the previous classes if you didn't know a word, you could say, "*Cosa vuol dire*?" [What does it mean?] and they would say the word and you'd be like, "oh, OK I get it." Now it's like a very eloquent explanation of "well this is what this

> means in reference to Dante's family or Dante's true love." (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

In this excerpt, Amanda noted the difference between the direct, simple meanings and translations she had been accustomed to in her language courses, and the kind of multiple, complex, and context-dependent meanings inherent in understanding literature. In fact, the inductive approach to vocabulary learning inherent in literature study effectively silenced (Leander, 2002) Amanda in the end, as she did not feel she had access to the meanings of the vocabulary used in class and in her texts, and was therefore unable to participate.

Amanda's diffidence in her Italian literature class can be further explained by the way she distanced herself from the subject matter. She described her difficulties in recognizing the grand themes in literature, using an example from Canto V of Dante's Inferno. This poem portrays a series of lovers who are swept up by a strong tornado-like wind. After reading through the passage with her tutor, the tutor asked her what she thought the significance of the wind might be. Amanda described her response to the tutor as follows:

> I was like, I don't know, what? A storm, what? She said it was because the act of falling in love is like a whirlwind, a storm. But like to me, I'm like what the hell, in English I'd never be like, "oh yeah falling in love is such a whirlwind so that must be the physical manifestation." (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

In the passage above, Amanda described the distance she perceived between the intended meaning of the literary passage, and her own perspective or thought process. As she read, her focus was largely on understanding the word-by-word meaning of each sentence, so much so that she considered the subtler meanings in the text to be beyond her grasp and almost ridiculed the theme of the text because it did not seem to resemble her experience. Perhaps it was this perceived incapacity that caused her to resist the subject matter, othering[15] it in an attempt to save face, since she was not able to grasp the difficult ideas in her literature texts. Amanda seemed to agree that literary analysis needed to go beyond knowing facts about literature (i.e., the author, time period, or culture-specific notions), to focus on seeking out meanings in the text that might not be apparent in a simple translation. However, she described this kind of knowledge as unrealistic to her learning trajectory.

> It's just very, very difficult to be even fairly fluent in a modern language, and then try and translate the words and understand, and then say, "I don't know history, I don't know ancient Italian. All I know is where this guy was born and who he was in love with and his family," and then to be able to say "he must have been thinking this on this day." It's just not realistic. It's hard to not be able to just translate words. It's about the thought process that puts the words on paper. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

Amanda's feelings about the Italian literature she was reading are readily apparent in the passage above, when she used the word *ancient* to describe the Italian literature and language she was studying. Miriam Webster's dictionary defines "ancient" as "of or relating to a remote period" (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ancient). Amanda's use of the word *ancient*, rather than a more descriptive term such as *medieval*, further demonstrates how she created a relational distance between herself and the literature she was studying, distancing it from her own worldview. However, in the excerpt above, Amanda also reasoned that to better comprehend literature, she would need to develop an emic perspective, reading texts from the perspective of those who wrote them. Understanding this cultural difference, however, registered as too great an expectation for her, as a beginning student of Italian literature.

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[15] Coupland (1999) defined "othering" as "the process of representing an individual or a social group *to render them distant, alien, or deviant*" (p. 5; original emphasis).

In fact, Amanda felt that there were a lot of things she was expected to know for her Introduction to Italian literature I class that she had not yet studied. For example, she recounted that one day as they were reading in class, Maria explained that a certain unknown word was actually in Latin, and she then asked the class if anyone knew Latin, and seemed surprised that no one did. This class experience reinforced in Amanda's mind both Maria's unreasonable expectations, which included knowledge of Latin, as well as her own unpreparedness to read linguistically challenging Italian literature.

At the end of the semester, Amanda admitted that the class prioritized the analysis and interpretation of literary texts, rather than simple translation or comprehension of the meanings of the individual words in the text. However, she didn't feel as though she had learned to analyze or interpret literature on her own, and didn't think her personal analysis would have been valued in the context of her class:

> I don't feel like my analysis would be accepted, unless it happened to overlap with [Maria]'s analysis. The course kind of hindered everyone's ability to analyze a poem. It was more about how to listen and pay attention in class. (Final interview, Pilot study, December 2011)

To succeed in this course, Amanda believed she needed to memorize what Maria said in class, and revealed a key difference between what she valued in literature compared to what her professor valued:

> Maria never asks like, “What are your thoughts on this piece?” It’s always, “Do you understand?” So even if someone understands it, they’re not going to say, “Yes, I understand it. I love it so much.” That’s not what the course is getting at. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

This statement reflects Amanda’s expectations about what literature learning should entail. She seemed to reject Maria’s failure to include student response and reflection on literature, which is a preeminent feature of the model of literature study prioritized in American education systems. Indeed, the American educational system has largely embraced reader response theory, introduced by Louise Rosenblatt’s (1938/1995) “Literature as exploration,” which rejects the notion of a single, fixed meaning in literature, in favor of a focus on the role of the reader in interpreting a text. Rosenblatt (1938/1995) claims that contextual information, like the historical, cultural, and literary frame provided in Maria’s class, is no more than “useless baggage” if the student is not trained to discover and create personal meanings in literature (p. 57). Amanda seemed to subscribe to Rosenblatt’s approach, and her perspective on literature had been shaped both by her experiences with English language literature in high school, her experience as a literacy tutor, and her preparation to become a special education teacher in the Teacher Education program at BSU.

For Amanda, the significance of literature was contained in the emotions and feelings it provoked, which is consistent with her training in English literature study. She viewed the information privileged in class in two ways: both straightforward, as in a set of facts she should learn about each author and poem, and also ambiguous, as in the inability to deduce the thought process of the author. She quickly became frustrated because she wasn't able to discover either of these concepts on her own, and was discouraged from hypothesizing about them in class. She was instead asked to learn in a way that did not interest her:

> I think from there on out I was like, this is never going to be something I'm fully invested in, it's just something I have to get through. It's just one of those road blocks that if you want to get to where you get, you have to suck it up and do it, and say, "This is what it is, it's not changing." (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

In effect, the discord between Amanda's value system with regard to literature, and that prioritized by her professor, caused Amanda to divest herself from the course. She further distanced herself from Italian literature study by positioning herself as uninterested in the study of literature, creating a safe space from which to opt out of the desire for success in the course: "I'll be the first to admit, I'm nothing close to a fan of poetry. So that's another reason why it's probably more difficult for me" (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011).

In our final interview, I found that Maria was not familiar with reader response theory. After I explained the basics of what reader response entails, Maria confirmed that she did not adhere to the reader response model of literature education and didn't think it had a valid place in the Italian literature tradition, which prioritizes a cannon of literary criticism that stretches back hundreds of years. Indeed, this confirmed some of the differences I had perceived in the culture of reading literature between Italian and American traditions, which I described in Chapter 2. Johnson (2003) describes reading as a complex cultural system "with deep roots in the traditions of a given society" (p. 9).

Modifications for the dissertation study based on pilot findings

Overall, the methodology of the pilot project was helpful in answering the research questions. The methods of data collection, including class observations, interviews, reading observations, and collection of primary documents provided rich information about the context and the participants. Interviews were particularly fruitful, although it was helpful to develop more rapport with students and professors in the dissertation study before the initial interview. Over time, both Amanda and Holly became more comfortable with me, as the researcher, and were more willing to share their personal insights. Furthermore, while conducting interviews, I found it more useful to replace the word *professors* with *scholars* in the last section of the interview protocol (see Appendix E), as it seemed more appropriate, since few undergraduate students thought of themselves in terms of a future career as professors of the subjects they are studying. I did the same for interviews during the dissertation study.

It was helpful to compare these interviews with observations of students' reading and class participation. These observations both validated ideas learned through interviews (such as how Amanda valued literature) but at times, provided contrast to participants' stated beliefs (for example, even though all three students said they did not value English translations, they all relied on translations for understanding in high-stakes situations). I was somewhat disappointed with the quality of information I was able to get through class observations, since students rarely spoke in class, and video recordings were unable to provide good detail about participant behavior since the camera was positioned on the entire class, and it was difficult to decipher what they were looking at or listening to, whether they were taking notes, and anything at all about students who were not clearly visible in the camera's frame.

Analysis of primary documents.

It was also helpful to collect and analyze students' class documents, even though I focused less on this data source during the dissertation study due to time constraints. While reviewing the highlighting in students' texts, it was difficult to know whether their notes in the margins of the text resulted from class discussion or from their own reading. I found it particularly helpful to ask students about specific notes in their text, to better understand why and when they recorded certain ideas. For example, I noted that Holly had written "*donna angelo*" [woman angel] twice in her notes, in two different poems from Dante Alighieri's *Vita Nuova* [New Life]. When I questioned her about this terminology, Holly said that the first time, she had written the words during Maria's in-class discussion of the poem. Later, when she read the second poem at home in preparation for class, she recognized that it was referring to the "*donna angelo*" they had previously discussed in class, so she made a note in the text. In the dissertation study, I conducted more brief discussions of this nature with participants throughout the semester.

During the pilot study, I also noted that it was helpful to discuss my observations of students' reading behavior with each student at the end of each meeting. While observing, I took notes and wrote questions to ask students after they had finished reading. This was particularly helpful in the cases of Holly and Jared, who were less forthcoming about their thoughts than Amanda.

Choosing an ideal location for meetings with participants.

The most fruitful data in my pilot research came from tutoring sessions between Amanda and her tutor, an MA student of Italian literature, who had been Amanda's instructor for first-semester Italian. It is likely that the close nature of their relationship also allowed Amanda to open up and talk about her feelings more than the other two focal participants who met with me privately. As a researcher, I was able to develop a stronger relationship with Amanda since we met frequently throughout the semester off campus, and with her tutor, who was also a friend of mine. Although it is not always possible to build this type of relationship with participants in a research study, I attempted to interact more frequently and consistently with the focal student participants during the dissertation study, in hopes of establishing a comfortable relationship, thus allowing them to open up more readily about their experiences than Holly and Jared did during the pilot study.

Amanda's tutoring sessions were originally held at a popular coffee shop, which turned out to be a difficult location for data collection purposes. The first time I met with Amanda and her tutor, Amanda had chosen to work right across from the coffee sales counter, where there was quite a bit of noise. We all had trouble hearing each other over the noise of the coffee grinders. On subsequent meetings, I arrived at the coffee shop at least an hour early, in hopes of securing a more secluded table on the upper floor, where it was somewhat less noisy. During my fourth observation of Amanda's tutoring sessions, a person who worked at Starbucks approached our table to say we weren't allowed to video record on the premises (apparently another customer had complained about the intrusion). I asked if we could audio record, and she said that was fine. This interaction had been somewhat worrisome, since some of my best data had come from these tutoring sessions. I then offered to reserve a room at the library, and we met there for all subsequent tutoring sessions.

Although meeting at a coffee shop provided a more comfortable atmosphere, I found it was also so noisy that the quality of my recordings was poor. During the dissertation study, I made a point of suggesting a private study room at the library for interviews and reading observations. With the exception of one student in the dissertation study, Bobby, who preferred to meet at a coffee shop and have lunch during our interviews, all interviews and reading observations took place at the library. I was also proactive in reserving study rooms in advance for group study sessions during the dissertation study. With the exception of one study session, which was organized at the last minute and held at a sandwich shop near campus, all study sessions were also held at the library during the dissertation study.

Video recordings of class meetings.

Due to the amount of data I collected, I also had to revise my plans for collecting audio and video recordings during the dissertation study. I found that the process was too complicated, and the digital files were too large, to make high quality recordings. After the first few recordings during the pilot study, I switched to a more streamlined process with a new video camera. Classroom recordings are complicated to set up, but I eventually found it most helpful to put the camera in a corner in the front of the room, so I could record most of the students, instead of recording the professor from the back of the room, since the students' behavior was more central to my research. Maria asked me not to make the video recordings of class available to the students, as I had planned, since she was afraid they might rely on the videos rather than attending class.

At the professor's request I did not record class meetings during the dissertation study, and therefore I was careful to take detailed ethnographic field notes, capturing as much student interaction and participation as possible. Although I would have preferred to have video recordings of class meetings as a more thorough data source to support my handwritten notes, I also wondered if the absence of the video camera in the room might have made students feel more comfortable volunteering to speak in class. There were certainly other reasons for the increase in student participation during the dissertation study, but it is possible that the absence of the video camera also favored student participation in that class.

During the pilot study, I found it particularly challenging to understand Jared's value system and reading practices with regard to literature. He seemed to be quite shy and introverted, and I had a hard time eliciting meaningful responses from him during our interviews and observations. It would have been helpful to spend more time observing him, both in class and while reading literature. I wasn't able to sit near enough in class to be able to observe his behavior during the pilot study, and it was difficult to infer much from the video recordings of class, where he was often hidden behind other students. In the dissertation study, I planned more frequent reading observations, and also positioned myself in the classroom where I could more easily see all of the students. After selecting focal participants in the dissertation study, I was also careful to take more thorough notes on their behavior throughout the semester.

Critical framing of student behavior.

During my observations of this pilot class, I noticed that many of the students in the class "played dumb" in social interactions with each other. They may have been trying to save face by acting like they knew *nothing*, rather than admitting that they knew just a little, as was proposed in Worth (2006). This idea is explored more thoroughly in the Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

Along similar lines, I noted Amanda's frequent criticism of the teacher, the materials, and the curriculum in the pilot study. Amanda told me that she often critiqued and complained about the class with her classmates via email and Facebook. I think she did this in part to take attention away from her inadequacies with regard to the Introduction to Italian literature I class. She often complained about the teacher's lesson plans, suggesting class time was not used wisely and that it was therefore not worth attending. For example, she complained when Maria reserved time in class for small group work (each group was to prepare a section of the reading and present it to the class), saying that students should have read the passage at home, on their own, so it seemed a waste of time to do it in class. I found this curious, since Amanda, herself, did not usually attempt reading on her own, and admitted to reading her Italian texts only with guidance from her tutor.

I made a concerted effort to praise Amanda's tutor for her language and proficiency in front of Amanda, in hopes of maintaining and supporting her role as tutor. I even made a point of purposely dismissing my own language proficiency and content knowledge in order to sustain the tutor's expertise. Consequently, at times, I was unsure whether I should interrupt to offer a correction or an answer that the tutor had missed or mistaken. For the most part, I refrained from intervening, although the tutor occasionally asked for my input, and a couple times I offered help voluntarily. I felt some responsibility to Amanda, as she was my participant, to help her in any way I could. However, I noted that her positive relationship with her tutor, rather than her trust in the tutor's knowledge base, was one of the primary motivations for their frequent meetings, even when sometimes those meetings were less than productive.

Giving back to my research participants.

During the dissertation study, I felt it was important to give something back to the participants, since they had been willing to dedicate so much time to helping me with this research. Therefore, as I discuss in Chapter 4, I offered my services as an informal writing tutor, and I also offered my help occasionally during study groups, when needed. In this way, I was able to show appreciation for my participants' availability to participate in my research.

Office hour recordings.

Although I know at least one student visited Maria during her office hours, Maria told me she had received no visitors, and had therefore made no recordings during her office hours. I requested the recordings several times outside of class, in part as a reminder to her to record office hours. I wonder if recording office hours made her anxious or if she may have simply forgotten to record them. Perhaps Maria felt more nervous about this aspect of participation.

Since the professor of the class I observed during the dissertation study was adamant that no audio or video recordings be made during class, I decided to forego asking him to record his office hours. I feel this was an appropriate decision, given this professor's willingness to participate in the dissertation research because I did not want to risk jeopardizing his willingness. Even in the absence of office hour data, I was able to collect a great deal of observational data, both inside and outside of class.

Modifications to research questions.

Finally, after analyzing the pilot data according to the three research questions I had proposed, I found it necessary to modify them in response to my observations during the pilot study. The most important change I made was to eliminate the second research question (What are the literacy events and practices employed by advanced students of Italian literature to access and create meaning in a literary text?), since I found during the pilot study that students were not able to accurately describe the practices and resources they employed in understanding their readings. Perhaps even more salient is the fact that they often failed to attempt reading their literary texts. This change, along with some additional modifications to the other two research questions, are discussed in Chapter 4, which presents the research methodology employed in the dissertation study.

In the following chapter, I will introduce the methodology that I used to collect and analyze the data, and provide a rationale for its validity in this study based on the proposed research questions.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the methodology guiding data collection and analysis in this project. The purpose of this inquiry was to investigate how students of Italian engaged with Italian literature as they completed an introductory-level Italian literature course. Two third-year Italian courses served as research contexts for data collection: one during the pilot phase, and one during the dissertation phase. As will be explained in this chapter, during the process of data collection and analysis, the theoretical framework and research questions evolved to paint a more valid picture of what transpired during the study.

Research paradigm

Duff (2002) describes three general components that make up one's research paradigm: a belief system about the nature of truth and knowing (epistemology), an ideology about the nature of reality (ontology), and a corresponding methodology for collecting and analyzing data (pp. 14-15). In fact, this relationship between paradigm and methodology was eloquently summarized by Guba and Lincoln (1994):

> Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm, which we define as the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways. (p. 195)

Therefore, before discussing methodological choices, it is important to begin this chapter with a brief overview of the epistemology and ontology that guide my approach to the research context.

The analysis in this dissertation examines the experiences and perspectives of participants in an Italian literature course, and is grounded in social and critical perspectives. Since each participant has a unique way of experiencing the world, it makes sense for this analysis to consider the localized nature of knowledge and reality. Therefore, this inquiry takes the position that the data and knowledge are dependent on individual perspective and worldview, and it consequently prioritizes an understanding of reality that is flexible and allows for individual differences. From an ontological standpoint, this inquiry prioritizes the varied nature of participant experiences, to reveal the unique realities in each of them.

Because it was impossible to accurately anticipate what I might find in conducting this investigation, due to the small, localized nature of the target population, I adopted a flexible methodology, modifying and revising my research questions throughout the duration of the project. The conclusions gathered from the pilot study were helpful in confirming and modifying my research plan at the outset, though even these did not always apply to the research setting in the dissertation study, since the class I observed during the pilot study was quite different from the one I observed during dissertation research the following semester. Although the present study does not claim strict adherence, the development of the methodology and analysis is inspired by grounded theory. Grounded theory methods have been defined as "a set of flexible analytic guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to build inductive middle-range theories through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 507). In this type of approach, it is anticipated that that theory development is "grounded" in the data itself and prioritizes an organic process of data analysis and theory-building (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). Furthermore, a grounded theory perspective suggests a dialectal relationship between data collection and analysis, where early analysis leads to modification and refocusing of data collection (Charmaz, 2006, p. 508).

The present research seeks to understand the complex interactions between the third-year language student and literary study. Since the multifarious relationships between the participants and the literature they study are not readily surmisable from any angle, it was important to employ a variety of methods. Triangulation of multiple methods and data sources increased the validity and rigor of these qualitative findings (Purcell-Gates, 2011), a topic to which I will return later in this chapter.

Based on the somewhat homogenous participant population of this project, I did not anticipate being able to elicit results that would be generalizable to other populations. The data collection was conducted at a large research university, and the observed conditions will likely vary when compared to a small, private college, for example. Due to the localized nature of curricular expectations and teaching styles, this study may not accurately describe Italian literature learning at another large research university, and should not be assumed to represent literature teaching and learning in the Italian program in which this study was conducted. Furthermore, students of literature in other foreign languages, such as Japanese, Arabic, or Native American literatures, might encounter different cultural and pragmatic obstacles than this small sample of students of Italian literature, and therefore the conclusions in this dissertation cannot accurately be extended to these contexts either. Nonetheless, this project suggests ideas which may be characteristic of many similar contexts, and its findings propose ideas for further inquiry in a variety of educational settings.

Since the population examined in this dissertation is somewhat small (fewer than 30 students), and is not representative of a larger group, a qualitative methodology was most appropriate. A quantitative methodology would not allow this investigation to probe deeply into such a complex issue (Dörnyei, 2010). Furthermore, the majority of this project focuses on an even smaller number of participants, whose conditions may not represent all those present in the sample population. Therefore, although it cannot be strictly considered an ethnography, this project employed ethnographic methods to describe the sample population and frame details about focal students as a case study. Qualitative methods provide a rich description of the situation for the select case studies involved.

Last, this research describes the learning environment in an Italian literature course, but does not attempt to describe or explain the cognitive processes behind such learning. Consequently, it required methods that would be capable of producing descriptive, open-ended data that could not be anticipated using a quantitative framework. For these reasons, a qualitative methodology was most appropriate to the nature of this inquiry.

Ethnographic methodology

As I embarked on this research, I was interested in better understanding why so many students struggle to succeed in their third year of college FL study, when their courses generally begin to focus on foreign language (FL) literature. My primary focus was to better understand what kind of relationship these students develop with Italian literature and Italian literature study. Therefore, I was interested in observing and investigating students in their "natural habitats" as they interacted with the professor, classmates, and their literature, both inside and outside of class. Since the complicated web of relationships that form the context of this research is not immediately clear, an ethnographic methodology seemed appropriate. Mackay and Gass (2005) suggest that, "Ethnographic approaches are particularly valuable when not enough is known about a context or situation" (p. 169). Therefore I used an ethnographic approach to collecting data, even though this study should not be considered an ethnography since it does not strictly adhere to all the principles of ethnographic research.

Egan-Robertson and Willet (1998) describe three key tenets of ethnographic research: First, it is holistic and contextual, second, it is systematic and adopts recursive methodologies, and third, it prioritizes an emic point of view. In the following section, I describe how this study prioritizes these three fundamental aspects of ethnographic methodology.

Understanding the sociocultural context in which the participants locate themselves is one of the primary objectives of an ethnographic methodology. Wendt (2003) claims that understanding the context of learning is essential to understanding the cause of phenomena in FL teaching and learning. Furthermore, Watson-Gegeo (1988) distances ethnographic inquiry from experimental approaches by describing how an ethnographic enquiry explores research contexts as "naturally occurring, ongoing settings, with a focus on the cultural interpretation of behavior" (p. 576). This definition emphasizes first, the undisturbed nature of the research context, and second, an analysis of the cultural roots of individual perspectives and observed behaviors. Although I attempted to leave the research context undisturbed, the study presented in this dissertation should not be confused with an ethnography, in particular because some of the methods employed in data collection, including interviews and reading observations, were a departure from students' normal, undisturbed behavior.

Harklau (2005) further defines the relationship of the individual to their cultural world as he succinctly describes the objective of ethnography: "To come to a deeper understanding of how individuals view and participate in their own social and cultural worlds" (p. 179). Indeed, it is precisely the social and cultural aspects of Italian literature study which I intended to pursue, rather than the mental and cognitive aspects of FL literature reading. In agreement with this idea, I set out to provide a rich, "thick" description of the context, in hopes of understanding some of the causes of these students' struggles.

Geertz's (1973) notion of "thick" description in ethnographic research implies not merely a dense construction of supporting information, but also emphasizes the multiple perspectives or frameworks that produce a detailed picture, not limited by a single point of view (p. 3). This notion of multiple frameworks is operationalized in the practice of triangulation, in which multiple data sources and methods support common hypotheses and add validity to ethnographic research. Conversely, being too quick to make assumptions and hazard analyses based on limited data sources can risk limiting research to what has been described as a "thin ethnography" (Ortner, 1995).

The third hallmark of ethnographic inquiry is an emic perspective that seeks to provide an insider's point of view. The etic, or researcher's perspective, is contrasted with an emic, participant-centered analysis, which prioritizes the participant's worldview. Watson-Gegeo (1988) proposes the importance of an emic sensitivity in qualitative research as a counterbalance to the researcher's etic analysis, sustaining that "a carefully done emic analysis precedes and forms the basis for etic extensions that allow for cross-cultural or cross-setting comparisons" (pp. 581-582). Consequently, a participant-centered approach guided data collection and grounded my analyses in an emic perspective. I did not employ a strictly emic perspective however, especially in instances where I analyzed and deconstructed students' behavior, and my own position as a language teacher and researcher likely tainted my observation of how students framed and valorized Italian literature study.

The FL literature course is a multi-faceted environment, which impacts student learning in a number of ways. In the classroom, students create perceptions about their classmates' fluency, preparation, and demeanor, among other things. They also create perceptions about the professor's expectations and hopes for them. Students' willingness to communicate in this context is affected by the potential risks and benefits they perceive from doing so, which are intrinsically tied to this rich sociocultural context. Therefore, a rich understanding of this context, such as that proposed by ethnographic methodologies, is appropriate for an investigation into classroom attitudes and behavior.

Beyond the classroom, students may experience varying levels of familiarity with their classmates, most of whom, in a college-level Italian program, they will have already met during previous semesters. Some may communicate outside of class about assignments or readings, or even go out together on the weekends. However, others may have little-to-no interaction with their classmates outside of the prescribed weekly meetings. These relationships (or lack thereof) are likely to have an impact on how students experience the course. Consequently, it is important that the methodology be able to address the complex network of relationships both inside and outside of the classroom.

Choosing a research site

I was initially interested in exploring graduate students' sociocultural literacy development in the early stages of a graduate-level Italian literature program. Since the pool of potential participants for such an inquiry is relatively small at my intended research site, I elected to conduct the pilot study among undergraduate Italian literature students, who were just beginning to study Italian literature. A fortuitous consequence of this is that I later decided to continue the dissertation phase of this project among undergraduate Italian students enrolled in third-year courses for several reasons. First, during the pilot phase I found the undergraduate experience with Italian literature to be a rich context for research, and was intrigued by what I had observed. Over the course of the pilot data collection, I developed a relationship of trust with the undergraduate participants, who were willing participants. I also realized that it would be helpful to explore the experience of undergraduate Italian literature students first to better understand a graduate student's approach to Italian literature, since most non-Italian graduate students of Italian literature started off as undergraduate students of Italian literature.

Last, I realized that, as a graduate student myself, my position as a researcher might be questioned by those directing a graduate program in Italian literature. Due to the decentralized nature of graduate study, the value that university departments place on their graduate programs, and the uniqueness of each university graduate program, I was concerned that the Italian literature faculty might perceive my inquiry as a critique of their program and their graduate students, and by extension of their own practices as professors and program directors. For these reasons, I decided to continue the dissertation phase of this project among undergraduate students of Italian literature, who are also more likely to be characteristic of a larger population that extends beyond the research site. Although the conclusions in this dissertation are not intended to be generalizable, many of the features of this population are similar to those of populations of undergraduate students of Italian literature in other settings, and therefore the results are likely to have a wider application than if the participants had been graduate students, whose characteristics would have likely been less homogeneous.

During the pilot phase of this project, I approached the professor of the undergraduate "Introduction to Italian literature I" course, and she readily agreed to participate in this research. She expressed a vested interest in the outcome of my analysis, and was interested in the implications I might be able to share. As a researcher, I was grateful for her enthusiasm and motivation to participate.

I met with some degree of resistance in recruiting a participating professor during the following semester for the dissertation phase of this project, which I do not believe to have been influenced by the research I had conducted during the previous semester. The professor teaching "Introduction to Italian literature II," the second in a two-course, chronological introduction to Italian literature, that semester allowed me to attend her class on the first day, but decided later that week that she would not participate in data collection, citing a lack of physical space in the classroom. Since there were no other undergraduate literature courses offered that semester, I then had to reconsider my decision to avoid the graduate level of Italian literature study and arranged to observe a graduate-level Italian literature class taught by another professor.

As I began observing his class, he suggested I might want to observe an undergraduate course he was teaching, entitled "Writing Workshop," since they spent most of their class time discussing Italian literature. I was initially hesitant to focus on the Writing Workshop, since from all outward appearances, it was a course on writing, not literature. I quickly found, however, that each class meeting focused on an assigned reading, and the mechanics of writing were rarely addressed in class. The mismatch between the stated course topic and actual class practice will be discussed in Chapter 5. Although the course was called Writing Workshop, each class meeting discussed assigned literary readings, and writing itself was rarely addressed in class. In the end, I decided to use the Writing Workshop class as the research setting for the dissertation phase of this project. Although the structure of this course differed from Introduction to Italian literature I, which was the context of the pilot study, most of the students enrolled in the Writing Workshop were concurrently enrolled in Introduction to Italian literature II. Therefore, I observed the Writing Workshop class, and all of my focal participants were recruited from that class. With the permission of the professor of Introduction to Italian literature II, who was not otherwise involved in the pilot or dissertation study, my inquiry explored student engagement with material from both courses among the focal student participants who were enrolled concurrently in both of them.

To situate these courses, it is important to understand how they fit into the Italian degree program at Big State University (BSU). In order to major in Italian, BSU students had to complete eight courses (24 credits) beyond the four-semester language sequence. Of these, five third-year courses (15 credits) were required: an Italian culture course, two third-year language courses, and a two-semester sequence of Introduction to Italian literature. Students were therefore required to complete only three courses (nine credits) of their own choosing among ten undergraduate Italian elective courses (300- and 400-level) offered by the department in language, culture, literature, and film. Usually, no more than two of these elective courses were offered per semester at BSU. Undergraduate students could also take any courses at the 600-level, whose primary audience was graduate students of Italian literature. Undergraduate Italian majors could not count Literature in Translation courses towards the major requirements, although the language of instruction was not specified for their required courses, some of which were usually taught in English.

The prerequisite for all third- and fourth-year Italian courses at BSU was completion of the equivalent of four semesters of Italian language study. Since it was important to the Italian department at BSU to facilitate undergraduate degree completion within four years of study, students were not required to complete preparatory (third-year) "bridge" courses, such as the Writing Workshop, before enrolling in Italian literature courses. In fact, I observed that students of Italian at BSU were concurrently enrolled in a variety of courses, which they often chose based on the day and time they were offered, rather than a logical sequence of course enrollments. Upon a review of FL degree requirements at similar institutions, I found the practice of concurrent registration in FL literature courses and bridge courses to be fairly common among FL degree programs.

Research questions

Since qualitative inquiry is, by its very nature, exploratory, research questions are often best developed during the process of data collection, rather than at the outset (Croker, 2009). Qualitative researchers approach an inquiry with a purpose for the investigation, a conceptual framework, and an idea of the initial focus of interest, even though these may evolve during the process of data collection and analysis. Thus, qualitative inquiry is not formulaic, but a complex, nonlinear process, which was the case for the development of research questions in this study.

I developed the initial research questions for this dissertation based on several previous projects, and my own observations about students' experiences studying Italian literature. In this section I present the initial research questions I developed, and then describe how the research questions evolved based on observations made during the analysis of the pilot phase of this dissertation.

My interest in exploring the study of FL literature stems from personal experience, and I developed initial research questions to explore the underlying forces of what I considered to be the principal disconnects between some undergraduate Italian literature curricula and the population they serve. As a Masters student in Italian literature, I quickly became aware of the difference between my own values and practices with respect to Italian literature, and those of my chosen field of study, as was described in Chapter 1. My values and practices were not born in graduate school; instead, they grew out of the values and practices I had already begun developing throughout my life, and especially in my previous experience as an undergraduate student of Italian literature. Therefore, I created the first and second research questions with the intent of exploring how participants developed value systems and practices with regard to Italian literature:

1) What do advanced students of Italian literature value in literary texts and how do they construct this value system?; 2) What are the literacy events and practices employed by advanced students of Italian literature to access and create meaning in a literary text?

I also anticipated a misalignment of values between American students of Italian literature and their Italian literature curriculum, and this motivated the original third research question: 3) How does participation in a beginning literature course affect advanced students' access to the Discourse of an Italian literary text?

