

A stylized, light brown illustration of a plant with several leaves and small, round buds, positioned on the left side of the slide.

FROM PAGE TO STAGE: PERFORMATIVE APPROACHES TO LITERATURE IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

**Teaching Italian: A Symposium /
Workshop for Instructional Materials**

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Insegnare la letteratura oggi vuol dire insegnare a dialogare...

- La lettura è un dialogo con il testo e con gli altri interpreti del passato e del presente presuppone una civiltà del dialogo fondata sul conflitto delle interpretazioni. Puntare sulla interpretazione e sulla attualizzazione del testo, motivare le ragioni per cui lo leggiamo e lo valorizziamo, significa interrogarsi sul mondo, scommettere su un suo senso possibile, confrontare valori con valori. [...]

Luperini, Romano. *Insegnare la letteratura oggi*, “Diciassette tesi sull’insegnamento della letteratura”, Lecce: Manni, 2006, 208-10.

... vuol dire insegnare a interpretare (il testo, gli altri e se stessi....)

[...] Interpretare abitua il giovane ad assumersi la responsabilità di cercare e indicare un significato, gli insegna anche che i significati sono infiniti e che ogni interpretazione è destinata a esser superata. [...]. Se ogni interpretazione è relativa, è tuttavia necessaria perché è grazie a essa che il patrimonio di valori sarà continuato e arricchito, e selezionato e tramandato al futuro.

L'abitudine all'interpretazione forma nello studente il cittadino critico e responsabile, rispettoso degli altri e del testo che ha davanti, ma pronto a battersi per la propria idea.

Luperini, Romano. *Insegnare la letteratura oggi*, “Diciassette tesi sull'insegnamento della letteratura”, Lecce: Manni, 2006, 208-10.

Movement between page and stage

= guiding student to grow ever more curious, competent, and confident in moving among different modes of literacy

- **traditional** (technical) literacy
- **intertextual** (cultural) literacy
- **performative (subject-enabling) literacy**

Sheridan Blau, *The Literature Workshop*, 2002.

Terms and Concepts

- **Page** = authentic literary text
- **Stage** = the site or setting for some performative act, though not necessarily a theatrical one.
- **Performance** = purposeful creation or construction of meaning, as related to the text. They provide evidence for the extent to which learning has occurred and to which the goals for a given course have been reached.
 - formal or informal,
 - planned or spontaneous,
 - formative or summative,
 - processes or products of various nature

LEAP – Liberal Education America’s Promise

- **1-Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**
 - Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts
 - *Focused* by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring
- **2- Intellectual and Practical Skills, including**
 - Inquiry and analysis, Critical and creative thinking, Written and oral communication, Quantitative literacy, Information literacy, Teamwork and problem solving
 - *Practiced extensively*, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance
- **3-Personal and Social Responsibility, including**
 - Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global, Intercultural knowledge and competence, Ethical reasoning and action, Foundations and skills for lifelong learning
 - *Anchored* through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges
- **4- Integrative and Applied Learning, Including**
 - Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies
 - *Demonstrated* through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

A case against teaching literature in our age

(J. Sell, *Why teach literature?*, 2005, 88-89)

- 1. Teachers experience anxiety over it. Many aren't specifically trained in literature and don't feel very prepared to teach it.
- 2. We are teaching in a communicative era; oral/aural skills are the main focus.
- 3. Students want linguistic input that they perceive as related to real-life situations.
- 4. The content and concerns in literary texts are often remote from learners' realities.
- 5. Literature creates an imbalance of power, and shifts us back to a more teacher-centered paradigm.
- 6. Technology and media cultures are slowly rendering reading obsolete... [!!!]

A case for teaching literature in our age

(J. Sell, *Why teach literature?*, 2005, 88-89)