During the pilot phase of this project, I assumed that my participants' Italian language proficiency would be considered advanced in the context of their Italian literature course, by virtue of the prerequisite four semesters of language study, even though I expected to observe variation in proficiency among students enrolled in the course. Since my intention, at that time, was to conduct the dissertation phase of the project among graduate students of Italian literature, I did not focus on students' language proficiency during the pilot project.

After analyzing the pilot data according to the three research questions above, I found it necessary to modify these questions based on my observations. First, as suggested above, the participants were enrolled in third-year courses based on the prerequisite courses they had completed, rather than on their Italian language proficiency. Since their proficiency varied greatly, and was certainly not an appropriate means of distinguishing the participants in this study from other Italian learners, I felt it necessary to change the language of the questions from "advanced students of Italian" to "third-year Italian students." This label better fits the nature of their selection as participants through their enrollment in third-year undergraduate Italian courses and situates them somewhat chronologically in the curriculum, without implying achievement of a particular level of proficiency.

I also found it necessary to reconceptualize the original second research question (What are the literacy events and practices employed by advanced students of Italian literature to access and create meaning in a literary text?). As I discuss in Chapter 6, undergraduate students are assailed by numerous competing demands, both academic and nonacademic, and since Italian is not generally perceived as instrumental to their future careers, most of the focal student participants neglected regular reading and preparation for their Italian courses most of the time. Many of these competing demands took precedence over reading for their Italian classes, and what I often observed was a failure to participate in literacy events and practices. This observation led me to refocus the second research question, so that it might more adequately reflect the critical implications of my participants' situations. I therefore revised the second research question to read: "How do these students' values and practices with regard to Italian literature study affect their access to the discourse of Italian literature?" This question still examines students' literacy events and practices, but does so from within a critical framework, which ascribes meaning to students' involvement in Italian literature study. Furthermore, this modification teases apart the ideas of value system and student participation in learning, the latter of which will lead to more concrete implications for FL literature teaching.

Last, I realized that successful participation in a university FL literature curriculum in the United States entails a variety of practices and values that go beyond the ability to read and understand Italian literature, and include an understanding and awareness of the values prioritized in the discipline of Italian literature study in the

United States. In fact, I found this to be an important distinction, with significant ramifications for students' success in Italian literature study. Therefore, I also added this dimension of analysis to all three research questions. Table 4.1 below shows the initial and finalized research questions.

Table 4.1. Development of research questions from Pilot study to Dissertation study.

Research Question	**Pilot study**	**Dissertation study**
1	What do advanced students of Italian literature value in literary texts and how do they construct this value system?	What do third-year students of Italian literature value in literary study and how do they construct this value system?
2	What are the literacy events and practices employed by advanced students of Italian literature to access and create meaning in a literary text?	How do these students' values and practices with regard to Italian literature study affect their access to the discourse of Italian literature?
3	How does participation in a beginning literature course affect advanced students' access to the Discourse of an Italian literary text?	How does participation in a third-year literature course affect these students' access to the Discourse of Italian literature study?

Role of the researcher

Before discussing the specific methodologies employed in data collection, it is important to understand how I, as the researcher, fit into the research context. As a former student of Italian literature, I sympathized with students' struggles to read Italian literature in their third year of Italian language study, without adequate preparation or scaffolding, such as pre- or post-reading activities, to aid comprehension. At the same time, as a doctoral student, my perspective on school and learning was certainly different from that of the undergraduate students I was observing. Since I had completed an MA degree in Italian, lived abroad, and taught Italian classes, the student participants likely positioned me as having some level of authority and understanding of the subject matter. I was also approximately 15 years older than the focal student participants, and our age difference was certainly a factor in how we perceived each other.

At the beginning of the pilot phase of this investigation, the professor introduced me at the front of the room as a student researcher, but apart from this, I sat in the back corner and students rarely interacted with me. Since I was video recording class during that semester, the students were likely cognizant of my presence initially, although it seemed that they were less aware of the video recording equipment as time went on. For example, at the beginning of the pilot study, students would glance occasionally at the video camera, but as the semester progressed, they did so less often and appeared to be less guarded about behaviors such as sleeping and cell phone use in class. During the pilot project, I had little interaction with focal student participants outside of our pre-arranged meetings. The exception to this was the extensive observation I was able to do with Amanda, who invited me to observe her weekly tutoring sessions.

Throughout the dissertation phase of research, my presence was less obtrusive, partly because I was not video recording the class. Many of the students remembered me from the previous semester, and would occasionally ask me a question about the readings or class material before or after class. Many of the students, including some I had very little interaction with otherwise, asked me to help them reserve a projector and set it up for their in-class presentations. In this way, they may have positioned me as a teacher's aide.

Due to the positive relationship I was able to build with the focal student participants over the course of the data collection, they saw me as something of a benevolent tutor, with expertise in the subject matter, yet not overbearing in providing suggestions and help. Some of the students invited me to study group meetings as they prepared for exams for another Italian class, and these study sessions often lasted until well after midnight. At these study group sessions, I generally observed students' interactions and behavior, although students sometimes asked me questions about the subject material itself, or about what I thought the teacher wanted them to know about it. They sometimes asked simple questions, like requesting a definition of an Italian word found in their text. I usually only provided help and suggestions when asked to do so, although I occasionally offered my help spontaneously.

As I reflect on my own subjectivity, I realize that there were times when I felt more like a participant than an observer, particularly during these late night study sessions when I shared their fatigue, hunched over our notebooks until the wee hours of the morning. The paradoxical situation of a researcher who interacts in the research context to the point that they begin to consider themselves a participant was described most notably by Glesne (1999). As I conducted the present investigation, I played many roles, including researcher, observer, participant observer, mentor, tutor, writing tutor, colleague, and friend. These roles were never static or assumed, but varied throughout the course of the data collection.

In hopes of compensating the student participants in some way, I also offered to serve as an informal writing tutor, although I insisted we meet in person to go over their writing, since I didn't feel comfortable providing my suggestions on their writing electronically. A few of the focal student participants gladly accepted my offer of help, although they rarely wrote their assignments far enough in advance for me to be able to meet with them. Several times, student participants sent me their writing assignment by email just hours before the deadline, in hopes that I would make the corrections on the document for them. This put me in an awkward position, as I wanted to show my gratitude for their participation in my research, while at the same time providing honest and transparent tutoring services. In the end I was able to provide tutoring a few times to the focal student participants, even though I often had to decline to edit their papers electronically at the last minute. Since my inquiry focused on reading, and most of the student essays did not refer to class readings in any way, the occasional writing tutoring I provided did not interfere with my findings regarding reading and participation in the curriculum.

Several of the focal student participants complained that the cost of printing their readings was prohibitive. Therefore, I decided to offer to provide copies of the reading, in cases where students complained that it was too inconvenient or expensive to print them. It is important to note that this action may have influenced these students' participation and preparation for class, although it was clear that some of the students who requested a printed copy of the reading from me, nevertheless neglected to read their assignments.

Throughout the data collection phase of this study, I was aware of how my role, as researcher, would impact the quality of the data. I considered my relationships with the participants in this project to be of utmost importance, since the relationship of trust we built over time allowed the participants to share more intimate details and reflections on their experiences. By positioning myself as a sympathetic mentor, I was able to create positive and productive relationships with the focal student participants.

Data collection

This research was conducted with the approval of my degree-granting institution (Appendix A). All names found in this report are pseudonyms, and the identity of participants in the study has been protected by masking revealing details about them and the context. As I conducted and reported on this investigation, I made every effort to protect the privacy of the research participants. I did not inform the participating professor about which of his students were meeting with me individually as focal student participants and I was careful not to initiate interactions with them before and after class meetings in order not to reveal their participation, although the focal students themselves sometimes initiated conversations with me of their own accord.

During the planning of the pilot phase of this project, I proposed the following methods for collecting data: audio recorded structured interviews with the professor and focal students, video recorded class observations, short student-written reflections requested via email, video recorded observations of literature reading, audio recorded office hour visits, collection of primary documents, and video recorded study group observations. Of these data sources, short student-written reflections and video recorded study group observations were added after the pilot phase of the project, to provide additional perspective on how students perceived readings and class meetings, and how they interacted with classmates outside of class.

As it turned out, several of the proposed methods of data collection were not possible during the dissertation study, for a variety of reasons. Although I had been able to video record classes during the pilot phase of the project, the professor whose class I observed during the dissertation phase preferred I neither audio nor video record class meetings. He was concerned that my audio or video recording in class might make students nervous, and dissuade them from participating in class, which was a valid concern for this student population. Although video recordings of class meetings were not particularly useful sources of information on student interaction during the pilot phase, since students rarely spoke or interacted during that class, this may not have been the case during the class I observed for the dissertation phase of this research. In this second class, students participated regularly in class discussions, and therefore it might have been helpful to have audio or video recordings to support my observations. As it stands, my observations of class meetings were recorded only as handwritten ethnographic field notes.

Moreover, I was not able to collect audio recordings of office hour visits during either stage of this investigation. The professor whose class I observed during the pilot project claimed that no students visited her office during the semester. I did not request audio recordings of office hour visits during the dissertation phase of data collection because of the professor's stated preference that the class not be audio or video recorded because I assumed he would maintain a similar stance with regard to audio recording his office hours.

Given that this inquiry focuses on undergraduate students' initial interactions with Italian literature, I intended to focus on students enrolled in two semester-long courses: Introduction to Italian literature I (covering Italian literature from the medieval period to the Enlightenment) and Introduction to Italian literature II (covering Italian literature from the Enlightenment to the modern day). During the pilot project, I observed Introduction to Italian literature I with the permission of the professor of that course.

Although I intended to observe Introduction to Italian literature II during the dissertation phase of data collection, the professor of that course declined to participate in this research. Therefore, I met with the professor of the only other third-year Italian course that was taught that semester, and he agreed to allow me to observe his course, entitled Writing Workshop, which is described in detail in Chapter 5.

Methods of data collection

The table below outlines the timeline and methods of data collection during this semester-long research project. A more detailed description of each of these methods is provided on the following pages.

Table 4.2. Timeline of data collection for the dissertation study

Method	**Time period**	**Content**
Class observations	January 2012-May 2012	- ethnographic field notes
Professor interview (initial)	February 2012	- teaching experience - description of current course - expectations of students - importance of curriculum in literature study Audio recorded
Focal student interview (initial)	February 2012	- background characteristics - how students prepare readings for class - importance of curriculum in literature study Audio recorded
First reading observations	March 2012	Video recorded
Second reading observations	April 2012	Video recorded
Collection of primary documents	May 2012	- syllabus - class emails and teacher/focal student correspondence - focal students' readers - focal students' exams and

		assignments
Final interviews with students and professors	May 2012	Audio recorded

The methods employed in this project were intended to respond to the three research questions presented earlier in this chapter. The table below describes which particular methods of data collection were meant to respond to each question.

Table 4.3. Relationship between research questions and methods of data collection.

Research Question	**Methods**
1. What do third-year students of Italian literature value in literary study and how do they construct this value system?	Class observations Structured interviews with students Reading observations Collection of primary documents
2. How do these students' values and practices with regard to Italian literature study affect their access to the discourse of Italian literature?	Structured interviews with students Structured interviews with professor Reading observations Collection of primary documents
3. How does participation in a third-year literature course affect these students' access to the Discourse of Italian literature study?	Class observations Structured interviews with professor Structured interviews with students Collection of primary documents

Class observations.

Participant observation has been described as a defining characteristic of ethnographic research (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland, & Lofland, 2001). Cowie (2009) describes observation as "the conscious noticing and detailed examination of participants' behavior in a naturalistic setting" (p. 166). Wolcott (1988) further divides observation into three tiers, which vary depending on how the researcher interacts in the research setting: participant observant, privileged observer, and limited observer. Although my relationship to each participant varied over time, my position in classroom observations could best be described as that of a minimally obtrusive, limited observer, although, as will be shown, my role eventually evolved into that of a privileged observer.

Purcell-Gates (2011) describes the primary position of the researcher in a classroom ethnography to be that of an observer rather than a participant, since the researcher's general aim is to understand the different aspects of classroom life as they might happen naturally, with minimal interference from the researcher (p. 144). Thus, even though this study should not be strictly considered an ethnography, I maintained the position of quiet observer in the Writing Workshop, and was not involved in the enactment of the lesson, except in those instances in which I was directly addressed by either the professor or one of the students.

Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen (1994) described how observation could reveal themes and ideas that lie beneath the surface of classroom interaction:

> Teachers and students follow familiar routines and activities in schools and often have quite fixed values, beliefs, and assumptions about what does or should go on there. Observation can help uncover these familiar and fixed aspects of education and 'help demystify what is actually going on as opposed to what we might hope or assume is happening.' (p. 129)

Thus, observation is a helpful tool for exposing the values, beliefs, and assumptions that motivate behavior in the classroom.

For this dissertation, I observed an intact third-year Italian class regularly throughout the semester. I took ethnographic field notes as I observed, and those notes serve as the basis for my remarks on participant behavior in the classroom. Classroom observation was particularly useful for understanding how students participated within the framework of a third-year Italian literature course, which addresses the third research question (How does participation in a third-year literature course affect these students' access to the Discourse of Italian literature study?). This data source also provided insight into complex relationships in the FL literature classroom, among students, the professor, the literary text and the field of literary study.

These observations helped me better understand the research context, and provided a background through which to understand participants' own descriptions of the class and the literature they read. Thus, classroom observations also address the first research question (What do third-year students of Italian literature value in literary study and how do they construct this value system?). They allowed me to observe how the professors' expectations were conveyed and how students responded to these expectations. I found it useful to compare both professors' and students' statements from the interviews with my observations of classroom interaction. This element of the project addressed the first research question, as it shed light on which elements of literature were emphasized in class, by the professor, and by the students. Careful analysis of the ways literature was treated in the classroom reveals how literature was valued in this setting and how students approached the Discourse of Italian literature.

Additionally, class observations served as a means of identifying and recruiting focal participants who were selected to represent a variety of perspectives. By observing interaction and classroom behavior, I was able to identify students who portrayed various degrees of participation and (perceived) success in their Italian literature course. I identified focal students who demonstrated differing levels of preparation and participation in class. For example, I recruited both focal students who voluntarily spoke frequently in class and students who generally avoided speaking in class.

At the beginning of the pilot phase of this study, I video recorded several class meetings throughout the semester. However, because as noted, during the dissertation phase the participating professor requested that no video or audio recordings be made, I therefore agreed to observe his class regularly and take detailed field notes, but was not able to rely on recordings in recreating detailed transcripts of what took place in class. Although using my field notes as the primary data source for classroom interaction is not ideal, I will rely on these notes in the analysis that follows, in order to be able to discuss student participation in class with some degree of detail.

The focal class met two afternoons per week for 75 minutes each time. I attended all classes during the 15-week-long semester, with the exception of three classes when I was unavailable, for a total of 25 observations. Except for the first couple of observations, I sat in the front corner of the room. Once students had self-selected a relatively fixed seating pattern in class, it would have been obtrusive for me to change places. My habitual, continuous presence in the classroom was also a mitigating factor in reducing the obtrusion of the presence of a researcher in class (Purcell-Gates, 2011, p. 144).

It became apparent that some students thought I may have been assisting the professor, since Boldini (pseudonym)[16] occasionally asked me for help in remembering a term or idea, since he was aware of my knowledge of Italian language and Italian literature. In fact, one day the student who was sitting next to me noticed that I was taking notes about what had been happening in class. He was concerned because he had been writing out an assignment for another class by hand in his notebook during class discussion, and feared I would report his off-task behavior to the professor. I quietly assured this student that my research notes would not be shared with his professor, which seemed to put him at ease.

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[16] I refer to the participating professor by his last name only, Boldini, since this is how students referred to him when they spoke about him outside of class.

Reading observations.

Once I had recruited focal student participants, I made individual appointments to observe them as they read for class. Although I would have preferred to observe students at the time and place they normally studied, most of the participants claimed to study late at night, if at all, in their living quarters or sometimes while at work. Because it would have been awkward and inconvenient to schedule reading observations at times and locations in which they would naturally occur, I instead met with students at a campus location of their choice, usually a private study room at the library. I observed each participant on at least two occasions, for a minimum of one hour per session. I was able to observe some of the focal student participants outside of class on a more regular basis, since they also invited me to study groups several times during the semester. These study sessions were usually held either at the library or a local eatery, late at in the evening. Study sessions often lasted three hours or more.

The reading observations shed light on the means that students employed in preparing assigned readings. By observing what resources (English translations, anthologies, internet sites, and online dictionaries, for example) students utilized in their preparation, I hoped to better understand what kinds of literacy products and practices they believed would help them uncover meaning in Italian literature. This kind of information primarily addressed the second research question (How do these students' values and practices with regard to Italian literature study affect their access to the discourse of Italian literature?), but also provided a complementary source of information in response to the first research question (What do third-year students of Italian literature value in literary study and how do they construct this value system?).

I expected that participant observation outside of class would provide me with greater insight about what happened in the classroom, as suggested by Hymes (1972, p. xxiii). Although I began this study in the position of a limited observer on all fronts, over time I gained greater access to participants and interacted with them outside of class on a more informal scale, so that my role evolved into that of a privileged observer (Wolcott, 1988).

Structured interviews with professor and focal students.

After observing a couple of classes, I interviewed Boldini in his office. This first interview occurred in early February, near the beginning of the semester. The semi-structured interview (see Appendix D for specific questions) focused on four main topics: teaching experience, description of current course, expectations of students, and importance of curriculum in literature study. The semi-structured interview can be seen as a compromise between a structured interview and an open interview, which allows for some conformity and comparison of professor and student responses, while encouraging the richness of insight that can be derived from a free-form open interview format. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer has a clear picture of the topics to be covered, but is flexible in approaching them.

The questions in this interview elicited Boldini's perspective on all three research questions, and responded in particular to the second and third research questions (How do these students' values and practices with regard to Italian literature study affect their access to the discourse of Italian literature?; How does participation in a third-year Italian course affect these students' access to the Discourse of Italian literature study?) by providing insight into curricular expectations of students.

Once focal student participants had been identified and recruited, I conducted a similar initial interview with them. Focal student interviews (see Appendix D for specific questions) elicited their perspectives on all three research questions. As the interviewer, it was important that I maintain a neutral role throughout the data collection, by refraining from offering my own opinions (Fontana & Frey, 1998, 52).

I modified and adapted the interview as I administered it, and found that it was helpful to be flexible and responsive to the context of each interview. For example, when interviewing Jared, I spent a significant portion of his interviews building a rapport, and when asking questions, I often asked several follow-up questions, since he was generally less talkative than the other student participants.

The focal student participants were interviewed a second time, near the end of the semester, after the final exam had been administered. Final interview protocols for the focal students were determined based on information collected during the semester. A general student interview protocol for the final interview is included in Appendix F, although I also asked individualized questions to each participant based on what I had observed throughout the data collection period.

Primary documents.

I collected several primary documents from focal students, including class notes, textbooks, exams, assignments, feedback from the professor, and email correspondence between the participant and their professor. These materials were helpful in a number of ways. First, by analyzing students' class notes and their marginal notes and highlighting in textbooks, I hoped to better understand which elements of their readings students considered to be of importance. This information corresponds to the first research question (What do third-year students of Italian literature value in literary study and how do they construct this value system?). Feedback and emails from the professor shed light on how the professor framed and valued course material and student contributions.

Data analysis

Upon completion of data collection, I had a corpus of over 60 hours of audio and video recordings to transcribe. These recordings included video recordings of class meetings (pilot study), video recordings of student reading observations (both pilot and dissertation study), audio recordings of interviews (both pilot and dissertation study), and video recordings of study group meetings (dissertation study). I used QuickTime Player to play back the audio and video files as I transcribed them in a Microsoft Word document. I found that it was usually helpful to wear headphones as I transcribed, and this made it easier to decipher difficult recordings.

As I transcribed the audio and video recordings, I began to notice several themes emerging, and I coded the transcriptions, my field notes, and the primary documents according to these themes. Since conducting research entails reflective and recursive processes, it is clear that, "data collection, analysis, interpretation, and writing are not exclusive processes but overlap and happen simultaneously" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995/2006, p. 97). In fact, data analysis and interpretation began somewhat spontaneously during data collection, and continued throughout the process of transcription and coding.

Coding

For the dissertation study, I initially planned to adopt a coding system developed by Eeds and Wells (1989) and Kim (2004). Eeds and Wells (1989) investigated the meaning-making process in literature discussions among young school children. They developed four categories for coding student discussion: literal comprehension, personal connections, interpretation, and evaluation (Eeds & Wells, 1989). Kim (2004) performed a similar study among adult ESL learners, and added a fifth category, cross-cultural themes (p. 150). I expected that these categories might be useful in answering the first research question (What do third-year students of Italian literature value in literary study and how do they construct this value system?) and the third research question (How does participation in a third-year literature course affect these students' access to the Discourse of Italian literature study?).

Although my intention was to adopt this system of coding for my research, I found that these categories did not seem to group the data according to the ideas I deemed to be most salient. Therefore I discarded the idea of using these pre-set categories in the early stages of data analysis and while I was still in the process of collecting data, since, as stated earlier, I found the collection and analysis of data to be a dialectal process. I found it more beneficial to instead allow coding themes to emerge spontaneously as I continued collecting data and transcribing interviews and field notes. This practice and the challenge of allowing ideas and themes to arise from the data is characteristic of grounded theory, and as this project progressed my research process increasingly reflected a grounded theory approach (Holden, 266).

As I collected and transcribed data, I copied relevant excerpts from the source material into a series of separate Microsoft Word documents according to themes I thought might be interesting, even if they did not directly relate to the research questions I had in mind. The themes which emerged from the data, not all of which were addressed in this dissertation, included: talk about classmates, what the professor wants you to know, ownership of learning, grades, non-studying study group behavior, vocabulary, short cuts around learning, student difficulties with language, student difficulties with unclear expectations/grading, student difficulties with reading, student criticism of curriculum, unpreparedness, note-taking practices, participation, and positive associations with reading.

I later collapsed some of these themes into one category since many of them overlapped. For example, I grouped all the data about student difficulties into one category and used digital color-coded highlighting to mark each entry according to source of difficulty, which allowed me to visually compare the kinds of student difficulties which presented themselves most frequently in the data. Several of these themes, including talk about classmates, vocabulary, and note-taking practices were not explicitly included in this dissertation, even though I expect to include the data under these headings in future reports on this study.

Subjectivity

While analyzing the data, it is important that the researcher keep in mind that what participants say is not necessarily representative of how things really stand, and therefore participants' utterances should not be taken at face value. In an article about qualitative interview practice, Talmy (2010) warns against researchers' tendency to provide a simple presentation of data, rather than engaging in a careful analysis of the content. Talmy cites Block (2000) to make the case that interview data, as well as the roles of interviewers and interviewees, should be problematized as part of data analysis, rather than taking participants "at their word" (p. 129).

Indeed, to take participants' words and interactions at face value would be a naïve perspective on the research data. Participants' outward expressions are shaped by how the participant wishes to be perceived, how they perceive the researcher, and by their perception of the context itself. Wendt (2003) elaborates this idea and explains how understanding of the context of learning can shed light on acquisition:

> Hence semantic domains of reference are not real, but already interpreted and therefore mental contexts. Foreign language instruction has to deal with these contexts when wanting to provide learning contexts and to promote context sensitivity. And if the description of the learners' realities in their cognitive, emotional and physical state is regarded as a task of language acquisition research, it has to direct its attention toward the external reality of the learners as interpreted context and toward their mental reality as interpreting context. (p. 95)

Thus, the external, etic reality of the participants in language acquisition research must be carefully deconstructed to better understand their perspective from an emic point of view.

Wendt (2003) further extolls the importance of a qualitative methodology for understanding a localized context by explaining why a positivistic perspective may not be able to accurately portray certain aspects of FL learning:

> Traditional research assuming objective facts may indeed be more convenient to handle. Nevertheless, it has not even been able to do justice to a foreign language methodology which is heavily loaded with presentation and input. And this is due to the impossibility of fully accounting for external factors and of proving linear cause and effect relations in the field of foreign language learning. It becomes even more implausible with the reinterpretation of learning contexts sketched above as "causes" for widely self-determined acting and learning.
>
> Therefore, contemporary research has to be prepared to answer exactly these questions about perception of world and self. In search of the processes constituting these perceptions and leading to a specific way of dealing with them, research must not recoil from continuously encountering the learning subject in his/her uniqueness. (p. 102)

Accordingly, the researcher's analysis is meant to go beyond the surface representation of ideas to tease out the subtle ideas behind them. This analysis should transparently show the researcher's hand in interpreting the data. In fact, Talmy (2010) reframes interviewing as a social practice, which entails a focus on the ideologies inherent in the interview process, such that when interviews are not taken at face value, but function as situated data to be deconstructed, they function as an "epistemological conduit" to their worldview (pp. 129-131).

Taking interviewees' words at face value is problematic, especially for a constructivist paradigm, because of the numerous factors that shape the contributions of the interviewee, including their rapport with the interviewer, potentially leading questions, and the variable psychological state of the interviewee. Participants' interactions in the classroom can also be similarly shaped by a number of localized factors. Therefore, as I reviewed the transcripts of the interviews and observations I conducted during the data collection period, I was careful to consider the contextual and individual factors that might have motivated participants' statements, and that is explicitly presented in my discussion of the findings.

In this chapter, I have presented the methodology that guided data collection and analysis in this project. The next chapter describes the research site and focal participants, several of whom were also enrolled in the class I observed during the pilot phase of this research. Amanda and Jared, who were described in the pilot study reported on in Chapter 3, elected to continue participation in the dissertation study, and will be presented in greater detail in Chapter 5, which describes the context and participants in the dissertation study.

Chapter 5: The Writing Workshop and its participants

Introduction

In this chapter, I set the stage for the rest of the dissertation by providing a detailed description of the research setting and participants. I begin by introducing the professor and the course I observed, followed by a detailed description of the focal student participants in this research. For reasons of space and coherence, I will limit these descriptions to the five focal student participants discussed in this dissertation, although in actuality nine focal students participated in this research. Additional rationale for the choice to focus on these five student participants is provided later in this chapter.

Professor Michele Boldini

The professor of the Writing Workshop class I observed during this research, Michele Boldini (pseudonym), was a professor[17] at Big State University, and had been teaching at that institution for several years. He had over 20 years' experience teaching all levels of Italian language and literature to undergraduate and graduate students. Most of the undergraduate students in this class addressed him as "Boldini" in class, and called him either "Boldini" or (less often) "Michele" when talking about him with classmates. As explained in Chapter 4, I will generally refer to him as Boldini to reflect the students' practice in this regard.

During our initial interview, Boldini recalled having some basic preparation in language teaching many years ago, when he was a graduate teaching assistant. He remembered including literature when teaching both first- and second-year language classes, and described in an interview how he used to go through poems word by word, as well as talk about genre and literary devices in his beginning-level classes. Boldini saw the inclusion of Italian literature from the very beginning of Italian language study to be an aid to language learning: “So teaching these texts you start to understand that teaching literature, one can explain the literature not just as a story, but also as a language exercise, to improve language” (Initial interview, February 2012).

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[17] The tenure status (as well as other important descriptive details such as native speaker status) of the professors described in this research is purposely not included here in order to protect these participants' identity.

Boldini’s enthusiasm for teaching Italian literature was easily apparent throughout the semester, especially due to his engaging stance. While teaching, he moved around the front of the classroom and used dramatic gestures and voices to elicit students’ attention and participation. Even after injuring his knee mid-semester, Boldini found it difficult to remain stationary while teaching, and relied on crutches as he moved about the classroom. He displayed a jovial demeanor, which seemed to ingratiate him with his undergraduate students. His class was conducted entirely in Italian, and he often made complicated plays on words or jokes as an aside, even though most students wouldn’t have been able to understand them due to their linguistic complexity. Regardless, he portrayed a light-hearted, kind disposition, and his students spoke about him outside of class, both in interviews and amongst themselves, in positive terms.

It is interesting to note that I initially observed a graduate-level literature course taught by Boldini, before he invited me to observe his undergraduate-level course. In the undergraduate-level class, Boldini’s demeanor was strikingly different from what I had observed during the graduate-level class. In the latter, he remained seated for the entirety of the class (three hours), and spent nearly the entire class period lecturing. The graduate students in that class listened attentively, but rarely had an opportunity to offer comments or questions. Thus, I was initially surprised at the degree to which Boldini engaged his undergraduate students during class discussions. It was apparent that he made a concerted effort to create opportunities for his undergraduate students to develop their language proficiency as well as think critically about the subject matter.

In fact, Boldini claimed that the biggest change he had made in his teaching over the years was to be more aware of his audience. In an interview, he said:

> When I first started, ... I was less aware of the audience, the difference between the audience for this course or that course. It wasn't necessarily always clear to me that a 400-level class has certain needs and a 600-level class has certain needs. Now I think I am more aware, … because year after year, [I have been] teaching different courses, realizing that those different numbers have different meanings, making me aware of the different goals. (Interview 2, April 2012)

Part of this new awareness of his audience extends beyond the interactive stance I recognized in his undergraduate class, to a purposeful revision of the Writing Workshop based on his perception of students' changing interests and motivations. Over time, Boldini had realized that his students were less interested in literature and in creative writing than they were in Italian culture, and therefore he has de-emphasized the importance of literature and the genre of creative writing in his Writing Workshop course to reflect this:

> When I started teaching [the Writing Workshop], it was definitely a more literary course, and more focused on being a writing workshop, as the title says. Now, not only are the readings not necessarily the readings I would like to have for a

> creative writing course, but even the assignments are different from the ones I used to require. Even though I tell the students they can write creatively, it doesn't happen. As long as they practice writing in Italian at a certain level, and hopefully writing in *good* Italian. (Interview 2, April 2012)

Thus Boldini had refocused his attention on students' language proficiency, rather than on what he considered *literary* endeavors. He stated several times that he considered his current Writing Workshop course to be less *literary* than in the past, both in terms of writing and reading. For example, he changed the nature of the readings he assigned, since he perceived students to be less interested in literature, especially poetry, than they might be in contemporary Italian culture:

> [Before], I wasn't even interested in cultural aspects of the Italian world. Instead now I'm more open. I insert stories in the syllabus that are more in touch with the contemporary understanding of the Italian world, from a perspective of the average undergraduate student who is not necessarily interested in reading literature all the time. (Interview 2, April 2012)

Even though Boldini felt constrained to modify his Writing Workshop syllabus and goals to deemphasize literature and creative writing, he also made a concerted effort to distance the course from first- and second-year language courses by purposely not giving space in class to grammar review:

> I'm doing my best to keep a literary level. I don't want a course at the 300-level to be a course in which we always deal with grammar and syntax. Of course, grammar and syntax are still problems, and we need to fix them. (Interview 2, April 2012)

Despite this comment, in reality, Boldini focused on helping students improve grammar and syntax when writing in Italian, although the majority of this process took place outside of class. He did this by commenting primarily on the grammar and syntax mistakes he found in their writing assignments, rather than on the content, theme, or complexity of their writing, even though he did precisely the opposite in class. To illustrate this point, upon receiving Boldini's comments and corrections on the first draft of her first composition, Stacie (one of the focal participants in this research) noted than many of her errors involved the incorrect use of prepositions. She then raised her hand in class to ask if they could go over the basic rules for the use of prepositions. Boldini responded that there was no longer time to focus on grammatical issues during class time, and suggested Stacie and other students use their textbooks from first- and second-year Italian to review grammatical topics such as prepositions on their own.

In an interview later in the semester, Boldini reiterated his position that third-year classes were not an appropriate place to work on grammar:

> That's why at the beginning of the semester I tell students, "Do you have your grammar book? If you don't have it, go get it somehow because you need to have it on your desk." Not in class. I don't go over grammar *ever*. And sometimes I should ((laughing)), but I don't want to do that, because if I do that once, I have to do it every week. (Final interview, May 2012)

Thus, Boldini was aware that his third-year Italian students still needed to work on their Italian grammar, but he felt it was their responsibility to work on this outside of class, using grammar references. As he described above, part of the reason for this perspective was because he believed if he addressed grammar questions in class once, grammar might become a recurring theme in class discussions, which did not fit in with his vision for the Writing Workshop.[18] In fact, he went on to describe why he preferred not to discuss grammar in class. He considered third-year classes to be an opportunity for a full-immersion experience in class, where language is no longer the focus, but instead the mode of communication:

> And instead, now, that's what I want to instill in the students' minds. It's time to use the grammar as if it were your own native tongue. And I know it's not, and it will take a while, for some a shorter while than for others, but the goal is that of not using this language as a foreign language anymore. At least in the hour and 15 minutes we are together. Instead, if we keep going back to the grammar book, we are always treating this language as something that is alien to us, that is over there. The grammar book is at home, and we are in this context, this no-window room, this lab in which for an hour and 15 minutes, there is nothing but Italy, Italian culture, etc. (Final interview, May 2012)

Hence, Boldini's decision to avoid discussing grammar in class was based on his desire to create an immersion-like experience for his students. Although his rationale was not always apparent to students, Boldini felt he could best support their language skills by asking them to resolve their uncertainties with regard to Italian grammar on their own.

The Writing Workshop

After the completion of the pilot study, I had intended to observe Introduction to Italian literature II for the dissertation phase of this research. However, as explained earlier, the professor of that course declined to participate in data collection, which meant I needed to find another undergraduate Italian course focusing on literature. After observing a graduate course in Italian literature taught by Boldini, he suggested I might be interested in observing his undergraduate course, since his students would be reading literature, and their class discussions would focus on the literature they had read. I had not originally considered observing this course, since it was entitled Writing Workshop, but I welcomed Boldini's invitation wholeheartedly. As it turned out, class discussions focused almost exclusively on reading, even though the majority of students' grades centered on the compositions they were asked to write outside of class.

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[18] It should be noted that Boldini rarely taught first- or second-year courses in Italian, and had not done so for many years, so it would not be possible to compare how he might teach language and grammar skills in a first- or second-year language course.

Description of course and syllabus.

Big State University's online schedule of classes lists the name "Writing Workshop" for the course, along with the following description of its contents: "Development of composition and editing skills with focus on grammatical accuracy, conventions, and rhetorical techniques for organizing information, presenting coherent arguments, and appropriateness of language to topic" (BSU online schedule of classes). Since this description focuses on writing development, I had not anticipated that this course might focus on literary readings. Similarly, the title of the course listed on the syllabus in three separate lines, was: "Advanced Composition and Conversation / Writing Workshop / *Laboratorio di scrittura* [Writing laboratory] " (Syllabus, Writing Workshop).

The syllabus also contained a description of the course, which was slightly different from the version found on the university schedule of classes:

> Development of composition skills related to expository and other forms of writing, with focus on grammatical skills, conventions, rhetorical techniques for organizing information, presenting coherent arguments, and appropriateness of language to topic. Substantial work on the development of writing strategies for composing and editing (vocabulary, revising, and rewriting) through several short papers and a final long paper. (Syllabus, Writing Workshop)[19]

The description of the course listed in the syllabus is quite similar to the one students might have seen in the online class schedule as they enrolled in this course. The last sentence of the course description found in the syllabus gave greater detail about the focus of the course, writing development. This description lists three primary foci of writing development: vocabulary, revising, and rewriting. However, vocabulary was the only one of these three elements that was addressed during class discussion. Revising and rewriting were only briefly mentioned in class, although Boldini provided personalized feedback on student drafts, and encouraged students to edit and revise their short papers according to this feedback.

Focus on reading.

I found it interesting that the mechanics of writing were never directly addressed in the Writing Workshop. Perhaps this is because Boldini had refocused the course around students' preferences, making it less of a writing workshop than the course's title implies. In fact, students were allowed to choose topics or styles of their own preference for their compositions, and the only requirement was the quantity of writing (seven compositions, 500 words each. No final long paper was assigned despite the course description above). Boldini provided students with a key to decoding his annotations on their drafts, so they could revise and turn in their corrected compositions to improve their grades. Furthermore, although reading and conversational skills were never assessed, class discussions centered on these two skills. About 4 weeks into the semester, Boldini reminded the class about his rationale for including such a variety of readings. He said that he intended for class meetings on Tuesdays to focus on a “light” reading, with emphasis on vocabulary development and cultural learning. Thursdays, on the other hand, were generally reserved for the reading of chapters from *A ciascuno il suo* [To each his own], a novel by Leonardo Sciascia published in 1966, which provided more opportunity for the development of reading comprehension and analytical skills. The reading materials will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

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[19] See Appendix H to reference the full course syllabus.

The classroom.

The Writing Workshop met for 75 minutes, twice per week. The classroom had been previously used as a recording studio, so the ceiling was painted black and remnants of a hanging curtain system still hung around the window-less room. Boldini complained about the lack of windows, but was unable to find a more aesthetically pleasing room for the class. The front of the room was covered by a row of blackboards, with a rectangular desk in the center, for the teacher. Moveable student desks lined the perimeter of the room, with an additional row of desks in the middle. At the beginning of the semester, I chose a spot in the back corner of the room, but this area was soon taken over by students, as it was a “prime” location, where students who did not want to speak in class could attempt to hide, in hopes the professor would not call on them. I thus repositioned myself at the far side of the front of the classroom, next to the unused overhead projector, where I could unobtrusively look on the class from the front. As the semester progressed, I often used the overhead projector as a table to hold my books, because the student desks were so small. Before sitting down, I would routinely switch my chair for a nicer one if possible, since several of the old chairs were wobbly or noisy and I didn't want to call any undue attention to myself.

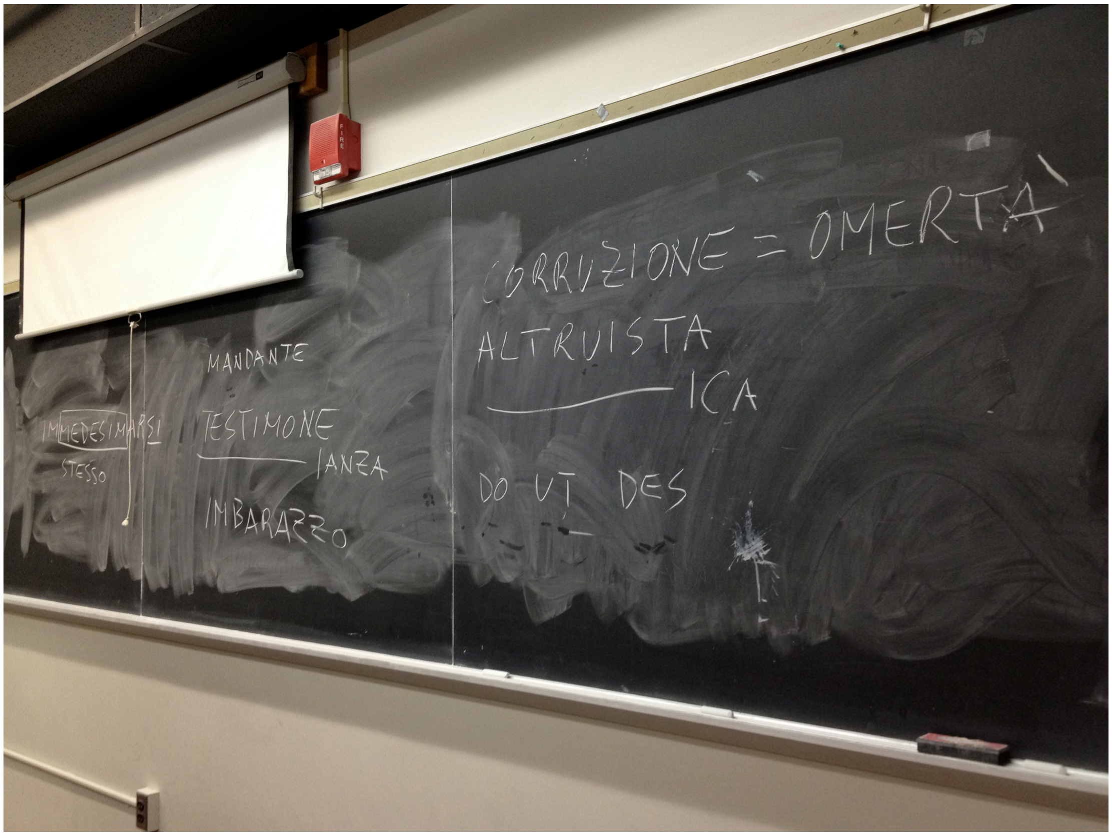
Because the majority of the students in the class were also enrolled in an Italian class that met before the Writing Workshop on another floor of the same building, they would walk down the stairs of the building in a sort of informal procession, and arrive to the classroom in a large group. A few students would use the 15 minutes between classes to use the restroom, buy a snack from the vending machine, or print off an essay in the computer lab. Before class, many of the students would chat together about their other classes or the assigned reading for that day. Once Boldini entered the room, the noise from the students' conversations would fade quickly, and he would often engage a few students in basic conversation before the bell rang to announce the official beginning of class.

Mechanics of class discussion.

Most of the 75-minute class was dedicated to a question-and-answer type lecture, where Boldini asked a variety of questions about the text, and encouraged students to volunteer answers. Most of the time, his questions were directed at the class at large, and most of the answers to his questions were volunteered by just a few students. Boldini attempted to involve a variety of students, by specifically asking each student a question he thought they might be able to answer, although many of them were hesitant to respond regardless of the nature of the question. The topics of these questions ranged from vocabulary to thematic ideas, and students were encouraged to contribute their personal ideas and reflections.

During class discussion, Boldini would frequently write new words on the board. It appeared that he had not planned in advance which words he would focus on, but instead made these decisions during class discussion when he noticed words he thought might be difficult or unknown to students. He was careful to always write the infinitive of verbs, or to highlight the root of nouns, verbs, and adjectives when possible. He often provided variations of these words based on the root, as can be seen in Figure 5.1 below. In the middle section of the board, he wrote the noun “TESTIMONE” [witness], which is one of the words that arose in class discussion from that day’s reading, and which Boldini must have assumed to be unfamiliar to most students in the class. Underneath “TESTIMONE,” he drew a long line, to indicate the part of the word that was related to a similar word he introduced, which was based on the same root (“testimon”), followed by an alternate ending (“-----------IANZA”, meaning “TESTIMONIANZA”, or in English, “testimony”). Boldini used the same method for introducing another term from the reading, “ALTRUISTA” [altruist] on the right-hand side of the board, after which he wrote “-------ICA”, meaning “ALTRUISTICA” [altruistic] underneath.

Figure 5.1. Vocabulary presented on the blackboard during a typical Writing Workshop class.


MANDANTE
IMMEDESIMARSI
STESSO
TESTIMONE
IANZA
IMBARAZZO
CORRUZIONE = OMERTÀ
ALTRUISTA
ICA
DO UT DES

A few times, students asked about a word in the text that Boldini had written on the board during a previous class, and instead of writing the word again, he would try to help the class remember its meaning by asking the rest of the class if they remembered it. Usually, one of the more vocal students in class was able to recall the meaning of the word.

In class, Boldini was always on his feet and animated, pacing and moving to different areas of the front of the classroom as he spoke. He would usually write the new words on the board wherever he happened to be standing, which meant they were often scattered around the chalkboard, not in a linear order. Students did not appear to take many notes during class, although most students would write down the words from the board directly in their texts. Since vocabulary was given such a prominent place on the chalkboard, students were especially attentive to writing those words in their notes, even if they did not remember what the words meant.

Use of technology.

At the very beginning of the semester, Boldini insisted that there be no use of technology during class. He prohibited the use of laptops and recorders in the classroom, which is possibly part of the reason he did not allow me to audio or video record in class. During an interview (March 2012), he recounted an experience from a previous class, where he could hear one of his undergraduate students furiously typing during the lecture, and since she didn't even pause when the class was silent, he assumed that she was not taking notes on his lecture. When he confronted her later about what she had been typing, she replied that she had already studied that day's reading in a previous semester, so she was writing a paper instead of paying attention to the class. This response seemed to leave Boldini flabbergasted, and he has since insisted that students not use laptops in class. In fact, he went so far as to specify that students may use technology (i.e., projector, speakers, laptop) for their in-class presentation, but as soon as the presentation was over, it should all be closed and put away.

I found it interesting that, despite his warnings, a few students would occasionally keep their laptops out on their desks during class. These students were generally following along in the electronic copy of that day's reading. Many of the class readings were sent to students in PDF format via email, often on the day before they were to be discussed. Some students failed to print these readings, for a variety of reasons. For example, among the focal student participants, Amanda and Bobby claimed that they didn't have time to read them before class, and Stacie claimed she didn't print the readings because printing was expensive, especially for something she may not have time to read (Final interviews, May 2012). Jared, one of the focal student participants from the pilot study who also participated in the dissertation study, said he didn't print all of the readings in order to conserve ink and paper, and because he probably wouldn't have read them anyway (Final interview, May 2012).

I later found out that some of the students who used the digital versions of the readings in class would later print them as they prepared for the final exam. For example, Bobby, one of the focal student participants, sometimes brought his computer to class so he could follow along in the reading, since he had not printed it out. However, he printed the readings at the end of the semester in order to study for the final. He later told me: "Usually I have to have a paper copy. I have a horrible time reading on the computer, whether it's Italian or English. I just don't like looking at a computer screen for that long. I like to mark up stuff a lot, you can put comments on PDFs and stuff, but it's just not the same." (Final interview, May 2012). Perhaps Bobby had not considered that he would need to go back and review the readings before the final, or else he might have printed them out in advance, rather than following along on his computer during class.

Assigned readings.

The readings in the syllabus came from three main sources: a scanned copy of an out-of-print edition of the novel *A ciascuno il suo* [To Each His Own] by Leonardo Sciascia, short stories scanned from Boldini's volumes of Italian literature from the 1900's (which Boldini referred to as "PDF readings" in class), and *Trame* [Plots], a reader containing excerpts of modern Italian fiction. Each week, Tuesday's class would focus on a reading from either *Trame* or the PDF readings, and Thursday's class would focus on assigned chapters from *A ciascuno il suo.*

Boldini sent a scanned electronic copy of *A ciascuno il suo* to all students enrolled in the course at the beginning of the semester. It was divided into six separate documents, containing approximately three chapters (20 pages) each. The edition of *A ciascuno il suo* used in this class contained 235 pages, which were scanned so that two pages of the text fit on each page of the PDF documents sent to students, resulting in a total of 127 pages (including front materials and an index) that students were asked to print and bring to class. At Big State University's campus computer labs, it cost seven cents per page for printing, so students could expect to spend no more than $8.89 to print the entirety of *A ciascuno il suo*.

Those students who printed their readings usually did so one set of chapters at a time, as they were discussed in class. Jared was fortunate to have access to free printing at his part time job in a computer lab on campus, so he did print the assigned readings before class. I happened to notice in class one day that Jared's copy must have been printed on a laser printer that was low on toner, because the ink was so light in some places that it appeared there were vertical stripes through his reading, which must have made it more difficult to read. Jared had also printed several chapters of the reading so there were two pages of the PDF on one page of printed paper, which meant that four pages of the original text were squeezed into just one page of the resulting printed page. This made the text so small and difficult to read that I saw him squinting at the text a couple times, and he joked about having accidentally printed it too small. In the end, he relied on these poor-quality copies rather than printing them out again in a more legible format.

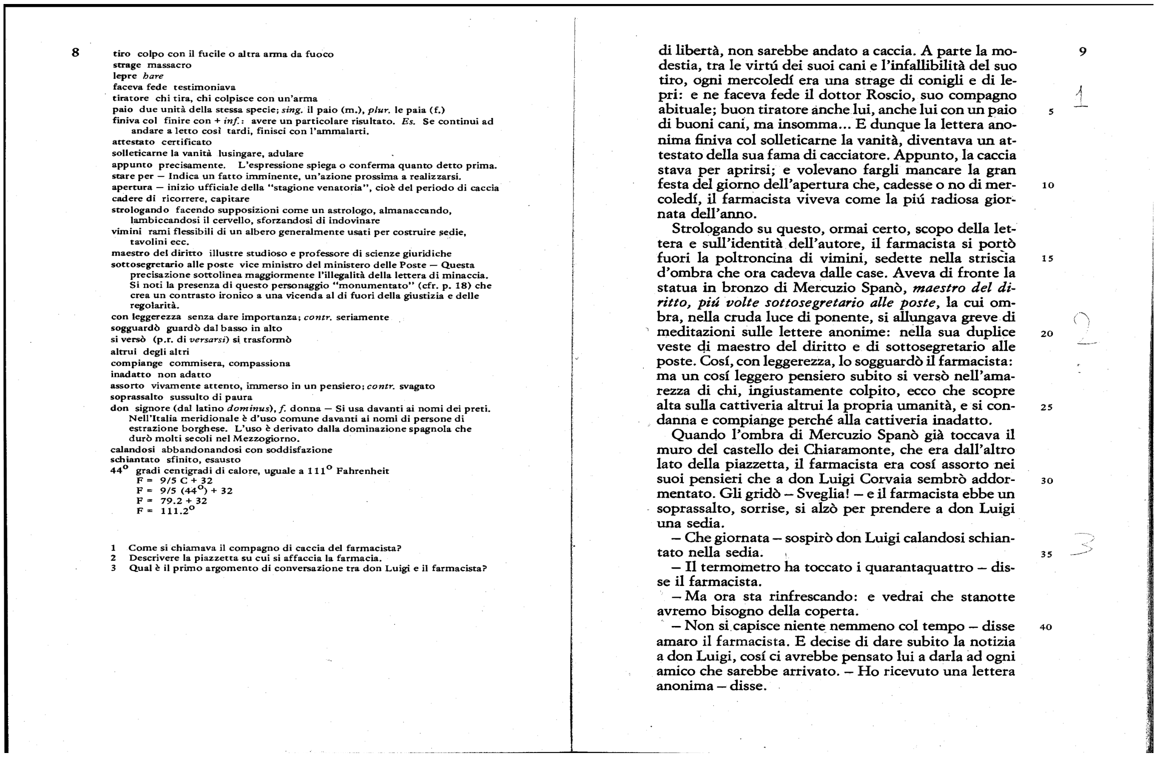
A few students claimed that the cost of printing was prohibitive, and for this reason were reluctant to print the chapters of *A ciascuno il suo* on their own. Eventually, I offered to print most of the chapters for some of the students I met with individually, including Stacie and Amanda, in hopes of making it easier for them to access the class readings. However, I found students' reluctance to print class readings to be perhaps more indicative of their attitudes toward actually reading these texts for class than of their concern about cost. Student attitudes toward reading will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

A ciascuno il suo [To each his own].

Boldini had used this version of *A ciascuno il suo* for a variety of different classes; he began using it in second-year Italian while teaching at another university, and had since used it in third- and fourth-year Italian at Big State University. He explained that he adjusts his teaching of the novel based on the ability and interests of his students (Initial interview, February 2012). For example, he had focused increasingly on the cultural aspects of Sicily, as portrayed in the novel, and had deemphasized the linguistic and stylistic focus of the novel in his teaching, which he estimated to be beyond the grasp of most of his current students.

The edition of *A ciascuno il suo* that Boldini prefers was prepared expressly for speakers of English who are learning Italian, and it is structured with vocabulary and comprehension questions on the left hand side of each page of text. As shown in the sample page from this text (Figure 5.2), several words are listed on the left hand page, and are described in Italian. Some of the students found this vocabulary list difficult to follow, since there is no indication of where these words were found on the right hand page of the text. Jared felt this vocabulary was not useful because it would take him extra time and effort to understand the meanings, provided in Italian, so he preferred to look up unknown words in an online dictionary (wordreference.com) instead.

Figure 5.2. Sample page from *A ciascuno il suo* [To each his own] by Leonardo Sciascia



8

tiro	colpo con il fucile o altra arma da fuoco
strage	massacro
lepre	*hare*
faceva fede	testimoniava
tiratore	chi tira, chi colpisce con un'arma
paio	due unità della stessa specie; *sing.* il paio (m.), *plur.* le paia (f.)
finiva col	finire con + *inf.*: avere un particolare risultato. *Es.* Se continui ad andare a letto così tardi, finisci con l'ammalarti.
attestato	certificato
solleticarne la vanità	lusingare, adulare
appunto	precisamente. L'espressione spiega o conferma quanto detto prima.
stare per	– Indica un fatto imminente, un'azione prossima a realizzarsi.
apertura	– inizio ufficiale della "stagione venatoria", cioè del periodo di caccia
cadere di	ricorrere, capitare
strologando	facendo supposizioni come un astrologo, almanaccando, lambiccandosi il cervello, sforzandosi di indovinare
vimini	rami flessibili di un albero generalmente usati per costruire sedie, tavolini ecc.
maestro del diritto	illustre studioso e professore di scienze giuridiche
sottosegretario alle poste	vice ministro del ministero delle Poste – Questa precisazione sottolinea maggiormente l'illegalità della lettera di minaccia. Si noti la presenza di questo personaggio "monumentato" (cfr. p. 18) che crea un contrasto ironico a una vicenda al di fuori della giustizia e delle regolarità.
con leggerezza	senza dare importanza; *contr.* seriamente
sogguardò	guardò dal basso in alto
si versò	(p.r. di *versarsi*) si trasformò
altrui	degli altri
compiange	commisera, compassiona
inadatto	non adatto
assorto	vivamente attento, immerso in un pensiero; *contr.* svagato
soprassalto	sussulto di paura
don	signore (dal latino *dominus*), *f.* donna – Si usa davanti ai nomi dei preti. Nell'Italia meridionale è d'uso comune davanti ai nomi di persone di estrazione borghese. L'uso è derivato dalla dominazione spagnola che durò molti secoli nel Mezzogiorno.
calandosi	abbandonandosi con soddisfazione
schiantato	sfinito, esausto
44°	gradi centigradi di calore, uguale a 111° Fahrenheit $F = 9/5\,C + 32$ $F = 9/5\,(44^{\circ}) + 32$ $F = 79.2 + 32$ $F = 111.2^{\circ}$

1 Come si chiamava il compagno di caccia del farmacista?
2 Descrivere la piazzetta su cui si affaccia la farmacia.
3 Qual è il primo argomento di conversazione tra don Luigi e il farmacista?

9

di libertà, non sarebbe andato a caccia. A parte la modestia, tra le virtú dei suoi cani e l'infallibilità del suo tiro, ogni mercoledí era una strage di conigli e di lepri: e ne faceva fede il dottor Roscio, suo compagno abituale; buon tiratore anche lui, anche lui con un paio di buoni cani, ma insomma... E dunque la lettera anonima finiva col solleticarne la vanità, diventava un attestato della sua fama di cacciatore. Appunto, la caccia stava per aprirsi; e volevano fargli mancare la gran festa del giorno dell'apertura che, cadesse o no di mercoledí, il farmacista viveva come la piú radiosa giornata dell'anno.

1

Strologando su questo, ormai certo, scopo della lettera e sull'identità dell'autore, il farmacista si portò fuori la poltroncina di vimini, sedette nella striscia d'ombra che ora cadeva dalle case. Aveva di fronte la statua in bronzo di Mercuzio Spanò, *maestro del diritto, piú volte sottosegretario alle poste*, la cui ombra, nella cruda luce di ponente, si allungava greve di meditazioni sulle lettere anonime: nella sua duplice veste di maestro del diritto e di sottosegretario alle poste. Cosí, con leggerezza, lo sogguardò il farmacista: ma un cosí leggero pensiero subito si versò nell'amarezza di chi, ingiustamente colpito, ecco che scopre alta sulla cattiveria altrui la propria umanità, e si condanna e compiange perché alla cattiveria inadatto.

2

Quando l'ombra di Mercuzio Spanò già toccava il muro del castello dei Chiaramonte, che era dall'altro lato della piazzetta, il farmacista era cosí assorto nei suoi pensieri che a don Luigi Corvaia sembrò addormentato. Gli gridò – Sveglia! – e il farmacista ebbe un soprassalto, sorrise, si alzò per prendere a don Luigi una sedia.

– Che giornata – sospirò don Luigi calandosi schiantato nella sedia.

3

– Il termometro ha toccato i quarantaquattro – disse il farmacista.

– Ma ora sta rinfrescando: e vedrai che stanotte avremo bisogno della coperta.

– Non si capisce niente nemmeno col tempo – disse amaro il farmacista. E decise di dare subito la notizia a don Luigi, cosí ci avrebbe pensato lui a darla ad ogni amico che sarebbe arrivato. – Ho ricevuto una lettera anonima – disse.

Below the vocabulary words on the left hand side of the text are a set of comprehension questions. Boldini announced in class that he would not go over these questions, or any of the post-reading grammatical exercises found in the text. However, he suggested students review the comprehension questions on the left hand page outside of class, even though they were not required and would not be part of class discussion. I assume that few students paid attention to these comprehension questions when reading, since all of the students with whom I conducted reading observations ignored them, with the exception of one focal student participant, Alejandra. As can be seen (faintly) in the sample page (Figure 5.2), Boldini had written numbers in the right hand margin of the right hand page to indicate where the answers to the comprehension questions on the left might be found in the text. When I asked him about those annotations, he explained that he had made them several years ago, and hadn't meant them specifically for the students in this particular class, which explains why he never mentioned or explained them in class. Jokingly, he suggested I keep the significance of his annotations in the right hand margin a secret from the students. I asked nine of the 22 students in class what the significance of these annotations might be, and only Alejandra (focal student participant) made the connection between the professor's written indication and the comprehension questions. Although most students ignored the questions altogether, I later learned that Amanda and Bobby (focal student participants) had met during the second month of classes and reviewed several chapters of *A ciascuno il suo* by responding to the comprehension questions on each page.

Since this particular edition of *A ciascuno il suo* was intended for an English-speaking audience, it also contained two additional pages of stylistic and grammatical exercises after every three chapters of the text. It did not appear that any of the students read or completed these exercises, since they were not required and were not discussed in class. During reading observations, all participants, including Alejandra, simply skipped these pages and exercises.

Students' preferences with regard to text choice.

About halfway through the semester, Boldini mentioned in class several times that he felt students preferred the readings from their *Trame* reader, and didn't like the PDF readings. I was curious about how he had deduced students' preferences, and in the final interview, he revealed that he gauged which readings students preferred by the degree to which they were willing to talk about the reading in class, and by how many students chose to engage with it in their compositions (April, 2012). From these factors, he gathered that the students preferred the readings from *Trame* compared to the other two sources.

When I asked students in their final interviews which readings they preferred, most of the students who participated in this research stated a strong preference for readings that were shorter and easy to understand, whether they be from *Trame* or one of the PDF readings. For the most part, they struggled with *A ciascuno il suo* because many of them had fallen behind in the reading and relied on basic ideas from class discussion to piece together the story. Several other factors, such as personal obligations and assignments in other classes, interfered with students' ability to find time to read regularly. For example, on days when most of the students had an exam in their other Italian literature class, very few students read the assignment for Boldini's class. Students' outside obligations were certainly a factor in how much they engaged with the texts in class and in their compositions. Last, a few of the readings in *Trame* had already been assigned in a previous course, so even if students had never actually read them, they felt more comfortable talking about those readings that had already been covered in another course.

Eventually, Boldini had to skip some of the readings he had planned in the syllabus because they were not able to cover all of the readings in the allotted time. By midsemester, the class was behind with respect to the planned reading of *A ciascuno il suo*, and students could no longer follow the daily schedule on the syllabus to know which readings to prepare for class. Often, Boldini would send an email on Sunday afternoon or evening to tell students what they should read in preparation for class on Tuesday afternoon. When Tuesday's reading would entail a short story scanned from Boldini's volumes, these readings would be attached to Sunday's email, which meant students often had less than two days to read it. Several of the students complained that this late notice made it difficult for them to do the readings before class, since they had other classes on Monday and Tuesday, although it is unclear whether these students would have prioritized reading the stories if they had received them beforehand, given that they often did not read the assigned chapters of *A ciascuno il suo*, which they had received well in advance.

Student Participants in the Writing Workshop

The Writing Workshop course I observed was considered a third-year Italian language course. Students were required to complete a fourth semester Italian language class, or its equivalent, before enrolling in the Writing Workshop. There were 22 students in the class; of these, all but four students had completed all four semesters of Italian language courses at Big State University before enrolling in the class, and completed this course during their third (junior) year. Of these four students, three were in their first (freshman) year at the university: Two of them had previously lived in Italy for a school year as high school exchange students, and the remaining freshman had demonstrated a high enough proficiency, following four years of high school Italian, to be placed into this class. The remaining student, in her third year, had lived in Italy with her family for several years, and attended an English-language high school and college there before transferring to BSU. It should be noted, however, that students were not aware of each others' backgrounds. This can be demonstrated by an interaction that occurred near the end of the semester, when a student named Marie (pseudonym) mentioned in passing during her presentation to the class that she had lived in Italy for several years. Afterward, the professor and several students commented that they had not been aware of Marie's extended sojourn in Italy, and they had several questions about her experience there.

The overwhelming majority (19 out of 22 students) of the class was female, which is representative of the population of students who study Italian at BSU. Three students in the class had studied abroad in Italy, although only one of these three had completed a study-abroad experience conducted in Italian language. Several more students planned to study abroad in Italy the following year.

From the very first day of class, I noticed that active student participation, taken here to mean orally addressing questions, comments, or responses to the professor and class as a whole, aggregated around three tiers of participation: those who volunteered frequently, those who volunteered occasionally, and finally those who spoke in class only when directly asked to do so. Boldini made a point of giving all students an opportunity to speak, although not in every class period. Some of the more vocal students in class would ask questions or make comments naturally, without raising their hands, and at times Boldini asked them to give others a chance to speak. Only a few students in the class, including Jared, were legitimately reluctant to speak, and would avoid doing so even when called on. The majority of the students in the class with whom I spoke expressed appreciation when their professors gave them opportunities to speak, and would have preferred to speak more in class, but found it difficult to do so, for reasons I will address in Chapter 6.

Focal student participants

Two of the three students who participated in the pilot study, Jared and Amanda, agreed to participate in the dissertation research. The third student from the pilot study, Holly, was not enrolled in Italian classes during the following semester, when the dissertation data were collected. Furthermore, as stated previously in this chapter, although I interviewed and observed nine focal students (including Jared and Amanda) during this research, I have chosen to focus on five of these students in this dissertation because they were all concurrently enrolled in three Italian classes during the semester I conducted this research: an Italian film class taught in English, the second in a two-course sequence of Introduction to Italian literature, and the Writing Workshop. In fact, these three courses were all taught on the same days of the week, so students who were enrolled in all three classes spent a total of five hours and 30 minutes seated in these classes, twice per week, which they described as "a marathon of power lectures" (Amanda, Initial interview, February 2012).