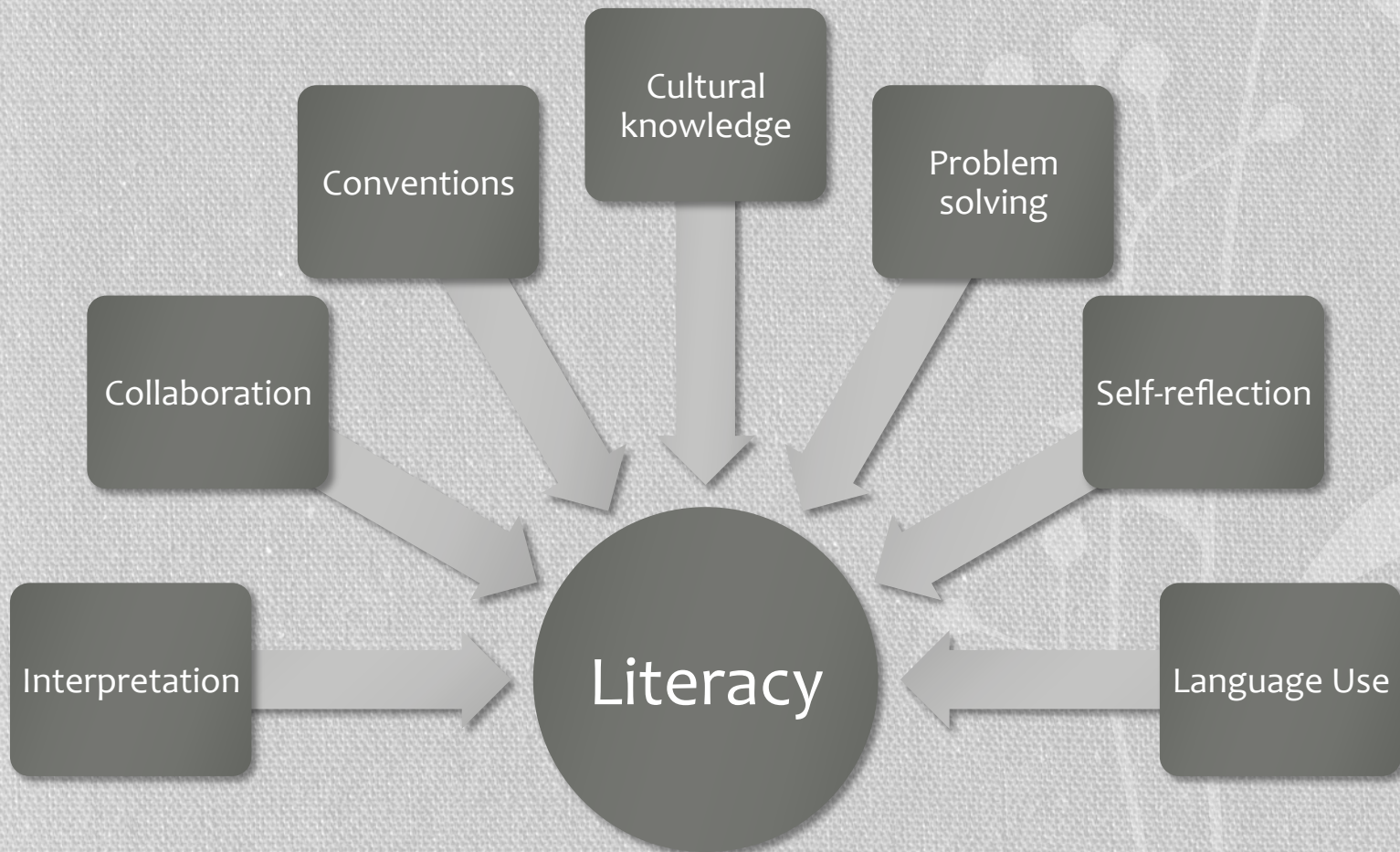
- “With literary discourse, *procedures for making sense* are much more in evidence, says Sell, “you’ve got to employ interpretive procedures in a way that isn’t required from normal or conventional reading.”
- “Narrative structures are well suited to our cognitive processes (at least in young learners)”
- “Literature provides learners with a truly cultural competence, equipping them with culturally-apposite pragmatic and socio-psychological components around which to build effective identities, which will enable their socialization in the target culture and enhance the effectiveness with which they participate in that culture.

Literature is central to human enterprises

(Whitepaper to the Teagle Foundation, MLA, 2009)

“Literature supplies an imaginative context through which readers gain insight into politics, history, society, emotion, and the interior life. Thus close reading of literary texts develops important analytic and interpretive skills that play central roles in complex human enterprises. What accomplished readers do with stories found in books—inhabit them, accept them provisionally as real, act according to their rules, tolerate their ambiguities, see their events from multiple and contradictory points of view, experience their bliss—informs what they can do with stories in the world at large.”