Interviews and observations of focal student participants focused on their personal experiences and reflections on the Writing Workshop course, which I attended as an observer. However, the focal student participants often referenced their experiences in the other two Italian courses they were taking contemporaneously, as well as the Italian courses they had taken in previous semesters. Although the participants' voluntary comments referred to the other two Italian courses in which they were enrolled, I only observed the Writing Workshop class.

Table 5.1. Characteristics of focal student participants

Participant pseudonym	Gender	Year at BSU	Enrolled in Introduction to Italian literature I during pilot study	Self-described proficiency[20]
Amanda	Female	3	Yes	Intermediate High[21]
Alejandra	Female	1	Yes	Advanced
Bobby	Male	3	No	Intermediate High
Jared	Male	3	Yes	Intermediate High
Stacie	Female	3	Yes	Intermediate High

The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to describing the focal student participants listed in the table above.

Jared.

Jared, a participant in the pilot phase of this research, agreed to continue as a participant during the dissertation phase of this research. For a more complete description of Jared, please see Chapter 3. On the first day of Boldini's class, he asked the students to introduce themselves to the class. Since there wasn't time on the first day of class for all students to introduce themselves, Jared introduced himself on the second day of class, when I was in attendance. He spoke the fewest words possible, simply giving his name and major. Throughout the semester, Boldini would occasionally urge Jared to participate in class by asking him a simple question, like what page they were on, or if he had seen any Italian films. Boldini never asked Jared difficult questions about the content or theme of the readings, but instead attempted to give him questions that he would have been able to answer without understanding the readings. Even with simple questions such as these, Jared struggled to understand and communicate an appropriate response.

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[20] Based on a reproduction of the ACTFL proficiency guidelines for Reading proficiency found in Nance (2010), pp. 238-9. See Appendix G. Focal student participants were given a copy of the ACTFL reading proficiency descriptions on which the labels (e.g., Novice, Intermediate, Advanced) were replaced by alphabetic letters (e.g., a, b, c), so they were not aware to which level they assigned themselves. The participants then read the descriptions and explained which description most accurately described their reading ability in Italian.

[21] Amanda, Alejandra, Bobby, and Stacie rated themselves between two levels. Since, per ACTFL, performance at each level must be consistent in order to claim that particular level of proficiency, I edited these students' self-assessments to reflect the level of proficiency they stated they were able to maintain consistently.

Like the other focal students, Jared was enrolled in three Italian classes during this dissertation research, and was pleased that he was able to schedule all of his classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays, which allowed him a long weekend. On Tuesdays he had Italian classes for nearly six hours in a row, leaving him exhausted. He was also able to enroll in an Economics class that met on Tuesdays and Thursdays. However, he told me that even though attendance was required, he only "made it to class" four times during the semester: on the first day of class, for two in-class exams, and for the final exam. He was pleased to receive a grade of C in Economics, especially because of how little effort he had put forth in that class. Jared's attitude towards his Economics class was particularly revealing about his attitude towards his studies in general. At the end of the semester, he told me that he was more interested in exploring what life had to offer than in excelling in school. It appears that he did make an effort to attend his Italian classes, even though he had decided at the beginning of the semester that he would not feel compelled to participate actively in class, or do the in-class presentation, which together with participation made up 20% of his final grade. He said he preferred to receive a lower grade in Italian classes than risk embarrassing himself in front of the class.

At the beginning of the semester Jared missed several appointments with me, largely, as he explained, because he had been staying up late to play video games with his roommates, and often slept in on the days he didn't have class, which caused him to miss some of our meetings. In fact, one of the times we met for a reading observation, he showed up without any of the readings, and when I asked him about what he planned to read, he couldn't tell me what he was supposed to read for class. He also missed several classes as the semester progressed. He missed the week before Spring Break to go climbing in the western US, and a couple classes later in the semester while he did a scuba certification course through the university's extension programs. Through my interactions with Jared, it was clear that he was most interested in enjoying life and exploring, and school was not his first priority.

Regardless of his educational ambitions, Italian seemed to hold Jared's interest more than most academic subjects, and he told me that he would like to go biking and backpacking through Italy. Toward the end of the semester, he was enthusiastic about the idea of meeting with me over the summer to practice conversation. I came to realize that Jared's lack of interest in his university classes did not equate to a lack of interest in learning, and that he might have benefitted from a less traditional format for learning. He mentioned to me several times that he would have been more interested in his Italian classes if they had included a variety of subjects, like art and culture, rather than literature, which was less interesting to him.

Amanda.

Like Jared, Amanda was also a participant during the pilot phase of this research, and expressed enthusiasm about continuing her participation during the dissertation phase of research as well. A more complete description of Amanda can be found in Chapter 3. Towards the end of the pilot study, Amanda expressed a great deal of frustration with

Maria (pseudonym),[22] her Italian professor, and I wondered if this stance might extend to her professors during the following semester. However, I observed Amanda's behavior to be strikingly different during the second semester of my observation, which is likely due to several factors. First, Amanda may have been initially resistant to what she saw to be unrealistic expectations as she began third-year Italian classes during the pilot phase, compared to what she described as an "easy A" in her first two years of Italian. Similarly, her resistance could also have been fueled by her linguistic inadequacies and her inability to succeed at the beginning of her third year. Finally, her increased participation in the Writing Workshop during the dissertation phase may have been due in part to Boldini's engaging and approachable demeanor, which was more in line with her extroverted personality. In fact, Amanda remarked several times during our meetings that she felt Boldini was not necessarily looking for one right answer, but that he was accepting of whatever opinions or answers she was able to contribute.

Amanda made an effort to raise her hand and speak in class frequently during Boldini's class, much more than she had during the previous semester in Maria's class. Often Amanda's contributions were only marginally related to Boldini's questions, which will be explored further in Chapter 7.

Amanda also decided not to meet with a tutor during the dissertation phase of this research. She felt that the tutoring sessions during the previous semester had not been as productive as she would have liked them to be, and she did not feel they resulted in an improved grade in her Italian classes. Instead, she often met with other students from class to study. She met with Bobby several times during the first half of the semester for hours at a time, to catch up on readings of *A ciascuno il suo*. Occasionally, throughout the semester, she would send me a text message to let me know she would be studying with another student, in case I wanted to come observe.

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[22] The professor of the course I observed during the pilot study was referred to by students exclusively using her first name, which is reflected in the pseudonym "Maria." Students frequently referred to the professor of the course I observed during the dissertation phase by last name, which is reflected in the pseudonym "Boldini."

Amanda also seemed to speak more frequently to her classmates before and after class during the dissertation phase of this research. Perhaps she felt less inhibited in Boldini's classroom, or she had simply developed more friendships with other students over time. Although I had not observed them speaking together much during the previous semester, Amanda developed a good friendship with Stacie, one of the other focal participants. She also communicated frequently with Stacie in Italian via text message and Facebook, which Amanda said was helpful and motivating.

Stacie.

Stacie had originally intended to take classes in Spanish at Big State University, since she had studied Spanish for four years in high school. However, because she enrolled late as a freshman, she found that all of the Spanish classes were already full. Since she couldn't enroll in Spanish, she decided to take Italian instead, because she has Italian heritage. She eventually took a Spanish course at BSU, but decided she would prefer to continue with Italian. Stacie was majoring in Communication Arts, and planned to declare a major in Italian after the semester in which I conducted this research. She was enrolled in the Introduction to Italian literature I course that I had observed during the pilot project, and told me she had originally decided to take that class because she saw Maria was teaching it. She had enjoyed taking a language class from Maria in a previous semester, so she thought she would enjoy taking another class with her.

Stacie also worked part time as a waitress at a local restaurant, and often started work at 5:30 am. She spent much of her spare time with her boyfriend of several years, or visiting her family, who lived about an hour away from BSU. She had an active social life, and was friendly and quite talkative. She expressed a strong desire to learn and do well in school, although sometimes her busy schedule didn't allow her to study as much as she would have liked. During the semester of this research, Stacie was working as many hours as she could in order to save money for an upcoming semester abroad in Italy.

When I asked Stacie to participate during the dissertation phase of my research, she was visibly pleased. She had attended the class in which I did my pilot study, and had been hoping to participate in my research. She said she was grateful for any opportunity to improve her Italian, and thought participation in this research might help her Italian proficiency. She volunteered answers and opinions frequently in class during the pilot research, even though she often stumbled over words as she spoke. Stacie's experience was unique in that she had taken the first two semesters of Italian language with Maria, the professor who taught the course I observed during the pilot study, so she had already developed a relationship of trust with her, and this put Stacie at ease when taking Maria's Introduction to Italian literature I class, even though the course material was no easier for her than it was for the other students.

Stacie felt she had excellent training in English literature. Her family read a lot, and she took AP English literature in high school, so she described herself to be positively inclined towards literature. She enjoyed discovering meanings and themes in the readings, although she struggled to do so in Italian literature because the language was often difficult. Even though she framed Maria's class positively, Stacie had struggled to understand the assigned literature:

> It was really, really intimidating. I guess especially because a lot of what we learned was old Italian. So if there were words I didn't recognize, or verbs especially, I would think "oh well this just might be one of those tenses I didn't know very well." And I would go back and, "no, it's just a word I've never been introduced to." So that was really, really difficult for me. It was like time and time again in that packet, it was like "ugh. I can't find a definition for it." (Initial interview, February 2012)

In fact, Stacie recounted how she told her roommates that it was as if she were taking a class in Shakespeare, in Latin, to emphasize the difficulty she encountered with the language in her Introduction to Italian literature I class. She felt comfortable with her reading and writing proficiency in Italian, and often attempted to make connections between texts, like she had been used to doing in English literature classes. She struggled primarily with poetry, and found prose to be easier to understand. She also explained that complicated philosophical themes were harder for her to understand than narrative prose (Initial interview, February 2012).

Of the four skills, Stacie felt listening comprehension was her biggest obstacle. She described how her difficulty understanding Boldini sometimes impeded her ability to participate:

> A lot of times I'll get stuck on something, I'm listening and I can kind of follow but I'll get stuck, and I'll try to figure out what I just heard, and then I'll miss what comes after that. So if I'm reading and I don't know something, I can just

> go back again, take my time, figure it out, and continue. (Initial interview, February 2012)

Stacie felt much more comfortable writing and reading, because she could write and read in Italian at her own pace, whereas speaking and listening are spontaneous exercises and this caused her more difficulty. She was very aware of how others might perceive her, which made her nervous about speaking in class, even though she tried to speak as much as she felt she was able.

Of all the participants in the dissertation study, Stacie was the most likely to make the effort to visit her professors in their office, and she did so a few times throughout the semester. During an interview, Boldini remarked to me that he was pleased that one of the students from class had made the effort to speak with him in Italian during office hours, since most students who visit him outside of class prefer to speak in English. I was aware that Stacie had visited his office earlier that day, and it was obvious that she had been the one to speak with him in Italian.

Stacie made overt outward expressions, such as volunteering in class and visiting the professor during office hours, to indicate her dedication and commitment to her studies. In fact, I recall one day after class that she apologized to Boldini for not having prepared the reading for class. I later found out, however, that Stacie was unprepared at other times, turned in assignments late, and almost always procrastinated assignments until the last minute. At the end of the semester, she started a 12-page paper for her film class, to be written in Italian, at about 1:00 am, which was approximately seven hours before the final exam and deadline. Not surprisingly, she turned in her paper several days late.

Overall, Stacie seemed enthusiastic about learning Italian, but I could observe from her mannerisms and speech that she was also somewhat anxious. She was the last student to finish the final exam for Boldini's class (May 2012), and afterward she headed straight to the library to study for another final exam later that day. As I accompanied her to the library, she asked if she could tell me something that she had been nervous about for some time. She had discussed this with a classmate, who encouraged her to be honest with me, since she was participating in my research. Stacie told me that she was often too anxious to participate in class, and asked if I had noticed that some days she was much more loquacious than others. This had been apparent to me throughout the semester, but I had assumed it was because she was more prepared on certain days, which allowed her to participate more actively in class. However, Stacie explained that she had found that if she "smoked" before class, she felt more relaxed and able to talk. I was, perhaps naively, initially confused about what she intended by "smoking" and Stacie clarified that she often smoked marijuana before Italian classes to allow her to participate with ease. She was worried that she would need to quit smoking marijuana before spending a semester abroad in Bologna the following year, since she might not be able to find marijuana in Italy.

Bobby.

I became acquainted with Bobby during the dissertation study because of his friendship with Amanda, who had been a participant in the pilot study. Bobby was tall and athletic, and belonged to a fraternity on campus. He often wore a button-up polo shirt and brown leather loafers to class, which was somewhat more formal attire than most of his classmates.

Bobby had studied Spanish in high school, but felt he didn't speak it very well, so he decided to start fresh in college with a new language. His father had taken a trip to Italy, which motivated Bobby to enroll in beginning Italian during his freshman year, and he had taken Italian courses every semester since then. During the pilot phase of research, he was enrolled in an advanced conversation course in Italian, but did not enroll in Introduction to Italian literature I because he worried his proficiency might not be good enough. He is the only one of the five focal student participants reported in this dissertation who had not yet taken the first course in the two-semester sequence of Introduction to Italian literature.

During his freshman year, Bobby was considering majoring in English literature, so he enrolled in several English literature courses. He had some frustrating experiences with his professors and teaching assistants (TAs), and eventually abandoned the idea of studying English literature. He later declared a major in Political Science, and had recently declared a second major in Italian. He planned to go to law school after graduation the following year, and hoped to work in international law or be a foreign ambassador. He would have liked to study abroad in Italy, and had initially planned to do so, but he found it would delay his graduation, so he decided against studying abroad. He was particularly interested in studying the culture and politics of Italy, and hoped to eventually get a certificate in European studies based on his coursework.

Bobby said he felt most comfortable writing in Italian, but that he often struggled with listening and speaking, because he found it difficult to process all the verb tenses and grammar as quickly as was necessary. He described himself as slower in reading Italian than the majority of the class, because he felt it took him more time to understand the words on the page. Bobby struggled with Italian grammar and felt his proficiency was weaker than it should have been in his third year of Italian language study.

Speaking and pronunciation were difficult for Bobby, and he felt he was at a disadvantage to some degree because he wasn't able to pronounce the Italian "R." He recounted an experience from his Introduction to Italian literature II class, taught by a professor whom students referred to by the last name Mannucci (pseudonym), in which he was asked to pronounce the Italian *R* in front of the class:

> One time in Mannucci's (pseudonym) class we were reading aloud and I couldn't roll my *R*s, and she wanted to get me to say the word correctly with rolling my *R*s. And I can't actually roll my *R*s—the skin that holds my tongue to the bottom of my mouth extends a lot more forward than a lot of people, it almost goes all the way to the tip of my tongue, so I can't even stick my tongue out that far. Which I've been told by my high school Spanish teachers and my Italian TAs, is the reason I can't roll my *R*s. So there was one day when Mannucci had gone around and I couldn't roll my *R*s for a word and she was trying to get me to do it. And I tried to explain to her that I couldn't, but she didn't really understand it. And I felt kind of awkward because I kind of just had to say "no." I had to say "I can't, I don't know what else to tell you." (Final interview, May 2012)

Thus, Bobby considered himself to be incapable of pronouncing the Italian *R* sound, and felt this to be a significant hindrance to his speaking ability.

Bobby coached swimming at a swim club in a nearby town, and when he wasn't coaching, he would often meet with classmates to study. He expressed a strong preference for studying with classmates, rather than alone, because he felt that talking through the material with others helped him learn. During the beginning part of the semester, Bobby and Amanda often met outside of class to go through Italian readings, and subsequently to study for Italian exams. They both described these study sessions as very helpful for their learning, but they eventually stopped meeting since they were both very busy.

Bobby volunteered questions, comments, and responses in class about as frequently as Amanda and Stacie, although he missed fewer classes than they did. He had a loud, booming voice, and he spoke Italian in a halted, staccato style, which made his participation even more noticeable. He often arrived to class with a sandwich and chips he had purchased at the university deli next door, and quickly ate his lunch at the beginning of class.

At the end of the semester, when discussing the grades he had received in Italian, Bobby said he felt his grades were representative of the work he did. Several of the other students had complained that they had hoped for higher scores, and Jared was pleasantly surprised to receive a grade he didn't think he had earned. Bobby, however, didn't feel he deserved a higher grade than those he received, since he felt he had not always put forth his best effort. This attitude was characteristic of Bobby's straightforward, honest demeanor, and even though his classmates sometimes misrepresented the amount of effort and preparation they put into their Italian courses, Bobby generally did not do so.

Alejandra.

I had noticed Alejandra during the pilot research, because she would sit next to Holly, who was a focal participant in the pilot study, and sometimes the two of them would talk about the readings before and after class. During the pilot study, Alejandra would occasionally volunteer answers, was always punctual, and seemed to be well prepared in class. I was surprised the following semester to find out that she was only a freshman in college, and had learned Italian in high school.

Alejandra is a Spanish-English bilingual speaker, whose parents had immigrated to the United States from Mexico before she was born. She grew up in a large metropolitan area, where she was surrounded by Spanish speaking friends and neighbors. She and her younger brother spoke English at home, although her family and friends often spoke Spanish together, or used Spanish expressions while speaking in English. Alejandra considered herself to be very proficient in Spanish. When she was a child, her parents read fairy tales to her in Spanish from books they bought at a local Spanish language bookstore. She also recalled doing catechism classes in Spanish, and felt this helped her learn to read and write Spanish properly, even though she had never formally studied Spanish in school.

Alejandra had attended a private Catholic high school with a large population of bilingual students, where she decided to study Italian rather than Spanish, since she felt her Spanish was already very good. She took four years of Italian in high school, and said that she was better at Italian than many of her bilingual Spanish-speaking friends. She differentiated speaking Italian from her experience with Spanish, because her only opportunity to speak Italian was in the classroom, and she didn’t have anyone she could speak Italian with outside of that setting. However, she believed her proficiency in Spanish gave her a great advantage over many of her monolingual classmates.

Alejandra had come to Big State University with a scholarship that required her to be involved in activities and events with her dormitory. As a freshman, she participated in many of the academic opportunities offered at the university, including a campus-wide reading event and a campus group aimed at women of Latin American heritage on campus. She spent her evenings and weekends studying in the library, or at campus activities, and occasionally traveled home to see her boyfriend.

Alejandra officially declared herself as an Italian major during her first semester, although she didn't expect to use Italian in her future career. She hadn't wanted to major in Italian, but when she first enrolled, an Italian faculty member showed her how few courses she would need to take, since her proficiency allowed her to skip the first four semesters of language classes. She planned to declare a second major in Communicative Disorders as soon as she finished the prerequisites the following year.

Since she had begun studying Italian at the university, Alejandra was keenly aware that the majority of her classmates put in little effort to prepare for class. Initially, she had been concerned that she might have trouble keeping up, since she had not taken Italian at the college-level before enrolling in Introduction to Italian literature I. She recounted her initial reaction during an interview: "I remember being really worried I wouldn't be able to understand what was going on, but on the first day of class I was like 'Pffff, I got it' " (Final interview, May 2012).

Although Alejandra was confident and performed well in her Italian classes, she had no interest in participating in extracurricular Italian club events alongside most of the other "good" students. She described her reticence to participate in Italian club as a feature of her strong personal identity:

> I'm not really interested in Italian culture. I feel like I'm not Italian at all, so I feel like me going to every single Italian event would just make me feel as if I'm

> desperate to be Italian. I'm not, you know what I mean. Like I really, really do enjoy the language, but it's pretty much just a desire to learn the language rather than to live an Italian lifestyle. (Final interview, May 2012)

In this statement, Alejandra positioned students who participate in Italian club as "desperate to be Italian," which ran counter to her own sense of self. In fact, she seemed to value linguistic proficiency, while simultaneously devaluing cultural proficiency.

Alejandra described her Italian classes as easy, and said she didn't understand why some of the other students struggled so much to keep up. She often expressed criticism about what she saw to be the prevailing laissez faire attitude of her classmates, and reasoned that they may not have been motivated to prepare for class because of their poor proficiency in Italian: "'cause if you suck at Italian, you're not going to be motivated to read it because you already know that you're going to understand next to nothing. So, like, helplessness" (Final interview, May 2012). From this statement, it is apparent that Alejandra was critical of her classmates, and it appeared that she did not communicate with any of them outside of class. She seemed to enjoy reading Italian literature, and finished the novel *A ciascuno il suo* several weeks ahead of the class, because she was interested to see how the mystery novel would end.

Alejandra never missed class, and volunteered often, especially at times when no one else knew the answer. She usually came to class with a bottle of water or iced tea, and often ate some sort of lollipop or hard candy during class. She portrayed a nonchalant attitude during class, yet behind this façade, Alejandra hid thorough preparation and a quick wit. Perhaps it was this façade which allowed her to seem less intimidating to her peers than some other classmates, who spoke more often in class, even though they were often less prepared and understood less of the readings than Alejandra.

One day in class, Boldini asked which Italian movies the students in the class had seen. The other students in class were only able to name a couple titles, even though many of them were also concurrently enrolled in an Italian film class. During the class discussion, I noticed Alejandra was writing something in her notes, which seemed curious to me, since she was usually paying careful attention, and it didn't seem an appropriate time to be taking notes. Towards the end of the discussion, however, Boldini asked Alejandra if she had seen any Italian films, and Alejandra then read the list of Italian films that she had written in her notes during the discussion. She listed about seven films, many more than the other class members. Thus, although she was less vocal than some of her classmates, she was always prepared, paid careful attention in class, and was able to respond to even the most difficult of Boldini's questions.

Each of these focal student participants presented a unique and relevant perspective to this research. They all participated willingly in this research despite their busy school and work schedules. Perhaps one of the principle merits of this study is that its participants were forthcoming in making themselves available frequently for the duration of the data collection.

The next chapter presents findings related to the first and second research questions, by describing what student participants valued in Italian literature study, and how these values affected their access to the Discourse of Italian literature.

Chapter 6: Motivation

Introduction

Motivation is widely considered one of the key factors influencing success in foreign language study. This chapter extends this idea to the foreign language literature classroom as it explores the underlying motivational system behind the decisions that five students made while enrolled in a third-year Italian course that had an emphasis in Italian literature. The analysis in this chapter responds primarily to the first research question, "What do third-year students of Italian literature value in literary study and how do they construct this value system?," reconceptualized in this chapter in terms of motivation. It also addresses the second research question (How do these students' values and practices with regard to Italian literature study affect their access to the discourse of Italian literature?), inasmuch as these students' motivational systems influenced their learning with regard to Italian literature.

I first explore these participants' decision to major in Italian and enroll in third-year Italian courses, after which I take a careful look at what kinds of motivation were evident in their learning experience during the course of the semester. Focusing primarily on Amanda's, Alejandra's, and Jared's contrasting experiences, the analysis examines the participants' motivation with respect to ease of completion and grades, as well as their personal interest in developing language proficiency and content learning**,** as they participated in third-year Italian courses emphasizing Italian literature. With the exception of Alejandra, whose perspective will be highlighted, the focal student participants generally considered Italian literature reading to be irrelevant to their grade in their third-year courses, impossible to understand on their own, and sometimes inconsequential to their language proficiency, and for these reasons they were not motivated to complete the recommended readings. Overall, the structure of these students' motivation, especially their lack of intrinsic motivation, likely hindered their learning in third-year Italian literature courses.

Instrumental and integrative motivation

According to Dörnyei and Skehan (2003), motivation is "responsible for *why* people decide to do something, *how long* they are willing to sustain the activity, and *how hard* they are going to pursue it" (p. 614, original emphasis). Theories of motivation in L2 (second or foreign language) learning have traditionally been grounded in social psychological research, including fundamental work done by Wallace Lambert and Robert Gardner. Gardner and Lambert (1959) identified motivation as one of the primary factors that determined their participants' achievement in French. Gardner and Lambert (1972) later distinguished between two broad categories of learner motivation: integrative orientation and instrumental orientation. The integrative orientation reflects a propensity toward members of the L2 community and a desire to interact with and become like them. The instrumental orientation sees language development in terms of potential pragmatic gains that might result from L2 proficiency, such as a higher salary or a better occupation (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 274).

More recently, social psychological and socioeducational research in motivation in L2 learning has proposed a number of sub-categories of motivation, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, intellectual curiosity, attribution about past successes or failures, need for achievement self-confidence, and situation-specific motivational variables such as classroom goal structures, classroom events and tasks, classroom climate and group cohesion, course content and teaching materials, teacher feedback, and grades (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 275). Many of these factors proved to influence the participants' engagement with the study of Italian literature over the course of this research.

Deciding to major in Italian

Before delving into these students' motivations with regard to Italian literature itself, it is important to understand the motivations behind the focal student participants' decision to major in Italian, their consequent enrollment in third-year Italian courses focusing on literature, and how these motivations impacted their learning. The following section examines how instrumental and integrative motivation can be applied to the focal student participants' decision to add a major in Italian to their undergraduate degree program.

It was both a series of smaller decisions and happenstance that led the participants in this research to study Italian literature. Most of the students in this study had no real intention of studying Italian language or literature per se, and enrolled in Italian language classes primarily to fulfill the university language requirement. Furthermore, they decided to continue studying third-year Italian overwhelmingly because of the relative ease of adding an Italian major to their transcript, even though they perceived a degree in Italian to be of little instrumental value.

Amanda, Jared, Stacie, and Bobby's decision to study Italian.

Amanda, Jared, Stacie, and Bobby all told me during their initial interviews (February 2012) that they had studied Spanish in high school, but they had decided to enroll in beginning Italian during their freshman year at BSU for several reasons. First, Spanish classes were in high demand and it was difficult to find a space in a Spanish class as a freshman, since freshmen were the last students permitted to register for classes. Second, although they may have initially tested into a second- or third-year Spanish class, all four of these students worried that their proficiency in Spanish might not have been adequate to keep up with the class, since they didn't know precisely what topics would have already been covered during the previous semesters at the university. Therefore, since Italian and Spanish are both Romance languages and have many similarities, they thought it might be easier to start over in a beginning Italian class, rather than enrolling in a more advanced Spanish class. Last, since Italian is not offered in many high school programs, these students attributed a sort of prestige or exoticism to being able to take courses in a language that was less commonly taught than Spanish.

Of the focal student participants, Stacie was the only one who claimed Italian heritage as part of her motivation for studying Italian. Both Amanda's and Bobby's families had had positive experiences travelling in Italy, which prompted these two students to enroll in Italian language courses at BSU. Thus, it could be inferred that Stacie, Amanda, and Bobby were driven by some degree of integrative motivation to continue their Italian studies. However, Stacie, Amanda, Bobby, and Jared had not considered majoring in Italian until they had been encouraged to do so in their fourth semester language class. All four students decided to continue studying Italian as a second, or additional, major, primarily because adding an Italian major necessitated few additional courses beyond those required for their primary fields of study.[23] These four students considered Italian to be a secondary major, and did not expect a degree in Italian to have much relevance to their future careers. Therefore, I propose that instrumental motivation was not a meaningful factor in these four students' enrollment in third-year Italian courses.

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[23] Although Jared had not yet declared a major, he considered Italian to be a secondary degree, which is evidenced by the fact that he was still searching for a primary degree program.

Alejandra's decision to study Italian.

Alejandra's experience was significantly different from that of the other four focal student participants. Since she considered herself a bilingual Spanish and English speaker, she had not felt the need to take Spanish in high school, and had enrolled in Italian instead, since it was similar to Spanish. She had intended on studying Portuguese in college, but when she contacted an Italian professor about receiving credit by examination for her Italian proficiency, she was told it would be very easy for her to complete the Italian major. Even though Alejandra didn't feel a degree in Italian would be useful for her future career, she decided to pursue it as a second major, since it required few additional classes.

Like the other four focal student participants, Alejandra's enrollment in third-year Italian was not the result of instrumental motivation, although she was nonetheless interested to know how a degree in Italian might be helpful to her future career. In fact, after attending a career fair for Italian majors during the semester of this study, she expressed frustration that not enough concrete information had been presented about how her Italian degree could be of use in the future. Instead, the career fair focused on Italian events and programs on campus, which were of no interest to her.

Alejandra claimed to be most interested in the intellectual exercise of learning a language, and not in being part of the community of Italian speakers or learners. Along these lines, Alejandra described during an interview that she was interested in the language, but not necessarily the culture of Italy, "Like I really, really do enjoy the language, but it's pretty much just a desire to learn the language rather than to live an Italian lifestyle" (Final interview, May 2012).

In this excerpt, Alejandra makes an implied connection between an interest in Italian culture and a desire to assimilate to that culture, which is a concept embodied in the notion of integrative motivation. In light of her other comments, and the way she positioned herself with respect to her classmates, this statement could also be seen as a criticism of her classmates' behavior.[24] Alejandra interpreted her classmates' overt interest in Italian culture as a desire to embrace a culture that was not their own. Alejandra's interpretation of her classmates' rejection of their own culture could also have been fueled by a defensive pride in her own Mexican culture and heritage. Furthermore, Alejandra was not shy about criticizing her classmates' insufficient language proficiency and effort, and she often distanced herself from them when talking about her classroom experiences.

In sum, none of the five focal student participants had initially considered majoring in Italian, however, they were all encouraged by their professors to add Italian as a second major, since as stated previously, adding a major in Italian would require them to take few additional classes. In this way, the Italian major was framed by professors and advisors as an “easy,” “additional,” and “extra” degree, whose value resided primarily in the ease with which it could be completed. Therefore, the instrumental value of the Italian degree was downplayed as faculty sought to recruit fourth-year students to the degree program, and this may have reinforced in students’ minds that the degree was indeed of little instrumental value. In fact, even though all five focal student participants expected to enroll in graduate school after finishing their undergraduate education, none of them considered Italian as a possible field of graduate study (Final interviews, May 2012).

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[24] As was described in Chapter 5, Alejandra made negative assessments about her classmates' proficiency and about the amount of effort they invested in reading Italian literature. She said, "'cause if you suck at Italian, you're not going to be motivated to read it because you already know that you're going to understand next to nothing. So, like, helplessness" (Final interview, May 2012).

Italian literature courses

As was discussed in Chapter 4, students were required to complete eight courses beyond the four-semester language sequence: five required courses in language, culture, and literature, and three elective courses. Of the five required courses, two focused expressly on Italian literature (a two-semester sequence of Introduction to Italian literature), and even though it is not explicit in the titles of the two “advanced” language courses, including the Writing Workshop which served as the locus for this study, they too tend to focus primarily on reading and discussing Italian literary texts. The only one of these required courses whose focus was not literature was the culture course, which took a historical approach to Italian culture, and used an Italian language history book as the primary text. The nature of the elective courses was varied, and included primarily courses on literature or film.

The focal student participants, with the possible exception of Alejandra, largely viewed Italian literature courses as a means to an end, that is, a necessary hurdle in order to complete the requirements of the Italian major. These students claimed to avoid literature courses and whenever possible would opt for courses on film or culture instead. During the pilot study, Amanda summed up what she considered to be a common perspective among her classmates on studying Italian literature:

> Students aren't taking [Italian literature] classes because they have this burning desire to study Italian literature. It's because "I want an Italian major, and this just happens to be one of the classes," and maybe I love the culture class and I love the class about Italian cinema, but I hate reading, and I don't like it. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

Although Amanda's statement above does not reflect the views of all the students enrolled in Italian literature courses, it represents a sentiment that I found to be quite prevalent among the participants in this research. As a matter of fact, I noticed that Amanda, Stacie, Bobby, and Jared, who were also enrolled in an Italian film class, spoke in more positive terms about that class than they did about their Italian literature classes. I asked Amanda in an interview if she had enjoyed the film class, to which she responded:

> I didn't really *like* it. It was easy to know how to get an A. And I guess that's what college students like about classes now: It doesn't kill your GPA and it's not too much work. There are always classes like that. You don't like it, but you're happy to take it because you know you're gonna get an A. (Final interview, May 2012)

In this response, Amanda clearly illustrated that she cared more about getting an A in the class than whether or not she enjoyed it or was interested in the subject matter. In fact, she claimed to speak for college students in general when she alleged that straightforwardness of expectations was one of the primary motivators for enrollment choice. Moreover, throughout the semester she expressed negative views about her Italian literature classes, in part because it had been difficult for her to gauge her professors' expectations. The motivational influence of grades will be explored more thoroughly in the next section of this chapter.

In a similar vein, Jared also claimed that he would have preferred to take classes in Italian history, culture, or art, rather than classes focused primarily on literature, since he was not personally interested in Italian literature beyond it's historical value (Final interview, May 2012). Therefore, although these students made the decision to major in Italian and to enroll in Italian literature courses, it was often apparent that they only took Italian literature courses because they were required for the Italian major. When courses in Italian history, art, or culture were offered, and could be applied to the major requirements, both Amanda and Jared stated that they preferred to enroll in those courses rather than in Italian literature.

Perhaps not surprisingly, since the five student participants viewed the Italian degree as having little instrumental value, they were less instrumentally motivated to learn about and read Italian literature. Thus their participation in the Italian degree program and third-year Italian courses was largely fueled by other forms of motivation, which may partly explain their failure to engage with the subject matter.

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

Given that reading Italian literature was such a difficult, and sometimes impossible task at their level of proficiency,[25] it is no surprise that most of the focal student participants made little effort to read and learn about Italian literature. During the semester of this research, I observed that the amount of effort these students expended in reading their texts was closely tied to its potential impact on their grades. Motivation to do something, which is tied to an external impetus, such as grades, praise, or avoiding punishment, has been defined as *extrinsic motivation* (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55). These researchers proposed the notion of self-determination theory, which distinguishes between extrinsic and intrinsic goals or motives that might spur one into action (2005). Intrinsic motivation, which is motivation to do something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, has been linked to high-quality learning and outcomes. Deci and Ryan (1985) contend that intrinsic motivation is involved "whenever students' natural curiosity and interest energise their learning" (p. 245). Since it has been correlated with positive learning outcomes, a large body of educational research has therefore addressed the fostering and maintaining of intrinsic motivation in classroom settings (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 58). External motivation, on the other hand, varies greatly in terms of autonomy and internalization, as can be seen in the figure below.

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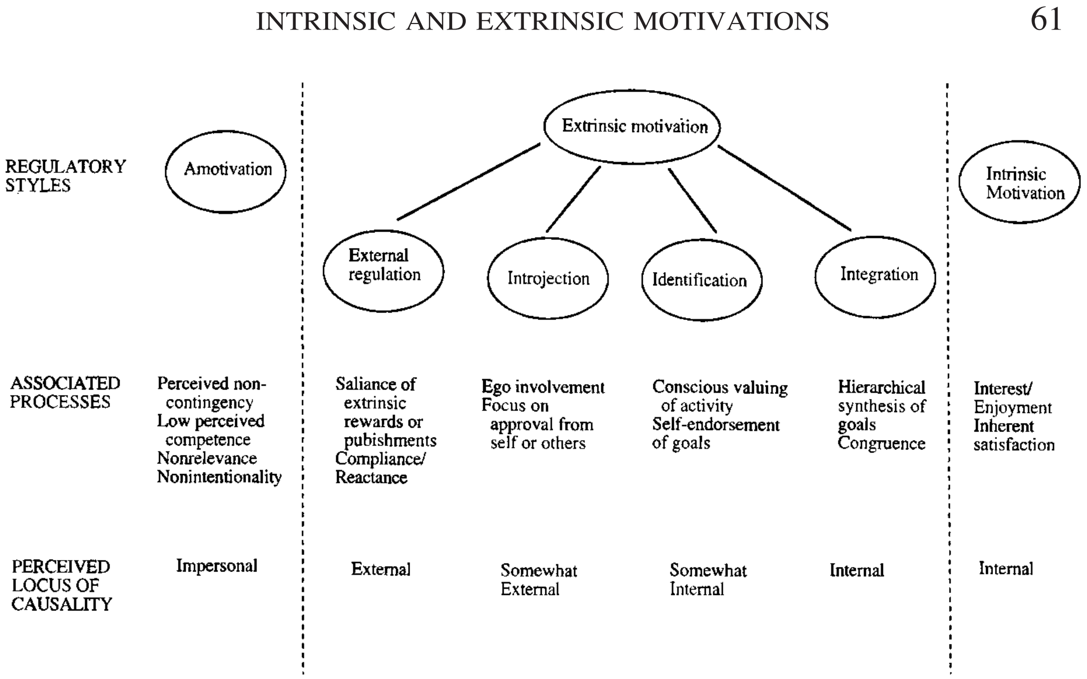
[25] Although no formal measure of the focal students' proficiency in Italian was conducted, focal students were asked to self-assess their Italian reading proficiency using the descriptors of reading proficiency outlined in the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, reproduced in Nance (2010) (see Appendix G). The proficiency level descriptions in the version of these Proficiency Guidelines that I gave to students for their self-evaluation were labeled with letters, rather than level descriptors (i.e., Intermediate Low, Advanced High). Their self-assessed reading proficiency can be found on Table 5.1. The five focal student participants described their own reading proficiency as Intermediate High to Advanced, although most of their reading assignments would have been appropriate for students with Advanced High proficiency based on length, stylistics, and linguistic complexity.

Figure 6.1. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations *Taken from Ryan & Deci (2000, p. 61).*


INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC MOTIVATIONS
61
REGULATORY STYLES
Amotivation
Extrinsic motivation
External regulation
Introjection
Identification
Integration
Intrinsic Motivation
ASSOCIATED PROCESSES
Perceived non-contingency
Low perceived competence
Nonrelevance
Nonintentionality
Saliance of extrinsic rewards or pubishments
Compliance/ Reactance
Ego involvement
Focus on approval from self or others
Conscious valuing of activity
Self-endorsement of goals
Hierarchical synthesis of goals
Congruence
Interest/ Enjoyment
Inherent satisfaction
PERCEIVED LOCUS OF CAUSALITY
Impersonal
External
Somewhat External
Somewhat Internal
Internal
Internal

In this figure, reproduced from Ryan and Deci (2000), the authors provide a taxonomy of motivation illustrating variation in motivation based on the degree to which behavior emanates from oneself. According to their taxonomy above, student motivation that revolves primarily around grades would be considered an extrinsic, external regulation of behavior. Over the course of this research, I found that grades were the most prevalent and apparent motivator in the focal students' behavior, particularly for Amanda, as will be discussed in more detail below.

Grades.

All five of the focal student participants had received very good grades during previous semesters of Italian language study, and they felt confident about their performance in these classes. This may have been one of the factors that motivated them to continue studying Italian, since these good grades were a boost to their overall grade point average (GPA). Receiving good grades in previous classes could also have boosted these students' self confidence about their own abilities, described as *extrinsic introjection* in Figure 6.1. This further reinforced their confidence and motivation to continue studying Italian.

Because they had previously received good grades, the focal student participants, with the exception of Alejandra, experienced some measure of shock and disheartenment in their third-year Italian classes, since course expectations were no longer quite as clear or straightforward as they had been previously. They found that it was not as easy to understand how to get an A as it had been, and struggled to figure out what their third-year professors wanted them to learn. This struggle is discussed further in Chapter 7.

Amanda's balance between grades and effort.

Amanda felt particularly confident in her ability to figure out what she needed to do to get by in her Italian literature courses during the dissertation project, even though she had struggled to do so during Maria's class, as reported in Chapter 3 on the pilot study. During our final interview, Amanda brought up the idea that she had an advantage over other students, because she was, in her own words, "competent." I initially thought she had misspoken, and had meant to say "confident," but she disagreed, so I then asked her to describe what she meant by "competent." She described being "competent" as having both confidence in her ability to perform well, and also the ability to anticipate or perceive what kinds of preparation might allow her to receive the highest grade possible with a minimal amount of effort on her part. In the excerpt below, she described her perceived advantage of "competence" in greater detail:

> I was kind of good at predicting certain things like the format of the final exam. Once [Boldini] started saying how open-ended it would be, I knew I didn't have to really prepare (. …) Even if I go in unprepared, I'm not nervous (. …) I always played the odds of having some that I knew and some I didn't know. I didn't go crazy trying to know every single thing. I tried to know a good portion of things and bank on it being eight of the 12 things I knew. I had the advantage of having a little more confidence. Most things I do, I do with competence. I could go in doing 80% less work than someone and still get a better grade because I just have the competence and I don't get nervous about those kind of things (. …) In high school I was one of the students who didn't really study but I could go in, take an exam, and be fine. Now it's different. I can't get away with not studying *at all*. I'm kind of like "what's the minimum I can do and still get by with the grades I want?" Because I'm more like "this is about enjoying myself and not going crazy," I'm the 3.3 GPA, not the 4.0. It's just the mentality you have. (Amanda, Final interview, May 2012)[26]

In this quote, Amanda clearly outlined the philosophy that guided her efforts in school. She seemed to give little value to the learning she might have derived from her studies, and instead viewed the effort she made in her courses in terms of set of economic transactions in which she hoped to spend as little effort as possible, to receive the best return on her investment.

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[26] Jared described the rationale for how much effort he put into his studies in a similar way to Amanda, saying "I tend to value my being content and health, over school, which I know some people wouldn't agree with, like my parents. But to me, not being stressed is more important than getting good grades" (Final interview, May 2012).

This banking model of education was criticized by Freire, because it frames learners as mere “collectors or cataloguers” of information, rather than active agents in their own learning (1970/2005, p. 72). Extending this economic metaphor to Amanda’s quote above, she prioritizes her return on investment, hoping to deposit the minimum amount of learning in order to achieve as much payoff as possible. In her perspective, success meant not putting in more effort than was necessary, while receiving a respectable, but not necessarily excellent, grade. In fact, she claimed that enjoying herself was a higher priority than getting good grades. Her prioritization of pleasure and enjoyment with regard to her experience at BSU did not pertain specifically to the enjoyment that might have been found in the material she was studying, but likely referred to enjoyment in her life in general, which she defined above as “not going crazy,” or not experiencing too much stress.

Thus, Amanda’s primary motivation with regard to learning Italian literature was governed by an external regulator (grades), and she was not intrinsically motivated to study Italian literature out of personal interest or for personal satisfaction. In fact, she expressed frustration to Bobby during a study session when she realized she had studied an Italian author who was discussed in class, but who would not appear on the upcoming exam. She told him, “I was really annoyed! Somebody did a presentation on Carducci, and I studied that, and I wrote all this stuff and it’s not even *relevant*” (Exam study session, March 2012).

Although Amanda may have initially been integratively, or even intrinsically motivated to learn Italian language, since she initially enrolled in Italian language classes because of a positive experience travelling in Italy (Initial interview, Pilot study, October

2011), this motivation did not appear to carry over to her study of Italian literature. She even went so far as to suggest during the pilot study that her Italian language proficiency had plateaued, and that studying Italian literature did not improve her language skills (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011).[27] Since she no longer felt that her classes supported the development of her language proficiency, and she was not intrinsically motivated to learn about or read Italian literature, Amanda identified the external, extrinsic regulator of grades to be her primary motivation:

> I've shifted my focus from improving my language skills to "how do I keep and maintain an A?" It never used to be hard to get an A in Italian, and I was learning things. Obviously I've still retained that stuff. But these past two semesters I don't feel like the things I'm learning are retained. I'm not going to remember who wrote what work in what century. Maybe some of the famous ones I could make a comment on. But in general, like 85% of the information we learned is gonna be out the window. It helps to continue speaking in class, but it's more strategy-based now. "How does this professor go about grading exams and making exams, and what do they want us to know?" "How do I study for it?" (Final interview, May 2012)

It is again apparent in this excerpt that Amanda views her Italian literature learning experience in terms of the banking model of education, as she considers the learning emphasized in her classes as information to be stored and filed away. Her lack of engagement with the subject matter was such that she was only able to retain a small amount of the information presented in class.

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[27] It is possible that Amanda felt the Writing Workshop course supported the development of her language proficiency, even though she did not consider her previous course (Introduction to Italian literature I) to do so. Regardless, her statements support the conclusion that grades remained her primary motivator while enrolled in the Writing Workshop.

It should be noted that Amanda's bold statements and general disregard for learning or putting effort into her studies may also have been motivated by her desire to save face in a situation in which she may not have been capable of performing at the desired level. Amanda's concern about saving face was especially apparent when she described her reticence to participate in the course I observed during the pilot study:

> I think a lot of the times people have issues participating in general because there's this fear people have of being wrong, being embarrassed, being shut down. I mean you have one bad experience with answering a question and someone laughs at you, and you never want to do it again. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)[28]

I think it is relevant that Amanda positioned her opinion as impersonal, by telling why "people" or "you" were reluctant to participate, rather than projecting emotions such as fear and embarrassment on herself with a first-person pronoun. Amanda returned to this description of her professor's negative feedback at the end of the dissertation study, which further demonstrates the impact it must have had on her: "If you answered something in a way she didn't expect, she's just kinda like 'no'" (Final interview, May 2012). Amanda's reaction to her professor's feedback is in line with how Seedhouse (2004) described the effect of direct, negative evaluation, which he claimed as likely to "offend and demotivate learners" (p. 172).

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[28] This excerpt is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Therefore, Amanda's relaxed and nonchalant attitude could have been a byproduct of her inability to be at the top of the class. Although this was certainly a possible explanation for her attitude towards learning about Italian literature, her behavior seemed to support her boldly stated disregard for learning about Italian literature. For example, while studying with other students the night before the final exam in one of her Italian literature classes, she left the study group early to have a drink with one of her friends at a local bar (Final exam study session, May 2012). This evidence suggests that she did, in fact, prioritize social events and enjoying herself over receiving excellent grades in her Italian classes.

Similarly, she later described how cutting corners in her reading and preparation for class had sometimes been detrimental to her grade, although she was still willing to take that chance in order to save herself some effort: "Sometimes it backfires, like when I don't go to class and it affects my participation. But other times it helps out when I save 20 hours of Sciascia reading because I tell myself, 'I know the basics and I can write an essay about it'" (Amanda, Final interview, May 2012).

Amanda's attitude towards her reading assignments is revealing about the kinds of motivation that drove her behavior with respect to Italian literature. Amanda seemed to take pride in her ability to receive an acceptable grade while putting in minimal effort. The previous statement clearly exemplifies Amanda's lack of intrinsic motivation with regard to Italian literature study, and highlights the prominent role of extrinsic, external motivation, in the form of grades. Since Amanda's time was also limited by the demands of her other classes, her off-campus work, and her busy social life, she considered the time she did not invest in reading her class assignments to be "saved" for another purpose.

Content learning: Alejandra

As prefaced at the beginning of this chapter, Alejandra's perspective often contrasted that of her classmates. Whereas her classmates' remarks generally focused on their Italian courses or instructors, but rarely on the texts themselves, Alejandra's comments during interviews and observations often centered on her personal experiences and opinions about reading Italian literature. Although I assume grades were important to Alejandra, she never mentioned them spontaneously during our interviews like Amanda had done.

When I asked Alejandra about what she had learned in her Introduction to Italian literature I course the previous semester, which I had observed as part of the pilot research reported in Chapter 3, her replies first focused on the aesthetic beauty of the literature she had read:

> I guess [I learned] an appreciation for poetry. I know at the beginning of the course I thought it was just going to be literature, like "pick Italy's best-selling books," like they would go to an Italian bookstore and pick a best seller, and we were going to read that. I had no idea it was going to be like Middle ages [*sic*] literature, and at first I was like "bleh, I don't want to do this." And honestly, this is going to sound really cheesy, but honestly a lot of the poems we read were just so beautiful to me, so it gives me pride knowing that I'm able to read *San Francesco d'Assisi* (Saint Francis of Assisi). I know what he's saying in this poem and I like that a lot. So it was just so pretty, like, who was it, "*la donna*

> *angelo*" [the woman-angel]. She didn't speak, but she was still so captivating. I liked that a lot. (Initial interview, February 2012)

Alejandra's response above echoes Holly's description of her learning in that same class during the pilot study. As described in Chapter 3, Holly had also found the recurring imagery of the *donna angelo* to be fascinating. Likewise, Alejandra also described her own personal satisfaction at learning new things, another characteristic that Holly had presented during the pilot study. Alejandra expressed intellectual curiosity and a sense of pride in having read medieval Italian literature in the excerpt below:

> When we were doing "*La divina commedia*" [The Divine Comedy], it's this thing I've heard so much about but never actually read it. And knowing that I'm reading something that was written *so long* ago, and understanding it, really got me excited. So I guess when I was actually motivated and excited, I read the passage on Paolo and Francesca, and how they were like lovers and now they're trapped forever, and it's so sad, you know. When you actually have the background of the story, and when you know on what level of hell Dante is, you just, I feel like a Renaissance man. I actually know what's going on. I really actually just enjoyed being able to say "hey, I can read this and know what's going on. It's an ancient poem and I know it all." (Initial interview, February 2012)

Alejandra's exuberance is clear in the above statement when she described how reading medieval Italian literature made her feel like a "Renaissance man." The pleasure Alejandra expressed with regard to reading and understanding Italian literature is indicative of intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, she claimed that her enjoyment in reading Italian literature was also increased by the fact that she could understand what she was reading. This conclusion is supported by the notion of *self-efficacy*, which proposes that a learner's beliefs about their ability to accomplish a task is a strong predictor of their success (Bandura, 1997). Conversely, theories of self-efficacy could also describe why Amanda, Stacie, Bobby, and Jared, who believed the texts they had been assigned were beyond their capabilities, attempted to read their texts much less frequently than Alejandra. Jared, in particular, claimed that he was concerned about misunderstanding his texts, since he found them to be nearly incomprehensible, and explained that this was one of the reasons he preferred to listen in class rather than read on his own (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011).

L2 motivational self system

An innovative framework of motivation proposed more recently by Zoltán Dörnyei is the L2 motivational self system, which frames motivation in terms of one's multiple perceptions of themself. Dörnyei's proposed theory is based on Higgins (1987), who identified three main ways of perceiving oneself:

> There are three basic domains of the self: (a) the actual self, which is your representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another) believes you actually possess; (b) the ideal self, which is your representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another) would like you, ideally, to possess (i.e., a representation of someone's hopes, aspirations, or wishes for you); and (c) the ought self, which is your representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another) believes you should or ought to possess

> (i.e., a representation of someone's sense of your duty, obligations, or responsibilities). (pp. 320-321)

Dörnyei (2009) recently extended these distinct domains of self, which had been initially proposed by Higgins, to the L2 learning context by suggesting the following three components of the L2 learning self:

> 1. *Ideal L2 Self,* which is the L2-specific facet of one's 'ideal self': if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the *'ideal L2 self'* is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves. Traditional integrative and internalized instrumental motives would typically belong to this component.
> 2. *Ought-to L2 Self,* which concerns the attributes that one believes one *ought to* possess to meet expectations and to *avoid* possible negative outcomes. This dimension corresponds to Higgins' ought self and thus to the more extrinsic (i.e. less internalized) types of instrumental motives.
> 3. *L2 Learning Experience,* which concerns situated, 'executive' motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g., the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success). This component is conceptualized at a different level from the two self-guides and future research will hopefully elaborate on the self aspects of this bottom-up process. (2009, p. 29)

The above descriptions of the various aspects of L2 motivational self system can provide a rationale for some of the decisions made by participants in this research. The section that follows shows how Alejandra's perspective on learning in her third-year Italian courses can be explained in terms of her ideal L2 self.

First, Alejandra's stated interest in the intellectual exercise of learning a new language is indicative of a projected ideal self who rises to the kind of intellectual challenge presented by learning a new language, and succeeds at doing so. In fact, it appeared throughout my observation of Alejandra in this study that she was much more concerned with her own proficiency development and content learning than she was with her grades. I draw this conclusion because of her level of engagement with assigned Italian texts, which went far beyond what was required to achieve a good grade in her classes. She demonstrated this engagement by asking me questions during reading observations about themes from past readings which had not been discussed in class, and which were not relevant to class assignments. Furthermore, she described learning in her Italian classes in terms of personal satisfaction and pride. The following excerpt from Alejandra's initial interview shows how she viewed her learning experience:

> I want to be able to say I'm educated on classic literature, and that's something that a lot of people don't really know too much about. I like knowing about Machiavelli and saying "this is what he wrote about in *The Prince*." And a lot of people don't know about that. And if you take the class, and they teach you it, and you still don't know it, that's ridiculous to me ((chuckling)). (February 2012)

In the quote above, Alejandra conveyed that she enjoyed becoming more educated about important Italian literature. Based on her description, it is likely that she might describe her ideal L2 self as a well-educated, intellectual individual.

In the second half of the excerpt above, she again refers negatively to her classmates ("a lot of people"), proposing that their disregard for learning the material was their primary failure, rather than their potentially poor grades in the course. In this way, she framed her classmates' behavior in terms of what she perceived to be their ought-to L2 selves, as proposed in Dörnyei (2009). It also appears that her conception of her own ought-to L2 self as an educated user of the L2 may have motivated her to engage more deeply with Italian literature, since, as she describes above, "if you take the class, and they teach you it, and you still don't know it, that's ridiculous to me" (Alejandra, Initial interview, February 2012). Therefore I propose that her level of engagement with learning in her Italian courses was motivated by her conception of her ideal and ought-to L2 self.

Dynamic models of motivation

Gardner and Lambert's (1959) model of instrumental motivation views the learner as unitary and fixed, measuring learner behavior at a single point in time. According to this model, motivation is a fixed, quantifiable, measurable characteristic or trait of an individual (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003, p. 617). Dörnyei's (1994) conception of motivation differs from Gardner and Lambert's (1959) model in that he acknowledges the dynamic nature of motivation, which varies according to time and effort invested. Although a large part of the L2 motivational research that has been published describes quantitative, psychological measures of motivation that present a snapshot of learner motivation at a certain point in time, Dörnyei and Skehan (2003) recognize that motivation changes longitudinally during the process of learning:

> During the lengthy process of mastering certain subject matters, motivation does not remain constant, but is associated with a dynamically changing and evolving mental process, characterized by constant (re)appraisal and balancing of the various internal and external influences that the individual is exposed to. (p. 617)

Therefore, Dörnyei and Skehan (2003) suggest that an appropriate model of L2 motivation should include a temporal dimension that can accommodate for variation over time and in response to various influences. However, this model of motivation views the language learner as an individual in somewhat reductive terms, downplaying the role of context and the variability of social identity in language learning and use.

In fact, this idea of dynamic motivation was reconceptualized by Bonny Norton Pierce, who in her seminal 1995 article, proposes the term *investment*[29] as a poststructuralist reframing of motivation. Norton Pierce (1995) conducted ethnographic research among immigrant women working in Canada, and proposed the notion of investment in order to, "capture the complex relationship of language learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to speak it" (p. 9). Grounded in theories of identity and social context, the concept of investment is meant to provide a sociocultural bent to the psycholinguistic conception traditionally prioritized in L2 motivation studies. The notion of investment also accounts for the contradiction between motivation and willingness to communicate (WTC), which MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément, and Noels (1998) define as "a readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (p. 547). Norton Peirce's (1995) research found that although learners may be highly motivated to learn a language, their WTC was often lower than their motivation, due to workplace, social, and identity issues (p. 26).

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[29] The word *investment* might also be considered part of a banking metaphor, such as that employed by Freire (1970/2005), its significance in terms of motivation presents a strong contrast to the banking model, and should not be considered a synonym for what Freire (1970/2005) described as educational "deposits" and "withdrawals."

Thus, Norton Peirce (1995) argues that motivation should not be considered a fixed personality trait, but must be understood with reference to social relations of power that provide opportunities for language learners to speak (p. 26). In fact, Pavlenko (2002) sustains that the terms "*agency* and *investment* have come to replace *motivation* in the study of L2 learning outcomes," in research that claims a poststructuralist, constructivist framework (p. 292).

Willingness to communicate (WTC)

Jared.

Jared's participation in the Writing Workshop can be taken as a prime model for demonstrating the concept of WTC. He was particularly shy, and even though he claimed to genuinely enjoy Italian, he actively avoided participating in class. During class he sat in his chair, immobile, and he told me in a reading observation that his stationary posture in class was a concerted effort not be noticed or called on by Boldini (Reading observation 2, April 2012). On one occasion I noticed that he had not taken his coat off, and even though it was quite warm in the classroom, his coat was zipped up to his chin. I wondered if he had left it zipped up because of fear of calling attention to himself.

While his professor asked questions directed to the whole class, Jared usually stared at his text, as if casually looking for answers, although his text was often illegible because of the poor quality of the printing.[30] During active class discussions, Jared kept his head still, and followed the interlocuters with his eyes. He was so still and quiet that many of the students did not even know his name at the end of the semester. This was apparent one day in class when Boldini was taking attendance and asked the class to tell him who was missing. A couple of students indicated Jared by pointing to the location where Jared was usually sitting, though they did not say his name, even upon further prompting.

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[30] The poor quality of Jared's printed texts is discussed in Chapter 5.

Early in the semester, Boldini attempted to involve Jared in class discussion by asking him simple display or opinion questions, which required no knowledge of the text they were discussing.[31] Each time Boldini directed a question at him in class, Jared seemed confused and alarmed to be singled out by the professor in front of the class. The following five excerpts are dialogues between Boldini and Jared from class observations that demonstrate Jared's unwillingness to communicate in the context of the Writing Workshop:

Excerpt 6.1

BOLDINI: ((to Jared)) *Dove siamo nel racconto*? [Where are we in the story?]

JARED: *Ripetere*? (sic) [Repeat?]

BOLDINI: *A che pagina siamo? Nel testo? Quale numero*? [Which page? In the text? Which number?] ((indicating the reading with his finger))

JARED: ((after a long pause, looking down)) *Abbiamo parlato del* (sic) *pagina 101* [We talked about page 101]

(Class observation, February 2, 2012)

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[31] Jared's participation in class discussion will also be discussed in terms of procedural display in the chapter that follows (Chapter 7).

Excerpt 6.2

BOLDINI: *Hai iniziato a leggere il racconto*? [Did you start to read the story?]

JARED: *Un po'*. [A little.] ((long pause)) *Poche parole. Ho avuto troppi compiti*. [A few words. I had too much homework.]

BOLDINI: *Di italiano*? [for Italian?]

JARED: *Sì*. [Yes.]

(Class observation, February 16, 2012)

Excerpt 6.3

BOLDINI: [Jared], *tu vai a caccia*? [Do you go hunting?]

JARED: *Che significa "caccia*?" [What does "hunting" mean?]

BOLDINI: ((mimes a hunter with a rifle))

JARED: ((shakes his head))

(Class observation, February 16, 2012)

Excerpt 6.4

BOLDINI: *Dov'eri martedì*? [Where were you on Tuesday?]

((Jared missed class on Tuesday, and wasn't able to explain why he had not been present in class. After a pause, he responded in English that he had been sick.))

(Class observation, March 1, 2012)

Excerpt 6.5

BOLDINI: [Jared], *sei superstizioso*? [Are you superstitious?]

JARED: No.

BOLDINI: *Perché*? [Why?]

JARED: *Perché sì*. [Because yes.]

(Class observation, March 1, 2012)

As can be seen in the five excerpts above, Jared responded as minimally as possible in front of the class. Furthermore, Jared's reluctance to speak in front of the class is further seen in his failure to complete a presentation in the Writing Workshop. One of the requirements for the course included a ten-minute presentation on a topic of the students' choice. Boldini left the assignment topic open so the students could do their presentation on any subject, at any time during the semester, as long as they confirmed it with him during the class meeting prior. During the first half of the semester, very few students did presentations, and I began to wonder how they would organize themselves at the end of the semester when few class meetings remained in which to do a presentation. In fact, since Boldini only allowed one student to present per class meeting, it was soon obvious that not all the students in the class would have the opportunity to do a presentation, since they had failed to schedule one earlier in the semester. Of the focal student participants, Jared was the only one who did not do a presentation. In an interview, he told me that he had never planned to do the presentation, and made a decision at the beginning of the semester that he would prefer his grade be reduced by ten percent than do a presentation in front of the class (Final interview, May 2012).

I later found out during an interview with Stacie, who had attended the same third-semester Italian language class as Jared, that he had fainted during a class presentation (Final interview, May 2012). She said that he had frozen in front of the class, and then fell to the floor. The trauma of the fall caused a nosebleed and Jared had to be taken away by ambulance. This experience might explain some of Jared's nervousness about presenting in front of the class. I think Jared might have been embarrassed about this experience, since he never acknowledged it to me himself, even when I asked about why he did not do a presentation. This experience, his shyness, and perhaps his inadequate Italian language proficiency contributed to Jared's low WTC.

Amanda.

The situated nature of investment can easily be applied to Amanda's variable WTC in her third-year Italian courses. As was discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, Amanda was reluctant to speak during her Introduction to Italian literature I class (pilot study), even though she spoke frequently in the Writing Workshop. As was discussed earlier in this chapter, she claimed to fear the possibility of a negative appraisal during the class I observed for the pilot study, and for this reason chose not to voluntarily speak in that class:

> I think a lot of the times people have issues participating in general because there's this fear people have of being wrong, being embarrassed, being shut down. I mean you have one bad experience with answering a question and someone laughs at you, and you never want to do it again. (Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)[32]

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[32] This and the following excerpt were discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Not only did Amanda worry about being told she was wrong in class, but she also suggested that her contributions and analysis would not have been valued by the professor of her Introduction to Italian literature I class:

> I don't feel like my analysis would be accepted, unless it happened to overlap with [Maria]'s analysis. The course kind of hindered everyone's ability to analyze a poem. It was more about how to listen and pay attention in class. (Final interview, Pilot study, December 2011)

The above excerpt shows how Amanda's decreased WTC during the pilot study contributed to her framing her learning in that course according to the banking model of education (Freire, 1970/2005). In essence, Amanda presented a conscious acknowledgment of her passive role in her own learning. However, although she preferred a passive role in Introduction to Italian literature I, Amanda's participation changed dramatically during the dissertation study, in Boldini's class. In her final interview, she claimed her increased participation in the Writing Workshop was because she was no longer afraid of being wrong: "I can participate really easily on the fly. I can just look at the book, skim it, find a sentence in class that [Boldini]'s talking about, and I'm not really afraid to be wrong either, so I don't mind participating" (May 2012). Although this statement does not reveal engagement with the subject matter, it does suggest that the atmosphere of Boldini's class had a positive effect on Amanda's WTC.

In summary, the quality of these five participants' learning can be described in terms of the motivational system underlying their behavior. Both Amanda's and Jared's learning was limited by their lack of intrinsic motivation to study Italian literature.

Furthermore, Amanda’s overwhelming focus on achieving acceptable grades, served as an external, extrinsic motivator that limited her engagement with Italian literature learning, since she was not required to read her texts in order to get the grades she desired. Alejandra, on the other hand, was intrinsically motivated to read and learn about Italian literature, and this supported her internalization of important concepts, making her learning experience more meaningful.

The following chapter will employ the concept of procedural display to frame focal student participation in learning in terms of engagement in the cultural practices involved in schooling, both inside and outside of class.