Literacy in the 21st Century (R. Kern)



Definition of Literacy

(Kern, *Literacy and Language Learning*, 2000, 17)

Literacy is the use of socially, historically and culturally situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts. It entails at least a tacit awareness of the relationships between textual connections 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”

From Communicative Competence to Symbolic Competence

(Kramsch, C. Modern Language Journal, 2006, 251)

- *[Language] learners are not just communicators and problem solvers, but whole persons with hearts bodies, and minds, with memories, fantasies, loyalties, identities. Symbolic forms are not just items of vocabulary or communications strategies, but embodied experiences, emotional resonances, and moral imaginings. We could call the competence that collegiate students need nowadays a symbolic competence. Symbolic competence does not do away with the ability to express, interpret, and negotiate meaning, in dialogue with others, but enriches it and embeds it into the ability to produce and exchange symbolic goods in the complex global context in which we live today.*

Possible criteria for text selection

- Linguistic level
- Linguistic content
- Length
- Appeal of topic
- Cultural background of students
- How old vs. contemporary the text is
- Complexity of content (abstract vs. concrete) etc.
- Genre

Janet Swaffar's Mooc

“Foreign Language Teaching Methods for Reading”

<http://coerll.utexas.edu/methods/modules/reading/03/>

Logical Relationships (Headings)	Type of Text
Contrasts or Comparisons	A text that contrasts two people or the "before" and "after" of an event or problem (differences in their characteristics)
Issues and their Features or Results	A text that critiques a movie (what's right or wrong with it and why)
Problems and their Solutions	A text about an historical era (political, economic, social issues and how they were addressed)
Events and their Impact	A news story about a current event (what happened/who was affected and how)

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Activities in Initial Reading	Activities in Rereading
Identify the main topic, examples of its features (summarize content in a FL)	<u>Talk</u> or <u>write</u> about details and their implications (analyze or interpret content)
Identify words and phrases conveying author messages and author POV (point of view)	<u>Role play</u> or <u>write</u> about that POV from the reader's perspective (modify, agree, disagree)
Identify genre features (expected order of events; types of people, events, ideas, or objects; characteristics of style)	<u>Perform</u> or <u>rewrite</u> in a different genre (from description to dialogue, letter, diary entry, etc.)
Comprehend and reproduce text language in appropriate categories using provided matrix headings	<u>Use</u> different categories to <u>change</u> the text's messages (e.g., from before/after to problem/solution)

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Rereading Activity	Learning Goal
Identify or rewrite specific grammar constructions that occur repeatedly in a text (passive voice, verbs in various tenses, cases, singular plural distinctions, etc.).	Recognizing or modifying grammar features in context and how grammar signals meanings.
Identify or rewrite statements that suggest a particular speech act (e.g., a command, an argument, a plea, etc.).	Recognizing or using language that conveys speaker or author intent (pragmatics).
Look for text features to revise in another genre (changing a conversation to a description or a news report to a diary entry).	Recognizing or discussing how changing the genre of the source text changes its rhetoric and the order of presenting its information.

The Précis

Swaffar and Arens, *Remapping the FL Curriculum*, NY: MLA, 2005

- Part 1 names the topic or provides a brief description of it
- Part 2 states how the readers sees the content organized or identifies pattern of textual information
- Part 3 gives examples from the text with a particular thematic, discursive, or linguistic goal
- Part 4 then uses the language samples for creating new meaning, or “articulate thoughts about the patterns of that language

Strategic Interactions

(Di Pietro, Robert, 1987)

Criteria

- (1) Clear aims
- (2) Shared context
- (3) Dramatic tension

Phases

- Preparation
- Rehearsal
- Performance
- Debriefing

Sample Scenario

Role A

You have fallen in love with someone from your home town. Your mother generally approves. You are relatively poor, so there will be no large party to arrange, just the help of your local preacher, the only person who can officiate for you. However, he is not willing to help you, so you go look to your fiancé for help.

Role B

You are in love with a lovely simple girl from your home town. You are both at marrying age and her mother, a widower, is happy to have you as her son-in-law. You only need the help of your local preacher to render your union official. However, he puts you off time and time and avoids helping you, as if he were refusing. You devise a plan to catch him off guard and say just enough words to render the wedding ceremony official.

Role C

You are a local minister. The only person in a small town who can officially marry people. You are annoyed by two teens who wish to get married because helping them would go against the wishes of a local boss who would like the young girl for himself. The boss has a group of thugs who regularly instill fear in you. Rather than state your position to either the teens or the boss, you avoid the former and cower from the latter.

Role D

You are a wealthy and powerful citizen of the small town where you control the “little people” around you through intimidation. You presume to marry the woman of your choice, in this case a sweet and humble girl of very modest means who loves and to marry a local boy of her same class. You make your intentions clear to the town preacher who must act on your behalf.



GRAZIE