Chapter 7: Procedural display

Introduction

This chapter examines student participation in a third-year Italian class at Big State University (BSU), to unravel the complex reasons behind why the participating students chose to behave themselves in certain ways toward literature study, both inside and outside of the classroom. Analysis of these interactions draws primarily on theory of procedural display (Bloome, Puro, & Theodorou, 1989), which is grounded in the social architecture of classroom interaction. The present investigation focuses on two main topics: the digestive metaphor of regurgitation of content learning and on how students and professors frame and perform paraphrasing in an introductory Italian literature class. These findings show how active participation in the FL literature classroom may not necessarily indicate student learning and engagement. This chapter proposes that student participation in FL literature classes is instead grounded in the social and cultural architecture of the traditional FL literature classroom, as students create and maintain diverse social identities within a predictable context.

Procedural display

In a seminal article on procedural display, Bloome et al. (1989) proposed this concept as a framework for understanding classroom interaction. Stated simply, procedural display is "a learner's need to 'pass' by echoing, mirroring and complying with peer and teacher accepted responses and behaviors" (Iannacci, 2006, p. 57).

Rooted in cultural anthropology and sociolinguistic ethnography, procedural display investigates classroom interaction as a cultural institution, with interactional and discourse features such as questioning/recitation, turn-taking, and grouping patterns (Bloome et al., 1989, p. 267-271). An investigation in classroom interaction through the lens of procedural display focuses on the cultural underpinnings of behavior in the classroom, and, according to Bloome et al., asks "What are the cultural meanings and significances of the interactional regularities found in the construction of classroom lessons?" (1989, p. 272).

Procedural display views participants in a lesson as actors in a scripted cultural and social experience:

> With regard to classrooms, the cultural meaning or significance of any particular behavior and of the event itself lies not so much in the intention of an individual (whether teacher or student) but rather in the constructed system of meanings and significance extant within the classroom at that time. (Bloome et al., 1989, p. 268)

Thus, participant behavior in a classroom lesson can be anticipated and described by a thorough understanding of the context and the culture in which it is grounded. Prior (1998) elaborates that, "'Doing a lesson' is not a simple procedural assembly; it is rather a cultural event that is defined relationally within a semiotic field of cultural meanings and roles" (p. 101). Although procedural display is grounded in a common cultural framework, not all participants should be expected to display identical behavior in a given context, but they will instead observe certain cultural norms, as well as fulfill certain roles in the enactment of the lesson. In an FL classroom, this could include students bringing materials such as the class text, a notebook, and a writing utensil to class meetings, looking at their assigned texts during class, writing in a notebook when the professor provides information, and asking and answering questions at appropriate times.

Bloome et al. (1989) further describes procedural display in terms of what counts as "doing" or "accomplishing" a lesson in a formal educational context. Iannacci (2006) conducted research among young minority students in Canada and found that "students engaged in procedural display to appear competent, fit in, please the teacher and/or to act as if they understood concepts and the requirements of assigned tasks in spite of the constraints placed on them" (p. 65). I would argue that these conclusions could easily be extended to the undergraduate FL classroom. Iannacci went on to describe some of the ways in which the students in his research participated in this collocation of behavior: "Students engaged in procedural display to mirror their classmates, feign competency and comprehension and gain teacher approval at the expense and suppression of their cultural/religious backgrounds" (2006, p. 66).

Studenting and Mock participation.

Some of the elements of procedural display can be found in the similar conceptions of *studenting* and *mock participation*. Studenting is similar to procedural display in that it describes the behavior of students in a classroom by illustrating their comportment in terms of participation in a set of culturally grounded rituals. Some of these include pacing (allocating time to tasks), attending (participating in both formal and informal conventions), conforming (fitting in with peers), and selecting (choosing which things to learn) (Wallace & Wildy, 2004, pp. 644-645). Fenstermacher (1986) proposed the notion that often, student behavior is considered to be learning, when in reality it may simply be students acting like students. Similarly, Bloome et al. (1989) described studenting in terms of the strategies students may employ "to get through a lesson rather than engage in the academic substance of the lesson" (p. 273).

Bloome et al. (1989) describes mock participation to be when students pretend to participate in a lesson by imitating behaviors that would be considered appropriate in their classroom setting (p. 273). Douglass and Guikema (2008) add that mock participation holds up only as long as the student is not called on, or required to provide a response, in which case there would be a breakdown in the lesson, since in reality, that student would not be prepared to respond. One clear example of mock participation in the present study could be found in both Holly's and Amanda's behavior during small group discussions in the pilot study. Both of these students feigned participation by looking at their texts when their professor came near, even though they had previously been chatting about unrelated matters with the other members of their group (see Chapter 3 for further details).

Jared's participation: Procedural display or studenting?

I often wondered if Jared might be engaging in mock participation in class, since he was generally unable to answer even the simplest of questions, even though he appeared to be following along and writing notes in his notebook during discussion. For example, one day Boldini attempted to engage Jared in class by asking him what page they were on, and Jared had a difficult time responding. When the interaction below occurred in class, I got the impression that he may not actually have been listening to the class discussion at all, even though that would have been difficult to guess from his stance:

Excerpt 7.1.

BOLDINI: ((to Jared)) *Dove siamo nel racconto*? [Where are we in the story?]

JARED: *Ripetere*? (sic) [Repeat?]

BOLDINI: *A che pagina siamo*? *Nel testo*? *Quale numero*? [Which page are we on? In the text? Which number?] ((indicating the reading with his finger))

JARED: ((after a long pause, looking down)) *abbiamo parlato del* (sic) *pagina 101.* [We talked about page 101.]

(Class observation, February 2, 2012)

Both studenting and mock participation differ from the notion of procedural display for several reasons. First, procedural display is considered a cooperative acting out of a lesson by both students and the teacher. Conversely, studenting and mock participation entail a measure of deception on the part of the students, whose behavior is aimed at conveying a message that is different from the actual situation. Furthermore, acts of resistance toward classroom norms would not be considered evidence of procedural display, inasmuch as they attempt to break down the structure of the classroom lesson by challenging its premises in a way that is beyond the expectations of normal classroom behavior (Bloome et al., 1989, p. 273). It is in fact these classroom norms that the concept of procedural display attempts to describe, rather than individual challenges to them. In the example above, Jared's appeared to listen carefully to the lesson, when in actuality he was either not listening or had difficulty understanding his professor's words, and was perhaps even a little surprised to have been addressed by Boldini in front of the class. I propose that his stance of attentive listening was likely participation in procedural display, which from Jared's perspective, signified silent acquiescence, and was not intended to be deceitful.

Amanda's participation: Procedural display or studenting?

The presence of procedural display does not eliminate the possibility of the presence of studenting or mock participation in a given context, and it is likely that elements of all three constructs were present at some point among the participants of this study. However, I propose that most of the student behavior I observed was not meant to intentionally deceive, and therefore most closely adhered to the notion of procedural display. During an interview, Amanda made an important statement about the complicity between the professor and the students in her class. As she described which sources she thought her professor expected her to consult in preparing class readings, she claimed that her professors assumed that students would not actually read the text, but rather rely on summaries, such as the scanned copy of an anthology of Italian literature that her professor had made available to students in the class. Amanda said, "[Our professor] knows students now like to look everything up online, and don't read books" (Final interview, May 2012). In this statement, Amanda revealed her perspective that her professors were aware that students often prefer to look up information on the internet, rather than read literary texts and primary sources, and she claimed that this understanding was the reason her professor had provided students with access to an anthology of Italian literature. Due to the absence of intended deception in this example, I propose that it is an example of procedural display rather than studenting. Furthermore, since the data and observations I present in this chapter exemplify complicit understanding between professors and students regarding student preparation for class, I consider procedural display to be an appropriate framework for understanding how these participants behaved, both inside and outside of class.

Procedural display as a cultural phenomenon.

Notwithstanding that most researchers have considered procedural display to be a cultural phenomenon, an individual's ability to perceive and comply with these group practices may vary. In fact, Prior (1988) problematized the individual's ability to participate in procedural display, especially in the case of ethnic and cultural diversity or disability:

> Although [researchers] argue that procedural display should be seen as a strictly collective accomplishment, I would also add an individual interpretation of procedural display. In other words, I see the person's ability to participate in a particular practice (a question of appropriated tools and identities) as an issue. (p. 102)

Thus, individual interpretations of group culture may result in varied manifestations of that culture. Regardless, it should be noted that since procedural display attempts to describe a cultural event, rather than individual behavior, it is not meant to be indicative of the quality of teaching. Rather, "engagement in procedural display may be a necessary condition of classroom education, and as such procedural display may be less related to the question of good or bad teaching than to the question of the nature of classroom education" (Bloome et al., 1989, p. 273).

Therefore, Bloome et al. (1989) characterize procedural display as an inherent interactional feature of the environment, which is not necessarily indicative of the quality of either teaching or learning:

> Procedural display is (a) the display by teacher and students, to each other, of a set of academic and interactional procedures that themselves count as the accomplishment of a lesson, and (b) the enactment of lesson is not necessarily related to the acquisition of intended academic or nonacademic content or skills but is related to the set of cultural meanings and values held by the local education community for classroom education. (p. 272)

Indeed, Bloome (2012) claims that procedural display can account for why some students fail to acquire knowledge about course material regardless of their interactional participation in a "successful" lesson (p. 22). Similarly, Miller and Atkinson (2001) found that their participants' engagement in procedural display was not necessarily reflective of their understanding of course material: "Students displayed to the teacher the types of information required so that the lesson could be completed, yet there was very little evidence to suggest that many students understood the subtleties of the main points" (p. 331).

Moreover, Douglass and Guikema (2008) found that procedural display may actually hide what is really happening during a lesson, thereby hindering student learning and engagement with the material. Gutiérrez, Zitlali Morales, and Martinez (2009) proposed that this false perception may be caused when students are more focused on "doing school," by following the norms of classroom behavior, than on learning itself. They suggested that this classroom display of "pseudo-learning" may not entail competence in the subject matter, but rather, a need to fit in with their peers (p. 223). In fact, some students' desire to appear successful can cause them to ignore their own learning "in order to facilitate their classroom social identity as 'the good student'"

(Rymes & Pash, 2001). Last, with respect to reading and procedural display, Anagnostopoulos (2003) critiqued the traditional model of education that allows procedural display to mask true engagement, for example by rewarding students for "reading," but failing to require them to explore themes, ideas, or perspectives in their texts (p. 193).

The rest of this chapter is organized around two major themes related to procedural display which emerged from the data: regurgitation and paraphrasing. First I discuss the digestive metaphor of "regurgitation," which was employed by the focal student participants, particularly Amanda, as they described their learning in an introductory Italian literature course. Second, I take a closer look at how paraphrasing was employed in that same class as a strategy to train students to understand linguistically difficult texts.

Study group data.

The focal student participants were all enrolled in an Introduction to Italian literature II class (focusing on literature from the Enlightenment to the present day), which was a continuation of the Introduction to Italian literature I class that served as the context for the pilot study (see Chapter 3), and which met right before the Writing Workshop. Therefore, students often discussed and studied for both classes when they met outside of class in study groups. In fact, since there were no exams in the Writing Workshop, students would often discuss the reading for that class briefly and in general terms during study groups, before moving on to the material they needed to know for their Introduction to Italian literature II class. Since tests determined a large portion of their grades for that class, students expressed much more concern about knowing the material for that class than they did for the Writing Workshop.

The professor[33] of Introduction to Italian literature II had taught the course several times. Students referred to her by her last name, Mannucci (pseudonym), and I will therefore refer to her by this name throughout this chapter in an attempt to mimic the tenor of this usage. Introduction to Italian literature II was a survey course in Italian literature, which was organized chronologically and covered literature from the Enlightenment to the present day. Mannucci had assembled a reader for the class, which was comprised primarily of photocopies of poems and a few short stories from a variety of anthologies. Although I did not observe this course, the details in this chapter are based on the student participants' reflections on their experiences studying Italian literature and many of their comments focused on their Introduction to Italian literature II course.

Regurgitation

A recurring theme in focal students' comments about their Introduction to Italian literature II class centers on the digestive metaphor of regurgitation in which, similar to the banking model of education proposed by Freire (1970/2005), teachers "feed" students knowledge, which they then hope to be able to "spit out" on an exam. Amanda described this teaching style as follows: "Some [professors] have the more old school philosophy where they spit out information and want you to regurgitate it. And it's very straightforward. Old style grading, everything. Not really room for your own personal interpretation" (Final interview, May 2012). Amanda considered this teaching style to be characteristic of her Introduction to Italian literature II course, and this perception of hers shaped the way she participated in that class.

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[33] Not a participant in this study.

As was discussed in Chapter 2, the banking model of education is generally marked by a lack of substantive engagement with the course material. Students' passively accepting and reproducing the teachers' words instead of genuinely engaging with their texts could be considered procedural display in the context of the FL literature classroom. Bernhardt (1987) describes how procedural display is enacted in the FL literature curriculum:

> Students learn how to fulfill teacher expectations in classrooms: They answer questions accurately and reproduce textual information. They learn over time that they are to protect certain "truths" handed down by the text through the teacher. Thus, unless the teacher specifically requests their interpretations, volunteering them would be perceived as disrespectful of textual authority and an interruption of planned instruction. (p. 36)

In this excerpt, Bernhardt (1987) describes how student behavior in an FL literature classroom might be driven by classroom norms rather than textual engagement. Her suggestion that students accept the professor's word without interference, and refrain from proffering their own viewpoints in the FL literature classroom supports the idea that procedural display may inhibit students' ability to appropriate classroom learning. In passively accepting the professor's "truths," students have effectively "filed [themselves] away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system" (Freire, 1970/2005, p. 72).

In contrast to Bernhardt's and Freire's positioning of the practice of educational regurgitation, Toohey (2000) frames it in more positive terms, which may echo how the professors who engage in this style of teaching might view it themselves. She wrote that students "try on other people's utterances, they take words from other people's mouths; they appropriate these utterances and gradually (but not without conflict) these utterances come to serve their needs and relay their meanings" (2000, p. 13).

While studying for an exam during the second half of the semester, Amanda explained that she preferred how the professor of her Introduction to Italian literature II class provided them with all the information that would be required on exams. Conversely, in the Introduction to Italian literature I class, reported on in Chapter 3, Amanda had felt that she was not able to succeed without putting in a great deal of work outside of class, even though her professor (Maria) had gone through each reading line by line in class. In the following excerpt, Amanda described what she enjoyed about Mannucci's classroom practice:

> I think I like her because if you actually pay attention in class, and listen, everything that's on the exam she says at some point in class. Like there's never really anything outside of class to do, as long as you take really good notes. And that's like the only problem. That's why, studying right now, I'm not really nervous even though I haven't studied yet. You don't really have to study. The only time you have to worry is if you didn't go to class. (Exam study session 2, April 2012)

In the above quote, it is clear that Mannucci made a concerted effort to provide information clearly and overtly, and as will be described in the following section on paraphrasing, she also attempted to provide a specific strategy whereby students might learn to read Italian literary texts on their own. However, as will be concluded, Mannucci provided the paraphrases herself, and most students passively accepted them, rather than learn to paraphrase on their own. Amanda preferred being given the necessary information directly, because it entailed less work on her part than if she would have had to come to it on her own by reading and studying her texts. She essentially positioned herself as a receptacle for the information her teacher provided, rather than an agent in her own learning (Freire, 1970/2005). Although she preferred this passive role in her classes, which required less work on her part, she also realized, and even complained, that she had not retained most of the material covered in her Italian literature course:

> These past two semesters I don't feel like the things I'm learning are retained. I'm not going to remember who wrote what work in what century. Maybe some of the famous ones I could make a comment on, but in general, like 85% of the information we learned is gonna be out the window…. It's more strategy-based now. "How does this professor go about grading exams and making exams, and what do they want us to know? How do I study for it?" (Final interview, May 2012)

The statement above shows that Amanda was aware that she had not been retaining the material covered in her third-year courses. From her discouraging experiences during the previous semester, reported in Chapter 3, Amanda learned to change the way she approached her Italian classes. Her pragmatic approach was aimed at achieving the best grade possible with minimal effort, as was discussed in Chapter 6, even though she was fully aware that by conducting herself in this way, she would not actually retain much of the subject matter of her courses. Her attitude towards learning in her Italian literature classes can be summarized in the excerpt below:

Excerpt 7.2.

AMANDA: It's probably 95% of the time that I'm not doing anything for my classes. ((laughing))

AMANDA: ((to me)) Did anyone come yesterday for the review session?

BARBARA: No.

AMANDA: I think its 'cause we had this exam. It's really been taxing. I don't think anyone really has read what we're supposed to with [Boldini]. I couldn't even think about reading it.

(Exam study session 1, March 2012)

Amanda came to believe that Boldini cared more about student participation in class than whether they completed their readings, perhaps because he was insistent that all the students in the class be offered frequent opportunities to speak. Since grades for the Writing Workshop were based on written essays on topics of the students' choice, and no formal grades were assigned in relation to the weekly class readings, Amanda concluded that reading was not necessary, as long as she was able to find something to say during class discussions:

> Honestly, I think I could have gotten away with never having read any of the *Trame* readings. But that's because I can participate really easily on the fly. I can just look at the book, skim it, find a sentence in class that he's talking about, and I'm not really afraid to be wrong either, so I don't mind participating. I feel like

> if I didn't read, and I was shy about participating, it would have been bad for participation's sake. (Final interview, May 2012)

Since Amanda did not consider it necessary to prepare in order to participate in Boldini's class, she rarely did so. She contrasted Boldini's emphasis on participation with Mannucci's emphasis on lecture, in what Amanda calls "a regurgitation type class":

> I don't think you really had to read the stuff in [Writing Workshop]. You could ask a question or whatever and [Boldini] kinda counted that as participation. [Mannucci] was a lot more about lecturing than conversation, whereas [Boldini] wanted you to make *him* talk less. [Writing Workshop] wasn't like a regurgitation type of class. It was more like have a conversation, ongoing, constantly trying to use your skills. Whereas [Mannucci] didn't really care what skills you had, she just wanted to make sure you had the information that she spit out. (Final interview, May 2012)

Although Amanda dismissed the idea of reading the assigned texts for her Writing Workshop class, she maintained that class discussion gave her the opportunity to practice her language skills in a way that she found lacking in her other third-year courses. She felt that any contribution she might make to the class discussion would be accepted and appropriate, and said that it "wasn't like a regurgitation type of class," since she and her classmates were encouraged to share their personal reflections and thoughts. In this scenario, the cultural grounding of this class created an environment in which procedural display allowed for individual contribution, even though that contribution did not necessarily need to be substantive. Amanda compared the environment in the Writing Workshop to Mannucci's Introduction to Italian literature II class, in which Amanda felt her speaking proficiency was irrelevant to class discussion because the important information was provided by her professor.

Throughout the semester, but especially while observing study groups, I noticed that students frequently referred to information presented in class by their professors as "what s/he said," and to information they needed to learn for a test as "what s/he cares about" or "what s/he wants." I observed this recurring semantic disassociation with the course material to be especially prevalent when Amanda, Stacie, and Bobby met in study groups to prepare for exams in their Italian classes. As they reviewed the material they had covered in class, they repeatedly referred to their notes and course material in terms of these two themes: 1) what their professor had said in class, and 2) what she expected them to produce on their upcoming exams. These phrases ("what s/he said," "what s/he wants") demonstrated a strong association between the information in their course and their professor, rather than linking that information to its inherent importance in the study of Italian literature.

In Mannucci's class, one of the primary strategies that Amanda and the other focal student participants employed in order to get a good grade on their tests was to try to determine "what she wants us to know." While preparing for their Italian literature exams, students spent a great deal of time trying to reconstruct what the professor had said in class and what she had deemed to be of greatest importance. The excerpt below is a conversation between Amanda and Bobby as they went over their class notes together during a study session a few hours before their first exam in Introduction to Italian literature II:

Excerpt 7.3.

AMANDA: For some reason I put a box around this one and wrote "memorize."

BOBBY: She made a huge emphasis on that, I highlighted it too.

AMANDA: What I think is going to happen is, you know how she had one part paraphrasing and one on short answer? …

(Exam study session 1, March 2012)

In the example above, Amanda and Bobby identified a potentially salient concept in their notes because they had both marked it. The markings in their notes led Bobby to remember that the thing they had highlighted was an idea that the professor had emphasized in class. Therefore, Amanda went back in her mind to remember the format of the test, so she could try to figure out how that information might be represented on it, and consequently, how she might be able to reproduce it on the test. This example is indicative of the process by which Amanda, Bobby, and Stacie studied. Since these three students often met together to study before tests in their Italian classes, I was able to observe their preparation for exams more so than I was able to with Alejandra and Jared, who generally did not meet with other students to study for tests.

The following section elaborates on a key practice in Mannucci's class, which I consider to be characteristic of third-year literature classes in general at BSU: paraphrasing. This section describes how students' paraphrasing was positioned by the professor and by students as another form of "informational regurgitation," in which students attempted to memorize and reproduce paraphrases presented in class, rather than developing their own ability to paraphrase.

Paraphrasing

One of the key strategies employed in Italian literature classes at BSU was paraphrasing linguistically difficult passages of Italian literature in modern Italian, ostensibly to help students learn to read and understand literature on their own. I had observed other Italian professors employ this same strategy during a previous research project, and therefore assume it to be common practice to use paraphrasing as a key strategy in beginning Italian literature classes, at least at BSU. In fact, I had observed paraphrasing to be the primary means of scaffolding linguistically difficult Italian literature in several undergraduate Italian literature classes at BSU.

The attention that the Italian professors at BSU gave to paraphrasing in their undergraduate Italian literature courses demonstrates their awareness of their students' linguistic limitations, and implies a purposeful effort on the professors' behalf to address the linguistic preparation of their students. However, I would argue that, in the examples I present in this section, adherence to the procedural display of "doing a lesson" on paraphrasing actually inhibited students from learning to paraphrase on their own. The examples that follow were collected from the focal student participants during interviews and study group observations. They generally pertain, not to their Writing Workshop class, but to Introduction to Italian literature II, in which they were all enrolled. This course focused on Italian literature that was more linguistically challenging than the literature students were assigned in the Writing Workshop since it reflected a variety of time periods, contexts, and conceptually difficult ideas. Although I did not observe this second class, I use participants' descriptions of what it was like to paraphrase in class in order to piece together what one of these lessons might have been like.

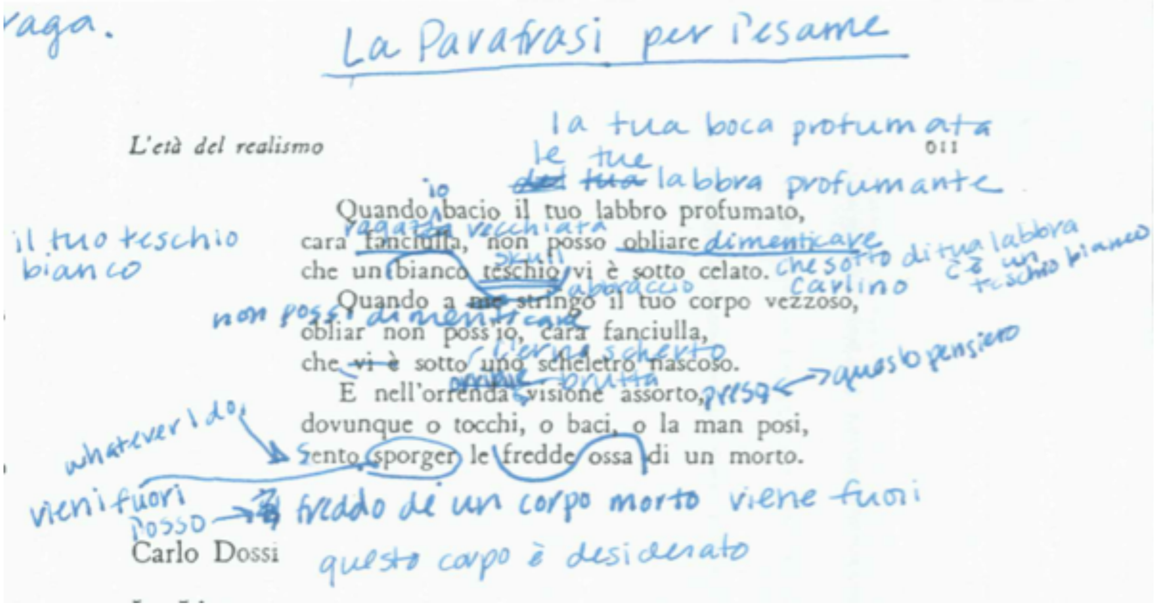
Most of the students in the Introduction to Italian literature II class were new to the exercise of paraphrasing literature, and initially struggled to understand how their professor intended for them to paraphrase their texts. It is likely that the professor hoped students would attempt to do some of this paraphrasing work at home, since the students told me she often asked them to volunteer their own paraphrases in class. However, Alejandra was the only one of the focal student participants who attempted to read and paraphrase the assigned readings on her own. Amanda, Bobby, Jared, and Stacie did not attempt to paraphrase literature on their own, and instead focused their efforts on copying the paraphrase that was presented in class. During a study session, I asked Amanda and Stacie how they went about paraphrasing a poem. Stacie described the process of paraphrasing in her Introduction to Italian literature II class in the quote that follows:

> So what we do in class, it's fast, and some things [the professor] changes, and there's not much room to write [on the text itself]. So what I do is, I circle the things that stay. And then try to get it as close as I can with substitution. I talked to [the professor] about the paraphrasing, and what she wants is like a one-word replacement. She wants us to use synonyms to replace and paraphrase, and then the analysis is where we talk about the meaning. So we're supposed to keep it pretty much word for word translations. (Exam study session 2, April 2012)

In the excerpt above, Stacie's description portrays her experience paraphrasing, which she frames as an in-class activity, led by the professor. One could easily imagine her sitting at a student desk with printed copy of the poem and pen in hand, attempting to annotate the reading while listening to the professor's suggested paraphrase. The professor speaks quickly, providing synonyms for the words in the text, and it is difficult for Stacie to keep up with the pace as she hurrily records the professor's words above or below the text of her poem. In fact, Stacie doesn't seem to know the rationale for which words she circles and which she replaces; she simply transcribes her professor's words alongside her text as best she can.

The description above shows how, from Stacie's point of view, the exercise of paraphrasing largely entailed copying the professor's dictated paraphrase of a text in her notes. My impression while observing study groups was that Stacie tried to record the paraphrase, word for word, as her professor spoke it aloud. Paraphrasing, in this case, consisted primarily of substituting common Italian words for those in the text that students were less likely to understand. Stacie described trying to "get as close as I can," but it is unclear what she was trying to approximate, though it is likely she meant that she was trying to transcribe the paraphrase provided by her professor as closely matched to the phrasing and structure of the original poem as possible. An example of Stacie's paraphrasing can be seen in the figure below, taken from her course reader.

Figure 7.1. Stacie's paraphrase of the poem *Memento* [Memento] by Iginio Ugo Tarchetti.



raga.

La Parafrasi per l'esame

L'età del realismo

011

la tua boca profumata
le tue
~~del~~ ~~tua~~ labbra profumante

io

Quando bacio il tuo labbro profumato,
ragazza vecchiata
cara fanciulla, non posso obliare dimenticare
skull
che un bianco teschio vi è sotto celato.
abbraccio
Quando a ~~me~~ stringo il tuo corpo vezzoso,
obliar non poss'io, cara fanciulla,
l'eterno scheletro
che ~~vi è~~ sotto uno scheletro nascoso.
orrible brutta
E nell'orrenda visione assorto, presa
dovunque o tocchi, o baci, o la man posi,
Sento sporger le fredde ossa di un morto.

il tuo teschio bianco

che sotto di tua labbra c'è un teschio bianco

carlino

non poss. dimenticare

questo pensiero

whatever I do

vieni fuori

posso

freddo di un corpo morto viene fuori

Carlo Dossi

questo corpo è desiderato

In the figure above, it is clear that Stacie's paraphrase was performed directly on the poem, almost as if she intended to rewrite the words of the poem itself. In the first line, she inserted the personal pronoun "*io*" [I] in order to emphasize the subject of the verb "*bacio*" [kiss]. She wrote a paraphrase of the last four words, "*il tuo labbro profumato*" [your perfumed lip] above that line in the poem, first conveying a literal meaning in standard Italian ("*le tue labbra profumate*" [your perfumed lips]), and then a second paraphrase above that, "*La tua boca* (sic) *profumata*" [your perfumed mouth], which conveys a more general interpretation of intended meaning of those words. In both the third and the final line of the poem, she drew a curved line between and around the words "*bianco teschio*" [white skull] and "*fredde ossa*" [cold bones] to indicate that in the paraphrase, the order of these noun-adjective pairs should be reversed, resulting in a sentence structure that more closely resembles standard Italian. Finally, on the fourth line Stacie crossed out the word "*me*" [me] since its reflexive use with the verb "*stringo*" [to squeeze] in that line would be considered colloquial.

In effect, during this paraphrasing activity, Stacie was actually editing the original piece of literature, writing above, around, and even on top of the words of the poem on the page of her text, copying the words her professor substituted as she dictated a simplified version of the poem in class. Stacie was aware that paraphrasing often implies a looser conveying of the meaning of the words in the poem, which at times could be taken as an analysis of the meaning of the poem itself, and she was therefore confused about the difference between paraphrasing and analyzing a poem. She approached her professor to clarify how she should go about the task, and from Stacie's report above, it seems that her professor did not want her to vary from the sentence structure of the original work, but instead to provide a simplified version of the vocabulary in the poem by substituting common words for the more difficult words in the text.

As this example demonstrates, Stacie described the act of paraphrasing in terms of word-for-word translations, substituting simplified, modern Italian words for linguistically difficult ones in her text. This was, of course, a limited conception of what the professor of this Italian literature course intended. I believe she intended to teach students the skill of paraphrasing as a scaffold to understanding linguistically challenging texts, so they might be better prepared to read them independently. In reality, paraphrasing instead became an exercise in dictation, or perhaps even translation of the Italian authors' words into standard Italian, which was largely carried out by the professor herself. It could be proposed that this type of exercise actually limited students' ability to understand their assigned texts on their own since, with the possible exception of Alejandra, the focal student participants claimed that they were unable to paraphrase their readings independently (Final interviews, Amanda, Stacie, Bobby, Jared, May 2012).

Although I believe the professor of the class intended for her students to learn how to paraphrase on their own, it was apparent from the way they spoke about paraphrasing that the students themselves only gained minimal practice in paraphrasing. For the most part, students reported during interviews and observations that they did not attempt to paraphrase on their own for several reasons, which will be elaborated in the following pages. First, the professor generally provided a word-for-word paraphrase in class, so students rationalized that reading and paraphrasing on their own was an inefficient use of their time. Second, most students felt that if they did try to paraphrase on their own, their answers would likely be wrong. They based this observation on class discussions in which the professor attempted to elicit student participation in constructing a paraphrase. Although Mannucci requested student participation, by and large students were not able to provide a paraphrase that she would have considered accurate, and therefore students were eventually hesitant to offer their contributions, since they lost confidence in their ability to provide an appropriate and acceptable answer (Exam study session 3, May 2012).

Thus, students came to believe that the professor's paraphrase was the only "right" one, which discouraged them from attempting their own paraphrase. In the professor's defense, I am sure that her intention was to avoid misleading students about the meaning of the poems by accepting an inaccurate paraphrase, even though her negative appraisals of student participation in effect silenced their contributions, insomuch that they eventually accepted her paraphrase to be the only one that was correct. Further, since students were required to complete a paraphrase of a text on their exams, all of the focal student participants attempted to memorize the professor's paraphrase, rather than attempt to paraphrase the text on their own.

While studying for an exam for this Italian literature class, Amanda described how she had been preparing for the paraphrasing section of the exam by memorizing the paraphrase presented in class by her professor:

> The paraphrasing is what it is at this point. It's not really, you basically memorize how she paraphrases it in class and hope you can remember it all, because she just likes it a certain way. But she gives you the answers straightforwardly. If you listen well, she dictates everything. (Exam study session 2, April 2012)

In this excerpt, it is clear that Amanda dismissed the idea of paraphrasing the literary texts herself. By claiming that her paraphrasing "is what it is," Amanda relinquished ownership of her own ability to paraphrase by conceding that paraphrasing really consists of an exercise in memorization. It is clear that she did consider herself capable of paraphrasing, or even improving her own paraphrasing skills for use on the test. She reinforced this idea that her own paraphrasing skills were irrelevant by claiming that since her professor "likes it a certain way," it was pointless for her to attempt her own paraphrase of the text. Although she expressed appreciation that Mannucci was clear in her expectations for the paraphrase, the fact that Amanda positioned her professor as the sole knowledge bearer and expert, who essentially "dictates" the answers, resulted in her positioning herself as somewhat inept and incapable of completing the task on her own. This juxtaposition of the provider and the receptacle of knowledge again suggests a banking model of education in which students passively accept information given to them by their teachers (Freire, 1970/2005).

Positioning themselves as the recipients of knowledge caused students to doubt themselves and their abilities. As I observed exam study sessions among the participants, as well as interactions between students outside of class, I noticed that overall, the students failed to take ownership for what they were learning. Two clear themes emerged from the analysis of the data: first, that students framed information as what they had "put" in their notes, rather than appropriating that knowledge as their own, and second, students' continual pursuit to figure out what kinds of information and expressions would please their teacher, expressed as a desire to understand "what s/he wants."

In the passage below, Stacie was having trouble understanding the significance of her own notes as she prepared for an exam in Introduction to Italian literature II. Here, Stacie addressed me, asking if I happened to know what the phrase in her notes might have meant:

> You know anything about *l'io lirico* [first person]? I have no idea what the heck that means. ((reading from notebook)) "Corazzini: *grande, grande io*" [big, big first person]. I don't know what the heck her notes mean. This is like stuff she writes on the board, and I just try to write it down and try to like hope I'll understand it. (Exam study session 2, April 2012)

It appears that Stacie had copied in her notes what Mannucci had written on the board in class, even though she hadn't understood its meaning. Perhaps it was not appropriate to ask about the meaning of the words on the board during the lecture, and in this way, Stacie may have engaged in procedural display by accepting the importance of the words on the board and writing them in her notes, even though she never knew what they meant.

In fact, while studying for an exam for that same class, Amanda and Bobby conferred about some minor inconsistencies in their paraphrase of a poem, *L'infinito* [The infinite], by Giacomo Leopardi. They had gone over this paraphrase in class and recorded it in their notes. The first excerpt below provides an example of how these students had framed their paraphrase of the poem as what they had "put" in their notes, rather than taking direct ownership of the ideas. In this excerpt Bobby and Amanda compared the paraphrase they had written in their notes as a preliminary step to memorizing the paraphrase before their test. They discovered that they had recorded a slightly different wording for one of the lines of the poem:

Excerpt 7.4.

BOBBY: I put "*io confronto* [I compare]"

AMANDA: Um, I put "*io faccio un confronto* [I make a comparison]"

AMANDA: They could probably both be right.

(Exam study session 1, March 2012)

This simple exchange first demonstrates these students' disassociation with the paraphrase, since they described it as what they had passively "put" in their notes rather than what they had actively understood or written. It is probable that they had listened in class as the professor constructed the paraphrase line by line, and copied the words in their notes, without a great deal of reflection. Since these are likely not words that they had suggested themselves, Bobby and Amanda did not appropriate them as their own, but rather as a transcript of what had been said in class.

During the same study session, Bobby and Amanda attempted to reconstruct another line from the poem *L'infinito* in Excerpt 7.4 below. The line they were discussing is written "*Infinito silenzio a questa voce* [Infinite silence in this sound]" in the original poem (student course packet). It is clear in the excerpt below that neither student was actually concerned about the meaning of this line, or which phrasing was most true to the meaning of the poem itself. Instead, both students seemed to focus exclusively on reconstructing the precise wording the teacher had presented in class, which they had "put" in their notes:

Excerpt 7.5.

AMANDA: I put "*Quel silenzio infinito* [That infinite silence]"

BOBBY: I put "*Quel silenzio ai suoni di nature* (sic) [That infinite silence of the sounds of nature]." ((laughs)) How did we write such different things?

AMANDA: Besides my reader, I wrote it out in my notebook as [Mannucci] was reading it line by line.

BOBBY: What did you put? "*Quel silenzio* [That silence]…" ((writing))

AMANDA: I said "*Quel silenzio infinita* (sic) *a questo suono* [That infinite silence of this sound]." Not "*rumore* [noise]," that's like the big thing.

AMANDA: "*A questo suono* [of this sound]" instead of "*a questa voce* [of this voice]." See, she flipped the lines.

BOBBY: "*Quel silenzio infinito a suono* [That infinite silence of the sound[?"

AMANDA: “*Questa* [This],” like the letter “a.”

(Exam study session, March 2012)

In the above dialogue, Amanda and Bobby found that they had written slightly different versions of the paraphrase of this line of a poem that their professor had presented in class. Amanda defended the version she had written in her notes, and seemed to understand which parts of the paraphrase referred to which parts of the poem when she described that “*a questo suono*” was meant to replace “*a questa voce*” in the paraphrase of the poem. In fact, during her last turn, Amanda explained to Bobby how the professor’s paraphrase followed the inverse order of the words in the line of the poem itself. It appears that Bobby had not made that connection, and he may not have been referring to the text of the poem at all, as he pieced together a paraphrase of the poem from his and Amanda’s notes. Furthermore, Amanda’s claim that “*rumore*” was not a good substitute for “*voce*” appears to be an idea that had stuck with her from class discussion. Although I am not sure at what point the word “*rumore*” entered into the discussion on paraphrasing this line, it is possible that it had been proposed by a student in class, and deemed incorrect by the professor.

It was apparent to me that, even though the professor was responsible for providing, or at least confirming, a correct paraphrase for her students, that she did attempt to involve them in constructing the paraphrase during class discussion. During a reading observation, Stacie revealed that she had been called on in class to offer her own paraphrase of the first line and title of the poem “*Perché tu mi dici: poeta?* (Why do you call me: poet?)” by Sergio Corazzini. In the excerpt below, she first described how the professor had rejected her idea that the first line of the poem should have been left as written in the original, and then demonstrated her understanding of the line of the poem by discussing the difference in meaning in the professor's paraphrase:

> She called on me [to discuss the paraphrase] and I kept it as "*Perché tu mi dici poeta*. [Why do you say to me: poet?]." And she was very, she just really insisted that it was "*Perché tu mi CHIAMI*," like "Why do you CALL me poet." "Why are you SAYING me poet" versus "Why are you CALLING me poet." And I thought that it kind of made a difference. Because by saying, like, "Why are you saying to me, poet?" is kind of like rejecting the whole classification of, or defining poet. And I was trying to write about that when I was writing my reflection on the readings, and I didn't really know how to describe that really. I thought it was a kind of element of neorealism really, like the whole identity thing. (Reading observation 1, February 2012)

In this quote, Stacie challenged her professor's paraphrase of a line of a poem by discussing the difference in meaning between the original line and the paraphrase. She proposed an analysis of that line of the poem, and suggested that her professor's paraphrase of that line would have made a difference in its meaning. In this instance, Stacie demonstrated engagement with the text itself, and problematized her professor's paraphrase. I argue that in this case, Stacie took ownership of her learning, rather than passively accepting her professor's paraphrase, and exemplified the notion of *conscientização* [critical consciousness] proposed by Freire. Freire (1970/2005) defines *conscientização* as "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 35). Stacie's critical reflection about the different meanings that might be implied in the first line of

Corazzini's poem show personal engagement with the material. The excerpt below is a continuation of Stacie's thoughts about the first line of that poem, and she explained why she had chosen not to challenge the professor's paraphrase during class discussion:

> Yeah, not only identity but just even his, it's like he didn't even know that word at all. It's almost like the idea of a poet doesn't exist to him. So I thought there was a difference there, 'cause he's rejecting the label itself. But she really thinks its, I didn't know how to ask about that in class, because to try and do that in Italian would be kinda hard for me. (Reading observation 1, February 2012)

Stacie explained above that even though she had felt confident about her thoughts on the meaning of the poem, and that the professor's paraphrase might have altered that meaning, she had chosen not to speak up about it during class. She said that the reason she had chosen not to bring up her ideas in class was because she didn't know how to express her ideas about the poem in Italian. Stacie didn't consider sharing her ideas in English to be an option, possibly because it had been established over several class meetings that any students who volunteered to speak, would do so in Italian. To offer a comment in English would have disrupted the norms for participating in the lesson. Therefore, in order to accomplish the lesson, she remained silent. In this way, procedural display can be seen to have silenced Stacie and interfered with her substantive engagement in class discussion. This conclusion is reinforced by Iannacci's (2006) study, in which he found that students' need to comply with classroom norms by engaging in procedural display can "limit … students' academic achievement and cause them to suppress their backgrounds in order to facilitate their classroom social identity" (p. 57-58).

Similarly, I had observed several times that Stacie had questions or ideas she would have liked to share during her Writing Workshop class, but since she wasn't able to formulate them in Italian, she often remained silent rather than volunteering her thoughts. The quote below is from a class discussion in which Boldini asked if anyone in the class knew what the term "pro forma" meant, since it had been found in that day's reading. Stacie knew what the term meant, but was not able to convey the definition in Italian:

Excerpt 7.6.

BOLDINI: *Cosa vuol dire è una colpa "pro forma*?" [What does "pro forma" guilt mean?]

STACIE: *In inglese*? [In English?]

BOLDINI: No; ((to the class)) *Va bene*? [Alright?]

STACIE: ((silence))

(Class observation, April 26, 2012)

Thus, the Italian-only policy of the classroom also hindered her ability to make substantive contributions to class discussion. This may partially explain why, even though Stacie claimed to be quite interested in literary analysis, she was rarely able to offer substantive insights in class. Since she was not able to adequately express her thoughts in Italian, and it would have disrupted the accomplishment of the lesson for her to challenge the target language-only policy of the class, her complicity in accomplishing the lesson effectively silenced her.

In summary, the examples presented in this chapter demonstrate how adherence to the social framework of their classroom caused the students in this study to disassociate themselves with their own learning. Although they participated in the enactment of the lesson by speaking as necessary and taking notes, since reading their texts was not directly relevant to their grades, most of the participants in this study failed to complete reading assignments and therefore participated in class only on a surface level. Engagement in procedural display, therefore, served to support a banking model of education (Freire, 1970/2005) in this context, in which knowledge was passively accepted by the student participants.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Introduction

In the concluding chapter of this dissertation, I situate the research reported here among three main empirical research studies (Donato & Brooks, 2004; Mantero 2002, 2006; Douglass & Guikema, 2008) that focus on FL literature study in the United States. I then review the research questions posed at the outset of this study, and discuss the findings in terms of each research question and describe the limitations of this research, and its implications for university foreign language (FL) literature teaching and learning. This chapter concludes with directions for future research based on the ideas gathered in this study.

Situating this study among similar research

Three prominent research studies which have focused on the FL literature classroom in recent years are particularly relevant to the study reported in this dissertation: Mantero (2002, 2006), Donato and Brooks (2004), and Douglass and Guikema (2008). Donato and Brooks' (2004) and Mantero's (2002, 2006) studies focused on the nature of student discussions in third- and fourth-year Spanish classes emphasizing literature, in order to evaluate to the quality and function of classroom talk in this type of classroom environment. Both of these studies reached the conclusion that the speaking patterns in the FL literature classroom were quite similar to those found in the language classroom, and did not often allow for students to practice advanced-level speaking functions, including extended discourse.

Although it was not the purpose of the present study to analyze the quality of discourse, my own observations sustain those proposed by Donato and Brooks' (2004) and Mantero's (2002, 2006) research. Students were given frequent opportunities to speak in both of the courses I observed, even though their contributions were generally brief, informational in nature, and closely followed the discourse patterns observed in Donato and Brooks (2004) and Mantero (2002, 2006). Although I did not observe the Introduction to Italian literature II class in which all of the student participants reported here were also enrolled, it is likely that neither this class nor the one I observed for the pilot study (Introduction to Italian literature I) offered students ample opportunities to practice advanced-level speaking functions. I make this generalization based on the way participants described the prioritization of information-based display questions in these courses, particularly in the case of Amanda, who contrasted the approaches to student participation employed by the professors of her third-year Italian courses:

> You could ask a question or whatever and [Boldini] kinda counted that as participation. [Mannucci] was a lot more about lecturing than conversation, whereas [Boldini] wanted you to make *him* talk less. [Writing Workshop] wasn't like a regurgitation type of class. It was more like have a conversation, ongoing, constantly trying to use your skills. Whereas [Mannucci] didn't really care what skills you had, she just wanted to make sure you had the information that she spit out. (Final interview, May 2012)[34]

As Amanda described above, Boldini purposely offered his students ample opportunities to speak by allowing them the freedom to comment or ask questions freely. Although many students took advantage of this opportunity, the framework of class discussion did not necessarily encourage the development of the kind of advanced-level speaking skills prioritized by Donato and Brooks (2004) and Mantero (2002, 2006).

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[34] This excerpt is further discussed in Chapter 7.

Perhaps even more relevant to the analysis presented in this dissertation is a study performed by Douglass and Guikema (2008) in which they evaluated the presence of procedural display in an intermediate-level FL reading lesson. It is important to note that their study represents the only published investigation of procedural display in FL education that I was able to locate as of the time of this writing. Like the two studies presented above, Douglass and Guikema (2008) focuses on interactional classroom discourse in a FL literature class, but instead of investigating advanced-level speaking functions, this study examined classroom interaction in terms of how participation in procedural display, or the lack thereof, contributed to the continuation or the breakdown of the lesson. Their conclusions support those presented in Chapter 7, and sustain that participation in the ongoing of the lesson at times masked students' lack of substantive engagement with course material.

The next section summarizes the conclusions of this research with regard to the research questions that guided data collection and analysis.

Research Question 1: What do third-year students of Italian literature value in Italian literature study?

> Students aren't taking [Italian literature] classes because they have this burning desire to study Italian literature. It's because "I want an Italian major, and this just happens to be one of the classes," and maybe I love the culture class and I love the class about Italian cinema, but I hate reading, and I don't like it.
>
> (Amanda, Initial interview, Pilot study, October 2011)

As was discussed in Chapter 3, Amanda claimed to represent her classmates in suggesting that although they may be interested in Italian in general, they are often uninterested in studying Italian literature. Among the participants interviewed in this study, only Alejandra and, to some degree, Stacie expressed an interest in learning about Italian literature. Amanda, Jared, and Bobby, on the other hand, demonstrated little interest in the study of Italian literature. All five focal students' interests with respect to the study of Italian revolved around their own Italian language proficiency development, which they described primarily in terms of speaking proficiency.

Since all the participants, with the potential exception of Alejandra, prioritized speaking proficiency over literature learning, they reflected negatively on the structure of their Italian literature courses in general. When asked what she had learned in her Italian literature courses, Amanda autonomously directed her comments toward speaking proficiency, describing her proficiency as both "failing" and "stagnant." Thus, it is clear that Amanda valued the opportunity to practice speaking Italian more so than aspects of her classes that related to literature and reading.

As I analyzed the dissertation data, I realized that motivation might be the most appropriate and established framework from which to understand what the student participants valued in Italian literature study. However, I did not approach this research with the intention of investigating motivation per se, but rather students' relationships with the study of Italian literature, and in particular the Italian literature they were assigned in their classes. Their lack of interest in studying Italian literature may have been exaggerated by the difficulty of the task, and their language proficiency may not have been adequate for the readings they were assigned. They were instead interested in improving their speaking proficiency, which was not directly addressed in their Italian literature courses. Since they were not intrinsically motivated to study Italian literature, their focus shifted from learning about Italian literature to receiving good grades.

Along these lines, Amanda aptly described the philosophy that guided how she invested her time and energy in studying Italian literature by posing the question: "What's the minimum I can do and still get by with the grades I want?" (Final interview, May 2012). In fact, it appeared that Amanda and some of her classmates invested the minimum amount of energy in order to get by with decent, though not excellent, grades. Similarly, both she and Jared claimed that they prioritized a low-stress approach to school, as described in Jared's statement to me during his final interview: "I tend to value my being content and health, over school, which I know some people wouldn't agree with, like my parents. But to me, not being stressed is more important than getting good grades" (Final interview, May 2012).

Research Question 2: How do these students' values and practices with regard to Italian literature study affect their access to the discourse of Italian literature?

In the case of Amanda and other students like her, lack of interest and motivation essentially resulted in a prioritization of grades over Italian literature reading, and since reading was not necessary in order to receive a good grade, many students didn't read. Instead, Amanda and her classmates employed two strategies as they approached their third-year Italian course. First, they attempted to participate in class in large part because it was necessary for the cultural completion of the lesson (procedural display), even though their contributions were not always substantive. Second, they carefully copied in their notes what their professor said in class, even if they didn't understand the meaning of the things they were writing, and therefore this behavior could also be ascribed to the notion of procedural display, which compels participants in a lesson to go through the motions of learning, even though little-to-no learning may actually be accomplished. Students essentially attempted to "regurgitate" the information that was "dictated" by their professors in class as accurately as possible on tests without truly engaging themselves with class material (Amanda, Final interview, May 2012; Exam study session 2, April 2012).

This practice in which students produced or reproduced information about their texts while failing to engage with the literary texts themselves essentially demonstrates that their prioritization of grades over learning prevented them from participating in the discourse of Italian literature. According to Freire's (1970/2005) critique of the banking model of education, students like Amanda, who passively accepted information rather than engaging in and appropriating that knowledge, effectively removed themselves from the learning process itself. By and large, the focal students failed to engage directly with the literature they were assigned, and in this way their own values and practices denied them first-hand access to the discourse of Italian literature.

Alejandra presented a unique perspective in this respect, because out of the five focal student participants, she was the only one who demonstrated an intrinsic motivation to study Italian literature. In Chapter 6 I described how Alejandra's experience differed from that of the other focal participants, primarily in terms of the personal interest with which she approached her Italian literary texts. Although she described being initially put off by the idea of reading medieval Italian literature, she developed an interest and appreciation for it over time (Initial interview, February 2012). She was the only participant to describe her experiences reading Italian literature in positive terms, using descriptive adjectives such as "beautiful," "pretty," and "captivating" (Initial interview, February 2012). In our initial interview, she described her experience reading medieval literature during the previous semester in the course I had observed for the pilot study as an "exciting" and personally gratifying experience: "When we were doing *La divina commedia* [The Divine Comedy], it's this thing I've heard so much about but never actually read it. And knowing that I'm reading something that was written *so long* ago, and understanding it, really got me excited." (Initial interview, February 2012).

Thus, Alejandra's practices with respect to Italian literature went beyond memorizing and repeating her professors' words. She prioritized understanding and aesthetic appreciation of the Italian literary texts she read, and this allowed her direct participation in the discourse of the texts she studied.

Research Question 3: How does participation in a third-year literature course affect these students' access to the Discourse of Italian literature study?

I observed a variety of types of student participation in this research. Their participation in class included paying attention, taking notes, and volunteering to speak. I also considered students' out-of-class activities related to the course as participation, and these activities included primarily reading assigned texts and reviewing class material on their own or in groups.

As I observed the Writing Workshop, it was apparent that many of the students were paying attention to class discussion and some volunteered to speak frequently. However, their contributions were often only tangentially related to the text, and usually did not demonstrate understanding of textual ideas. Amanda believed she had an advantage over other students because she felt comfortable raising her hand and speaking in class even when she had not done the reading, and she perceived that whatever she might say, regardless of the content, would garner her credit in the eyes of her professor (Final interview, May 2012). In fact, based on my class observations, her comments in class were rarely about the text itself. With respect to Gee's (2008) description of (capital-D) Discourse, presented in Chapter 2, which frames literacy as participation in a particular practice, I argue that Amanda did participate in the Discourse of the Writing Workshop, by volunteering spoken comments according to the loose rules of engagement for that context. However, participating in the Discourse of her third-year Italian class did not inevitably entail participation in the Discourse of Italian literature, since Amanda's comments did not reflect understanding of the literary texts discussed in class.

Similarly, although all five focal student participants prioritized paying attention in class and taking careful notes about what their professor said, they often failed to understand the meaning of the words and phrases they wrote in their notes. In this way, even though they participated according to the norms of their third-year Italian class, they did not always engage in the Discourse of Italian literature, especially in the cases where they didn't understand the words and concepts they had copied in their notes.

Outside of class, the focal student participants generally disregarded reading their assigned literary texts, since they thought that reading was not necessary and seemingly irrelevant to their grade. While studying for an exam with Stacie, Amanda claimed that her third-year Italian courses didn't require her to put in any effort, such as reading her texts, outside of class: "Like there's never really anything outside of class to do, as long as you take really good notes" (Exam study session 2, April). Amanda was also aware that neglecting to read and study outside of class limited what she would actually learn in conjunction with her Italian classes: “Like 85% of the information we learned is gonna be out the window” (Final interview, May 2012).

With the exception of Alejandra, the focal student participants only rarely engaged with their course materials outside of class except in preparation for exams. However, this preparation was primarily motivated by a desire to get a good grade on an upcoming test and usually consisted of reconstructing missing bits of information in class notes or figuring out which information to memorize for the test. This behavior, although characteristic of the third-year students of Italian literature that I observed, did not generally constitute true engagement with Italian literature study.

As evidenced above, even though the focal students participated in their third-year Italian courses to some degree, they were not required to engage with Italian literature in order to earn the grades they desired. This failure to read and interact directly with their texts indicates that they did not actually participate in the Discourse of Italian literature study. Instead, these students maintained a largely passive role with respect to Italian literature study.

The exception to this conclusion can be found in Alejandra’s participation in her third-year Italian courses. She made frequent, substantive contributions during class discussions because, unlike most of the students I observed, she usually read her texts outside of class. She was intrinsically motivated to read Italian literature, and developed an aesthetic appreciation for it. After completing the first semester of “Introduction to Italian literature” she felt proud that she had read and understood literature in a foreign language from such a distant time period. She proudly called herself “a Renaissance man" because she could read medieval poetry and understand the major themes (Initial interview, February 2012). Thus, I argue that Alejandra's participation in third-year Italian courses, supported by her intrinsic motivation to read and study Italian literature, allowed her access to the Discourse of Italian literature.

Major contributions of this study

The primary contribution of this study lies in its application of procedural display to FL literature study both inside and outside of the classroom. The only other published study of which I am aware that uses procedural display is Douglass and Guikema (2008), which was described both above and in Chapter 7. This concept has the potential to provide additional meaning to the numerous studies in classroom interaction by framing this interaction as participation in a culturally-rooted norm, which reveals some of the driving forces behind participant behavior that might not otherwise be apparent at first glance.

This project also makes the case for the need for additional attention to pedagogy in the FL literature curriculum. As suggested by Donato and Brooks (2004), more evidence-based research is needed to support the development of pedagogy in this context. It is hoped that research such as that presented in this dissertation might drive pedagogical innovation in FL literature study, in order to provide a better learning experience for students of FL literature.

Implications for FL literature teaching and learning

The implications of this research are many. First, it was apparent from the outset of this study that the students enrolled in the third-year Italian courses I observed were not linguistically prepared to approach the difficult texts assigned in their courses.

Donato and Brooks (2004) argued that, "literature instructors must address linguistic issues or be confined to present shallow literary exercises of plot recall (Fein, 1999), to conduct class in English, or to have discussions only with international students or heritage language learners in the course" (p. 185). Indeed, students' language proficiency inevitably affects the quality of class discussions around literature, due to their inability to both decode assigned texts (as was seen in the case of Jared, who expected to understand no more than 40% of his texts) and to formulate opinions and hypotheses about complex ideas (as was shown in the case of Stacie, who was unable to communicate her complex ideas about literature during class).

However, it should be noted that L2 (second or foreign language) proficiency is not necessarily a reliable indicator of L2 reading comprehension and inferencing ability. Fecteau (1999)'s empirical study found that L1 (first language) reading comprehension and inferencing ability was significantly correlated to L2 reading comprehension and inferencing. This suggests that developing these skills in the L1 could have a positive affect on the same skills in the L2.

Second, I observed a striking lack of student engagement with Italian literature, which I believe has strong roots in the linguistic inadequacy of these students to approach FL literature in the way it is usually assigned and presented in their university courses. There are differing opinions about how best to support and structure student learning about FL literature. Bernhardt, for example, argues as follows:

> There is a line of thought that increasing amounts of classroom time should be devoted to strategy learning; there is another line of thought, arguing that strategy training is taking important instructional time away from background knowledge

> acquisition. This is an important issue to resolve and the present data base presents us with more contradictions than assistance." (2011, p. 49)

As Bernhardt suggests above, although the problem is evident, the field of FL literature study has yet to arrive at a resolution on how to best support students' ability to read and understand FL literature. Strategy instruction has been suggested to be helpful, including strategies such as skimming and guessing word meanings from context (Rusciolelli, 1995) and extensive reading (Horst, 2005; Maxim, 2002; Renandya, Rajan, & Jacobs, 1999).[35]

The Italian program in which I conducted this study promoted paraphrasing as a strategy for approaching linguistically difficult texts. However, students understood paraphrasing to be a role performed for them by the professor, rather than a skill they might develop themselves. Their understanding of how paraphrasing functioned in their Italian literature courses was reinforced by their perception that only the professor's paraphrase was correct, and that they were incapable of producing the correct paraphrase on their own. For example, as described in Chapter 7, Stacie told me about an experience in class when she had been called on to attempt to paraphrase the first line of a poem in class. In this instance, her professor had disagreed with the paraphrase she had provided, and even though Stacie continued to maintain that her own proposal might be just as good, she reluctantly accepted her professor's paraphrase (Reading observation 1, February 2012). From this experience, Stacie gathered that she was not capable of producing the exact formula for the paraphrase that she believed her professor expected.

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[35] For a more complete discussion of the benefits of extensive reading in FL literacy, see Day & Bamford, 1998.

Therefore she positioned paraphrasing as an exercise in memorization of the word sequence proposed by her professor.

A similar conceptualization of paraphrasing was shared by Amanda, who described how she prepared for the section of her tests in Introduction to Italian literature II in terms of memorization of the paraphrase that had been presented by her professor in class: "You basically memorize how she paraphrases it in class and hope you can remember it all, because she just likes it a certain way" (Exam study session 2, April 2012). Consequently, the strategy of paraphrasing was in actuality treated as a set of facts provided by the professor, rather than a skill for uncovering meaning in literature.

In fact, the professor who participated in the pilot study, Maria, seemed to support the second idea proposed by Bernhardt (2011), that students were not yet ready to approach literature without a great deal of background knowledge about the texts they were reading. As was discussed in Chapter 3, she did not find the notion of reader response theory, which prioritizes the reader's reaction to a text over contextual and historical information, to be applicable to Italian literature study.

Based on the findings of this research, I propose that third-year students of Italian require additional scaffolding and strategy instruction in order to allow them to interact directly with their texts. I do not exclude the importance of contextual background, but propose instead that training students to discover meaning in literary texts themselves might bolster their intrinsic motivation to study Italian literature. Providing students with the opportunity to involve themselves in their own knowledge construction encourages critical thinking and reflection, leading to participation in the Discourse of FL study.

This claim is supported by Prior's (1998) description of the implications of "deep participation":

> Deep participation not only opens paths toward full participation, that is, taking up some mature role in a community of practice, but also increases opportunities to assume privileged roles in a community. Deep participation may be displayed in roles the person assumes, in her relations to other participants, and in qualitative aspects of her engagement in practices. (p. 103)

Limitations

Finally, there are a number of limitations to this study. First, this qualitative report is specific to the context and participants it describes, and as discussed in Chapter 4, is not generalizable to a larger population. Although I recruited student participants who I thought might represent a variety of opinions, I found that most of them approached Italian literature and Italian literature courses in similar ways. It is likely that the students who participated in this study did not reflect the variety of opinion and participation that were present in the class I observed, even though I was able to capture some variation, in particular through Alejandra's perspective. Additionally, it would have been beneficial to have conducted a more formal evaluation of student participants' language proficiency, since their language proficiency may have played a significant role in the behaviors that were observed during this study.

Furthermore, it was not feasible to observe students at the times and locations in which they might normally read and prepare for class (if at all), likely late at night in their bedrooms. Therefore, the behavior I observed during scheduled reading observations in the library inevitably varied from students' normal practice. It is probable that conducting these reading observations caused some students to read at times when they otherwise would not have done so. However, even though these scheduled reading observations might have been a departure from students' normal practices, when this was the case, it was usually apparent. For example, when I met with Jared for a reading observation, he came unprepared, without his texts, and didn't know which reading had been assigned. Furthermore, he read through his text more quickly than the other focal student participants did, and afterwards, was unable to tell me anything about what he had read (Reading observation 1, February 2012). It was apparent in this instance that Jared was not accustomed to reading and understanding his texts in preparation for class, and it appeared that he had done so only as part of his participation in this research study.

One of the limitations of the data I was able to collect during class observations was the lack of video or audio recordings of class meetings during the dissertation study, in order to respect the participating professor's preferences. Although I attempted to gather as much rich detail as possible in my handwritten field notes, it was difficult to capture interactions in the class, which would have undoubtedly provided an important dimension to Chapter 7 on procedural display. Even though I was not able to make video or audio recordings of the class I observed, my detailed field notes did provide enough information to allow me to include several instances from class discussion in this dissertation. Moreover, they served as an important data source for triangulation and for confirming the validity of participants' statements made during interviews and observations.

Perhaps the greatest limitation of the study was that it would have been more appropriate to perform the dissertation phase in the second semester of the two-semester Introduction to Italian literature sequence, since the pilot study was based on the first semester of this two-course sequence. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, it was not possible to conduct this study in that setting because the professor of that course declined to participate in this project. Although the Writing Workshop was not intended to be a course on FL literature, it was considered a bridge course, and was relevant to the research questions in terms of how participation in the Writing Workshop prepared students to approach literature in future courses. Since literary texts served as the basis for class discussions, it was an appropriate setting for investigating how students approached FL literature and FL literature courses.

Directions for future research

This research has proposed several questions with regard to FL literature learning and teaching that merit further investigation. First, additional research into the planning and preparation of FL literature courses and curricula could shed more light on how departments, programs, and faculty view FL literacy development. Donato and Brooks (2004) remarked on the paucity of studies addressing the pedagogy of FL literature teaching. These researchers commented on how few empirical studies address the development of language proficiency in FL literature curricula and consequently they call for an increase in such studies in order to provide evidence-based pedagogical recommendations for FL literature study (p. 184). In fact, these researchers claim that,

> If the study of literature is a useful context for developing language proficiency and cultural knowledge (and research and practice provide evidence for this

> claim), then there must be similar investigations of the literature class as a site for developing advanced language competence.” (Donato & Brooks, 2004, p. 184)

A foray into FL departments’ curricular requirements and program outcomes would be germane to understanding what kinds of expectations faculty have of their FL students, and the ways in which these expectations play out both at the macro- and the micro-levels of FL instruction. It could be beneficial to ground qualitative studies, like the one presented in this dissertation, in a quantitative evaluation of the state of FL literature study in general, and Italian literature study in particular.

Although some of the students in this research participated over the course of two semesters, a longer trajectory of longitudinal research might reveal more information about students’ FL literacy development and motivation with regard to FL study. This type of study might ideally include students’ participation in FL courses from the beginning stages through the fourth year of a university FL degree program.

Since participants’ statements cannot be taken as absolute truth, it would be helpful to conduct a protocol analysis to get a better idea of what students actually understood as they read their Italian literary texts. This methodology could also shed light on how targeted strategy instruction and language proficiency might play a role in students’ relationship with FL literature and FL literature study.

Last, it could be helpful to have a record, either written or audio, of students’ reactions to their assigned FL literature texts, in order to better gauge their individual approaches to the text, which may be somewhat masked in the context of classroom discussion or formal written assignments, since in these cases, students generally try to produce what they think their professors want. Participant diaries might provide greater detail about which elements of the texts seem most relevant or salient to FL students, and would provide greater insight into their participation in the reading culture and Discourse of the FL literature they are reading.

These suggestions for future research are certainly not exhaustive, though they provide a few avenues for continued exploration of the context reported on in this study. Another related area for future research can be found in graduate-level FL study. At the outset of this study, I had intended to investigate the research questions in the context of graduate-level Italian literature courses, but due to several circumstances described in Chapter 4, I decided to conduct this study among undergraduate students of Italian. A qualitative report on graduate FL study could provide additional insights into the trajectory of FL literacy, which could serve to further ground the present research conducted in the undergraduate FL curriculum.

In the introduction to this project, I described my personal experience studying Italian literature in both an undergraduate and a graduate context. The struggles I experienced in my Italian literature courses served as the initial impetus for this investigation. It was simultaneously reassuring and painful to observe the student participants' difficulties throughout this study. On one hand, I was glad to be able to observe and provide a rich, evidence-based report on these undergraduates' experiences studying Italian literature for the first time, since my desire is that this project will help make the case for an increased focus on pedagogical development for FL literature learning at the third and fourth years of undergraduate FL study. On the other hand, I felt compassion for the participants in this study as they struggled to read challenging texts in a foreign language, a task for which most of them were ill prepared.

As a teacher of Italian language myself, this research has provided me with a deeper understanding of these students' experiences, making me more conscious of some of the potential obstacles to student engagement and learning in my classes. This project has made me more aware of the competing demands on students' attention and energy, and has reinforced in my own mind the importance of providing adequate scaffolding for difficult tasks such as reading linguistically challenging FL literature.

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Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval

Notice of Action
University of Wisconsin–Madison
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Principal Investigator: Diana L Frantzen
Department: Spanish and Portuguese
Co-Investigator: Barbara Bird
Point of Contact: Barbara Bird
Protocol Title: Accessing Literature: Advanced students of Italian literature
Protocol Number: SE-2011-0586
IRB: Social & Behavioral Sciences IRB (Contact: 263-2320)
Committee Action: Approved on: **September 21, 2011** Expires: **September 20, 2012**

We have received the information you sent regarding the above named protocol. This information complies with the modifications required by the Institutional Review Board, and your protocol is now approved. You may begin collecting data at any time.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Special Notes or Instructions: Researcher has complied with the modifications set forth by the IRB. This protocol is now approved per 45.CFR.46.110(b)(1)(7) as a minimal risk study of group characteristics. Research seeks to examine how advanced students of Italian literature uncover and create meaning in literary texts. Signed, written consent will be obtained. This protocol is minimal risk.

INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES:

Unless this protocol is exempt, or the IRB specifically waived the use of written consent, an approved consent form that is stamped with approval and expiration dates can be found on IRB WebKit. To find the stamped consent form, go to IRB WebKit at https://rcr.gradsch.wisc.edu/irbwebkit/Login.asp. Login and open this protocol number. The link to the consent form can be found on the left side of the page. All copies of the form must be made from this original. Any changes to the consent form must be approved in advance by the IRB.

Any changes to the protocol must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented.

Any new information that would affect potential risks to subjects, any problems or adverse reactions must be reported immediately to the IRB contact listed above.

If the research will continue beyond the expiration date indicated above, a request for renewal/continuing review must be submitted to the IRB. You must obtain approval before the current expiration date. If you do not obtain approval by the expiration date noted above, you are not authorized to collect any data until the IRB re-approves your protocol.

Signed consent forms must be retained on campus for seven years following the end of the project.

If you are continuing to analyze data, even though you are no longer collecting data, you should keep this protocol active.

Appendix B: Professor consent form

(modification, according to participating professor's preferences is indicated with strike-outs)

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Faculty Research Participant Information and Consent Form
Title of the Study: Accessing Literature: Advanced Students of Italian Literature

Principal Investigator: Diana Frantzen (phone: 608-262-2096) (email: dlfrantzen@wisc.edu)
Student Researcher: Barbara Bird (phone: 608-332-8197) (email: bbird@wisc.edu)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study about how advanced students of Italian literature uncover and create meaning in literary texts. You have been asked to participate because you are teaching a course on Italian literature. The purpose of the research is to better understand how advanced students of Italian literature approach the reading of Italian literature.

This study will include professors and students enrolled in Italian literature courses. The Student Researcher will observe ~~and video record~~ Italian literature classes in their regularly scheduled meeting places and will also ask you to audio record office visits with your students. She will conduct individual interviews at a location of the your choosing. You will be audio ~~and video taped~~ during your participation in this research. ~~Only you, your students, and the Student Researcher will have access to video recordings of your class.~~ Each audio recording of your office visits with students will only be available to you, the student who met with you, and the Student Researcher. The Student Researcher may share brief clips in academic settings, where neither participants nor their colleagues might be present. She will keep audio ~~and video~~ files indefinitely.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate in this research you will be asked to allow the Student Researcher to observe ~~video record class meetings~~. You will also be provided with a digital audio recorder and will be asked to audio record students' visits to your office. The Student Researcher will contact you to collect audio recordings each week, until the end of the semester.

You will be asked to participate in two interviews, one near the beginning of the semester and one near the end. Last, the Student Researcher would like to collect class documents, including assignments, written feedback, and email correspondence between yourself and 2-6 focal student participants in your Italian literature class. The Student Researcher will request these documents directly from focal student participants.

Your participation will last approximately 1 hour per interview and will require 2 interview sessions, which will require 2 hours in total.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

While there are no physical risks to you, you may feel uncomfortable with the Student

Researcher observing ~~and video recording~~ your interaction in the classroom. You may be uncomfortable audio recording students' visits to your office. You may be concerned that sensitive, personal or identifiable information from email correspondence with students or class documents might be included in this research. You may worry this research will take too much of your time or disrupt your literature class, though I expect disruption will be minimal.

Both you and your students may opt out of any part of this research at any time. Participation is voluntary. Should you prefer to restrict the Student Researcher's access to ~~video recording your class~~, audio recording office visits, or to email correspondence and other class documents, the research team will honor your preferences. Should you worry that your email correspondence with students or other class documents contain sensitive, personal or identifiable information, you may request that the Student Researcher not collect these materials from focal student participants.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

You may use this opportunity to reflect on your own practices and course goals. This study may give student participants the opportunity to reflect on their experiences, which may improve their performance in their academic program, including your Italian literature classes. ~~The Student Researcher will provide access to classroom video recordings to you and all students enrolled in your class by uploading them to a secure and private university- sponsored website (mywebspace.wisc.edu). This will allow students an additional opportunity to review class material, and will give you a valuable opportunity to review and/or collect samples of your own teaching.~~ She will also give you and your students access to audio recordings made during their personal office visits with you viamywebspace.wisc.edu. Students will only receive access to recordings of their own office visits, and will not be given access to audio recordings of other students. This may aid students in recalling and implementing your instructions, comments, and advice given during office visits.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

Pseudonyms will be used to refer to participants, in transcripts, analysis and in presentation and publication of this research. Any identifiable information in ~~video or~~ audio recordings will be modified. Any personal, sensitive, or identifiable information contained in email correspondence with students or other class documents will be modified by the Student Researcher to protect your identity. Should you consider any email message or class document to contain personal, sensitive, or identifiable information, you may request the Student Researcher not collect these materials from focal student participants. If you participate in this study, we would like to be able to quote you directly without using your name. If you agree to allow us to quote you in publications, please initial the statement at the bottom of this form.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about this research at any time. If you have questions about the research after our meeting, you should contact the Principal Investigator, Diana Frantzen at 608-262-2096 or by email at dlfrantzen@wisc.edu. You may also call the Student Researcher, Barbara Bird at 608-332-8197 or by email at bbird@wisc.edu.

If you are not satisfied with the responses of the research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education Research and Social & Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320. Your participation is completely voluntary. Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print):____

____ ______________
Signature Date

_________I give my permission to be quoted directly in publications without using my name.
_________ I prefer not to participate in this research.

Appendix C: Student consent form

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Title of the Study: Accessing Literature: Advanced Students of Italian Literature
Principal Investigator: Diana Frantzen (phone: 608-263-0604) (email: dlfrantzen@wisc.edu)
Student Researcher: Barbara Bird (phone: 608-332-8197) (email: bbird@wisc.edu)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study about how advanced students of Italian literature uncover and create meaning in literary texts.

You have been asked to participate because you are enrolled in a course on Italian literature.

The purpose of the research is to better understand how advanced students of Italian literature approach the reading of Italian literature.

This study will include students enrolled in Italian literature courses.

The Student Researcher will observe Italian literature classes in their regularly scheduled meeting places. Individual interviews and observations will be conducted at a location of the participant's choosing.

You will be audio and video taped during your participation in this research. The Student Researcher will have access to audio and video recordings, and she will make audio and video files available only to those who might appear in the audio and video files themselves and would like a personal copy. She may share brief clips in academic settings, where neither participants nor their colleagues might be present. The Student Researcher will keep audio and video files indefinitely.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

There will be two levels of participation in this research: general and focal.

If you decide to participate in this research as a general student participant, you will be asked to allow the Student Researcher to video record class meetings, and to allow your professor to audio record your office visits.

Additionally, 2-4 students will be asked to participate as focal student participants. The Student researcher will ask these students to participate in audio recorded interviews and video recorded observations outside of class, and to share class documents, notes, emails, and materials with the Student Researcher. Participation will be voluntary. The Student Researcher will discuss her ideas with focal student participants in an audio-recorded interview to verify her findings.

Focal student participation will last approximately 1 hour per interview and will require 2 sessions, which will require 2 hours in total.

Students who have agreed to participate may withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

While there are no physical risks to participants, you may feel uncomfortable or shy as the Student Researcher observes and video records your interaction in the classroom. You may be uncomfortable with being audio recorded during your office visits with the professor. Focal participants may worry that their professor might become aware of their participation. Focal participants may worry this research will take too much of their time or disrupt their literature class, though I expect disruption will be minimal.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

While there are no direct benefits to student participants, you may have an opportunity to express opinions, feelings, beliefs, or frustrations in a safe environment. I will provide unlimited access to classroom video-recordings to the professor and all students enrolled in the class by uploading them to a secure and private university-sponsored website (mywebspace.wisc.edu). This will allow you an additional opportunity to review class material. I will give you access to a digital audio recordings made during your personal office visits with the professor by uploading them to a secure and private university-sponsored website (mywebspace.wisc.edu). You will only have access to audio recordings of your own office visit, and will not be given access to audio recordings of other students' office visits. These audio recordings may aid you in recalling and implementing the professor's instructions, comments, and advice given during office visits.

2-4 students will be selected to participate in interviews, observations, and to provide the researcher with their class materials will receive a $100 gift card.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

While there may be publications as a result of this study, your name will not be used. Only group characteristics will be published.

Pseudonyms will be used to refer to the participants, in transcripts, analysis and in presentation and publication of this research. Any identifiable information in video or audio recordings will be modified to protect the student's identity.

If you participate in this study, the Student Researcher would like to be able to quote you directly without using your name. If you agree to allow her to quote you in publications, please initial the statement at the bottom of this form.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about this research at any time. If you have questions about this research after you leave today you should contact the Principal Investigator Diana Frantzen at 608-263-0604 or by email at dlfrantzen@wisc.edu . You may also call the student researcher, Barbara Bird at 608-332-8197 or by email at bbird@wisc.edu .

If you are not satisfied with the responses of the research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Education Research and Social & Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-263-2320.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study it will have no effect on your grade in this class.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print):______________________________

____ ______________

Signature Date

_________ I give my permission to be quoted directly in publications without using my name.

Appendix D: Professor interview protocol

Initial interview-- Professors

These are guideline questions to elicit information about the broad category in each section. They may not all be specifically asked and may not be asked in this order.

1. Teaching experience:
    a) Which courses have you taught? How many times?
    b) What kind of training have you had in literature teaching or foreign literature teaching?
    c) How did you know the methods by which to teach?
    d) How has your teaching changed since you first started teaching to now?
    e) In what ways do you approach [the course you are teaching] differently than you would a language course?
2. Current course:
    a) How many times have you taught [the course you are teaching this semester]?
    b) (How) has your approach to teaching [the course you are teaching this semester] changed?
    c) As you developed the syllabus, how did you choose the materials you use?
    d) Are the class materials you chose in any particular order?
    e) Do you teach differently from your colleagues?
    f) What are some difficulties that students usually encounter in Italian literature courses?
    g) What are some difficulties that students usually encounter in [this course]?
    h) What are some successes that you've seen students achieve in [this course]?
    i) What do you expect they learn during the semester? Specifics
    j) How do you help them achieve these goals?
3. Expectations of enrolled students:
    a) What are the prerequisites for [this course]?
    b) What do you expect students know at the beginning of the semester/ before beginning [this course]?
    c) How is [this course] different from the courses students might have taken previously in the Italian department?
    d) Student preparation:
        1) How do you think students *should* prepare for class?
        2) What process do you think they should employ in order to understand the assigned readings?
        3) Which of these resources/processes do you think are *most* helpful? (examples: plot summaries, dictionaries, Wikipedia, anthologies, literary criticism, English translations, skimming, rereading, underlining, taking notes,, etc.)

        4) Which of these resources / processes do you think are *least* helpful?
        5) What process do students go through in understanding the assigned readings?

4. Importance of curriculum in literature study:
    a) How do you approach the teaching of a text in this class? What steps are necessary for a student to understand literature? (in classroom and out)
    b) Could your students understand the materials without this instruction? Why/why not? Do you think there are differences between how a student approaches Italian literature and how a professor of Italian literature would treat it? What do students need to learn/do in order to become professors of Italian literature?
    c) How does (this class / the Italian program) help students become professors of Italian literature?
    d) (In what ways) do you feel you support the ongoing development of Italian literature professors through [this course]?

Appendix E: Student interview protocol

These are guideline questions to elicit information about the broad category in each section. They may not all be specifically asked and may not be asked in this order.

1. Background:
    a. Where did you learn Italian?
    b. Have you spent time in Italy?
    c. How would you describe your (listening / speaking / reading / writing/ overall) proficiency:
    poor / acceptable / good / very good / excellent / _________________
    d. What made you decide to study Italian literature?
    e. How many courses have you taken in Italian literature?
    f. What do you hope to do with the knowledge you acquire in this class?
    g. What are your goals with respect to Italian literature?

2. Preparation of class readings:
    a. What process do you go through as you prepare the assigned readings?
    b. Which resources/processes do you think are *most* helpful? (examples: plot summaries, dictionaries, Wikipedia, anthologies, literary criticism, English translations, skimming, rereading, underlining, taking notes)
    c. Which resources/processes do you think are *least* helpful?
    d. Ideally, how do you think students *should* go about preparing for class?
    e. Do you think most students prepare in this way? Why/why not?
    f. What are some difficulties you think students encounter in reading literature?
    g. What do you expect they learn during the semester? Specifics
    h. How do you expect to achieve these goals?

3. Importance of curriculum in literature study:
    a. How do class meetings help you understand Italian literature?
    b. Do you feel you could have learned this on your own, without the professor?
    c. Do you think there are differences between how a student approaches Italian literature and how a scholar of Italian literature would treat it?
    d. What do students need to learn/do in order to become a professor of Italian literature?
    e. How does (this class / the Italian program) help students become future professors of Italian literature?
    f. (In what ways) do you feel you are developing as a future professor of Italian literature through [this course]?

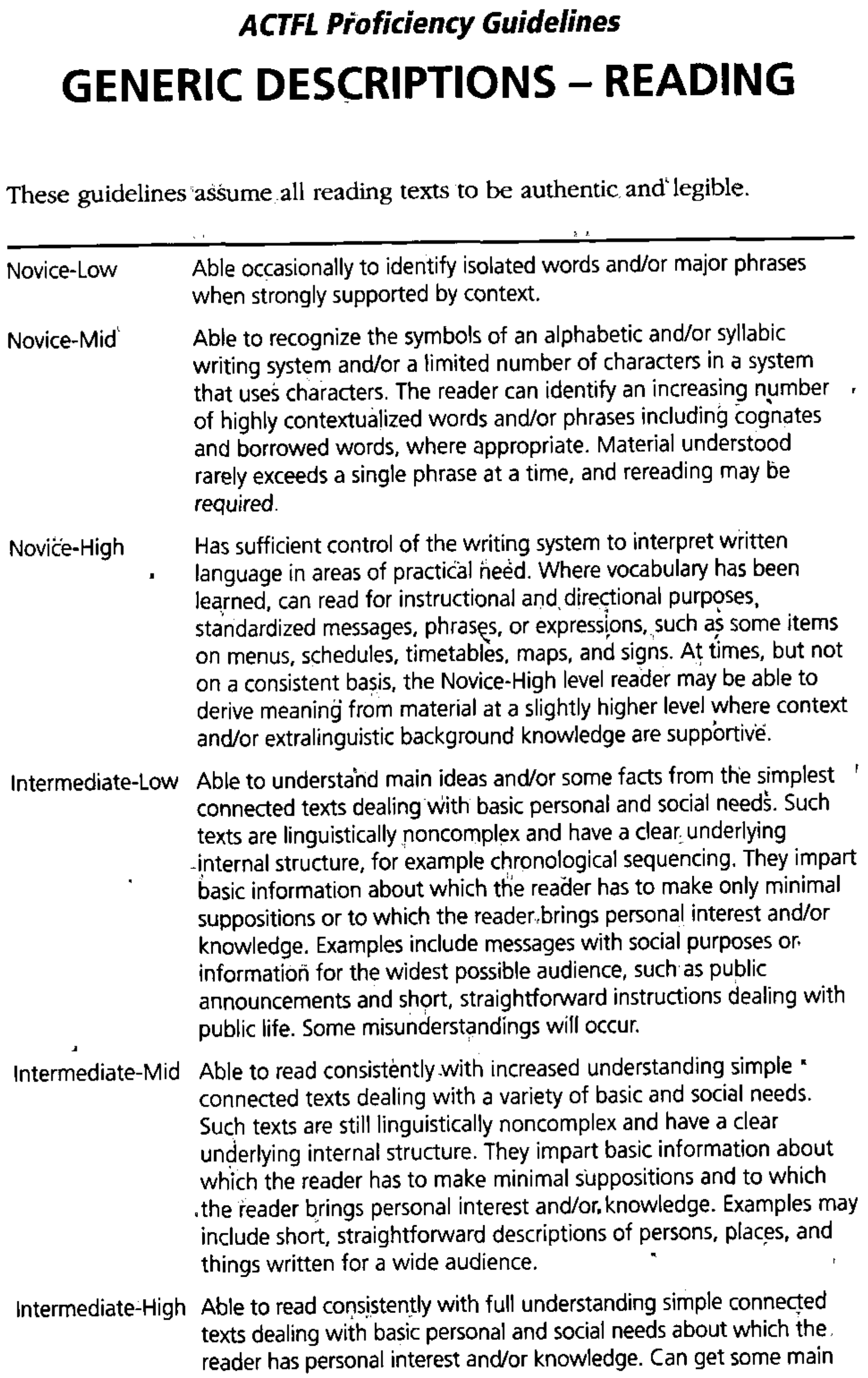
Appendix F: Final student interview protocol

These are guideline questions to elicit information about the broad category in each section. They may not all be specifically asked and may not be asked in this order.

1. Using the ACTFL reading proficiency scale provided (Appendix G), please rate your own reading proficiency.
2. Did you meet with other friends studying Italian outside of class?
3. Did you do anything Italian-related outside of class?
4. What grades have you received in your Italian classes?
5. Which readings did you complete from the syllabus? Which did you skip?
6. What did you learn this semester?
7. What would you have preferred reading this semester?
8. Would you ever consider going to graduate school in Italian?
9. Are Italian professors on the same page with you, regarding what they want you to know and be able to do?
10. Are your Italian professors are all on the same page with each other, regarding what they want you to know and be able to do?
11. Did you have any special advantages or disadvantages in this class?
12. Has your motivation to study Italian changed this semester?
13. Was the way you took notes helpful to you?

Appendix G: ACTFL reading proficiency guidelines

(as reproduced in Nance, 2010, pp. 238-239)



ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines

GENERIC DESCRIPTIONS – READING

These guidelines assume all reading texts to be authentic and legible.

Novice-Low	Able occasionally to identify isolated words and/or major phrases when strongly supported by context.
Novice-Mid	Able to recognize the symbols of an alphabetic and/or syllabic writing system and/or a limited number of characters in a system that uses characters. The reader can identify an increasing number of highly contextualized words and/or phrases including cognates and borrowed words, where appropriate. Material understood rarely exceeds a single phrase at a time, and rereading may be *required*.
Novice-High	Has sufficient control of the writing system to interpret written language in areas of practical need. Where vocabulary has been learned, can read for instructional and directional purposes, standardized messages, phrases, or expressions, such as some items on menus, schedules, timetables, maps, and signs. At times, but not on a consistent basis, the Novice-High level reader may be able to derive meaning from material at a slightly higher level where context and/or extralinguistic background knowledge are supportive.
Intermediate-Low	Able to understand main ideas and/or some facts from the simplest connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs. Such texts are linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying internal structure, for example chronological sequencing. They impart basic information about which the reader has to make only minimal suppositions or to which the reader brings personal interest and/or knowledge. Examples include messages with social purposes or information for the widest possible audience, such as public announcements and short, straightforward instructions dealing with public life. Some misunderstandings will occur.
Intermediate-Mid	Able to read consistently with increased understanding simple connected texts dealing with a variety of basic and social needs. Such texts are still linguistically noncomplex and have a clear underlying internal structure. They impart basic information about which the reader has to make minimal suppositions and to which the reader brings personal interest and/or knowledge. Examples may include short, straightforward descriptions of persons, places, and things written for a wide audience.
Intermediate-High	Able to read consistently with full understanding simple connected texts dealing with basic personal and social needs about which the reader has personal interest and/or knowledge. Can get some main

	ideas and information from texts at the next higher level featuring description and narration. Structural complexity may interfere with comprehension; for example, basic grammatical relations may be misinterpreted and temporal references may rely primarily on lexical items. Has some difficulty with the cohesive factors in discourse, such as matching pronouns with referents. While texts do not differ significantly from those at the Advanced level, comprehension is less consistent. May have to read material several times for understanding.
Advanced	Able to read somewhat longer prose of several paragraphs in length, particularly if presented with a clear underlying structure. The prose is predominantly in familiar sentence patterns. Reader gets the main ideas and facts and misses some details. Comprehension derives not only from situational and subject matter knowledge but from increasing control of the language. Texts at this level include descriptions and narrations such as simple short stories, news items, bibliographical information, social notices, personal correspondence, routinized business letters, and simple technical material written for the general reader.
Advanced High	Able to follow essential points of written discourse at the Superior level in areas of special interest or knowledge. Able to understand parts of texts which are conceptually abstract and linguistically complex, and/or texts which treat unfamiliar topics and situations, as well as some texts which involve aspects of target-language culture. Able to comprehend the facts to make appropriate inferences. An emerging awareness of the aesthetic properties of language and of its literary styles permit comprehension of a wider variety of texts, including literary texts. Misunderstandings may occur.
Superior	Able to read with almost complete comprehension and at normal speed expository prose on unfamiliar subjects and a variety of literary texts. Reading ability is not dependent on subject matter knowledge, although the reader is not expected to comprehend thoroughly texts which are highly dependent on knowledge of the target culture. Reads easily for pleasure. Superior-level texts feature hypotheses, argumentation, and supported opinions and include grammatical patterns and vocabulary ordinarily encountered in academic/professional reading. At this level, due to the control of general vocabulary and structure, the reader is almost always able to match the meanings derived from extralinguistic knowledge with meanings derived from the knowledge of the language, allowing for smooth and efficient reading of diverse texts. Occasional misunderstandings may still occur; for example, the reader may experience some difficulty with unusually complex structures and low-frequency idioms. At the Superior level the reader can match strategies, top-down or bottom-up, which are most appropriate to the text. (Top-down strategies rely on real-world knowledge and prediction based on genre and organizational scheme of the text. Bottom-up strategies rely on actual linguistic knowledge.) Material at this level will include a variety of literary texts, editorials, correspondence, general reports, and technical material in professional fields. Rereading is rarely necessary, and misreading is rare.

Appendix H: Writing Workshop syllabus

(modification for anonymity of course number, location, professor, and university)

Advanced Composition and Conversation
Writing Workshop
Laboratorio di scrittura
Italian XXX (call # XXX)
Spring 2012
Professor Michele Boldini [pseudonym]
[email address of professor Boldini]

Italian XXX Writing Workshop Development of composition skills related to expository and other forms of writing, with focus on grammatical skills, conventions, rhetorical techniques for organizing information, presenting coherent arguments, and appropriateness of language to topic. Substantial work on the development of writing strategies for composing and editing (vocabulary, revising, and rewriting) through several short papers and a final long paper. Prerequisite: Italian XXX or consent of instructor.

Orario delle lezioni: TR 2:30-3:45pm (Room XXX, Building XXX)

Orario di ricevimento: TR 10am-12pm (Room XXX, Building XXX)

Testi

Cristina Abbona-Sneider, Antonello Borra, Cristina Pausini (Edited by), *Trame: A Contemporary Italian Reader*, New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2010

Leonardo Sciascia, *A ciascuno il suo* (PDF)

Racconti italiani del Novecento (PDF)

Requisiti del corso

Composizioni: 7 saggi (almeno 500 parole per ciascun saggio su un argomento da concordare con l'insegnante: il numero delle parole va indicato in fondo al saggio. Times New Roman, font 12, double space). Il saggio può essere su argomento critico o su argomento narrativo. I saggi devono essere consegnati in tempo ed in copia cartacea: non si accettano saggi in ritardo. 60% del voto per il corso.

La correzione delle composizioni permette di guadagnare fino ad un massimo di 5 punti sul voto ricevuto in quella composizione.

Presentazione orale e Partecipazione: 20% del voto per il corso è basato sulla presenza in classe e sulla partecipazione. È richiesta una presentazione orale in classe (10-15 minuti). La presentazione deve essere concordata almeno una settimana prima del giorno stabilito per essa. La presentazione è effettuata da due studenti "undergraduate" che insieme sviluppano l'argomento scelto.

Esami: esame finale (2 ore). 20% del voto per il corso.

Non sono ammessi in aula computer, telefoni e altri supporti tecnologici.

Academic Integrity **-** We support active collaboration with classmates, more proficient speakers, and tutors in completing and correcting homework, in practicing dialogues or other activities, or discussing the material of compositions. You may share notes and ideas with other students, however, **you may not ask tutors, more proficient speakers or classmates to complete your own work**, and **you may not use electronic translation programs**. In accordance with [BSU] policy, plagiarism, cheating, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor may lead to lowered course grades, a failing in the course, or more severe measures, depending on the gravity of the individual case according to the University policy.

University Policy on Disabilities – [Big State University] encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please contact your instructor and the Office for Disability Services as soon as possible. For more information, please visit [WEB SITE]

Programma del corso

Settimana 1
Gennaio 24 Introduzione al corso
26 Conversazione in classe

Settimana 2
31 Massimo Bontempelli, "Avventura deserta, ovvero, l'ultimo dei romantici" (PDF pp.100-105)
Febbraio 2 Sciascia, *A ciascuno il suo*, capp.1-2
Saggio #1 (almeno 500 parole)

Settimana 3
7 Giovanni Papini, "L'ultima visita del Gentiluomo Malato" (PDF pp.122-130)
9 Alessandro Baricco, "Next" (*Trame* pp.15-21)
Correzione del saggio #1

Settimana 4
14 Enrico Pea, "Violetta al varietà" (PDF pp.131-137)
16 Sciascia, *A ciascuno il suo*, capp.3-5
Saggio #2 (almeno 500 parole)

Settimana 5
21 Dino Buzzati, "Il crollo della Baliverna" (PDF pp.482-490)
23 Andrea Camilleri, "La scomparsa della vedova inconsolabile" (*Trame* pp.40-48)
Correzione del saggio #2

Settimana 6
28 Niccolò Tucci, "Figli e padri" (PDF pp.680-686)
Marzo 1 Sciascia, *A ciascuno il suo*, capp.6-8
Saggio #3 (almeno 500 parole)

Settimana 7
6 Elio Vittorini, "Nome e lagrime" (PDF pp.687-691)
8 Andrea De Carlo, "Giro di vento" (*Trame* pp.80-86)
Correzione del saggio #3

Settimana 8
13 Elsa Morante, "Il soldato siciliano" (PDF pp.868-875)
15 Sciascia, *A ciascuno il suo*, capp.9-11
Saggio #4 (almeno 500 parole)

Settimana 9
20 Visita del poeta Antonio Riccardi
22 Alda Merini, "O carme, gentile indovino" e " Manuela cara" (*Trame* pp.154-161)
Correzione del saggio #4

Settimana 10
27 Anna Maria Ortese, "Oro a Forcella" (PDF pp.998-1007)
29 Elena Loewenthal, "Lo strappo nell'anima" (*Trame* pp.127-132)
Saggio #5 (almeno 500 parole)

Pausa di Primavera

Settimana 11
Aprile 10 Goffredo Parise, "Bambino" (PDF pp.1346-1353)
12 Sciascia, *A ciascuno il suo*, capp.12-13
Correzione del saggio #5

Settimana 12
17 Paolo Bertolani, "Le cicale" (PDF pp.1423-1429)
19 Melania Mazzucco, "Vita" (*Trame* pp.139-145)
Saggio #6 (almeno 500 parole)

Settimana 13
24 Giuseppe Pontiggia, "Lettore di casa editrice" (PDF pp.1444-1453)
26 Sciascia, *A ciascuno il suo*, capp.14-16
Correzione del saggio #6

Settimana 14
Maggio 1 Antonio Debenedetti, "Fin de race" (PDF pp.1470-1478)

3 Simona Vinci, “In viaggio con le scarpe rosse” (*Trame* pp.229-238)
Saggio #7 (almeno 500 parole)

Settimana 15
8 Carlo Lucarelli, “C’è un insetto sul vetro” (*Trame* pp.133-138)
10 Sciascia, *A ciascuno il suo*, capp.17-18
Correzione del saggio #7

Maggio18 Esame Finale (5:05-7:05pm)