COMING CLOSER TO LITERATURE: LEARNING AND INSTRUCTION IN A CONSTRUCTIVIST SPIRIT

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Abstract. The Israeli educational system is a centralist one – the Ministry of Education sets goals and objectives, establishes detailed curricula, and maintains a supervisory mechanism. One of the objectives set for teachers, beginning in 2007, was a transition to meaningful learning and teaching, using "thinking development teaching". To attain this objective, the supervisory body for the teaching of literature runs in-service programs for teachers, aimed at introducing the teachers to approaches to thinking development in the teaching of literature. Teaching that emphasizes the fostering of cognitive skills requires a change in the perception of the roles of teacher and student as well as a change in teaching and learning strategies, in learning environments and in methods of evaluation. The process of teaching and learning that fosters cognitive skills is based on constructivist principles of education

This article presents a study conducted among 79 teachers of literature in junior high schools and high schools in Israel, who participated in in-service programs for teachers, in 2007-2008. The study was carried out using a mixed method, combining quantitative and qualitative methods.

The findings present a picture of teachers' attitudes toward the goals of teaching literature and of the school teaching environment in general and of that of teaching/learning in literature classes. It also demonstrates that teachers hold constructivist attitudes toward teaching while exercising conservative teaching behavior.

Key words: Literature instruction, constructivism, thinking development.

1

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Chinese
[Translation Shek Kam Tse]

TITLE. 走进文学：建构主义精神影响下的学习和教学
ABSTRACT.
以色列的教育系统是中央集权制的。教育部设定教学目标，构建细化课程，并设有持续的监察机制。从2007年开始，教育部为教师设定了一项面向有意义的学习和教学的目标，即使用"思维发展式的教学"。为了达到这一目标，监察文学教学的机构为教师们办了在职培训，目的在于向教师介绍在文学教学中进行思维发展的方法。强调培养认知技能的教学，要求转变对教师和学生的角色认识，并转变教学和学习的策略，学习环境，以及评价方法。培养认知技能的教学和学习过程是建立在建构主义的教育理念上的。
本文所呈现的研究，其研究对象为以色列初中和高中的79名文学教师；这些教师在2007年-2008年间，都参加过备课会。本研究采用了混合研究法：既使用了量的研究方法，也使用了质的研究方法。
研究结果展现了教师对文学教学目标的态度，学校大体的教学环境，以及文学课上的教学与学习情况。研究结果还证明，教师在进行传统的教学行为时，对教学抱持的是建构主义的态度。
KEYWORDS: 关键词：文学教学、建构主义、思维发展

Dutch
[Translation Tanja Janssen]

TITEL. Dichter bij literatuur komen: Leren en instructie in een constructivistische geest
SAMENVATTING. Het Israëlische onderwijssysteem is een gecentraliseerd systeem: het ministerie van onderwijs bepaalt de doelstellingen, stelt gedetailleerde curricula vast en houdt toezicht. Een van de doelen die sinds 2007 gesteld zijn voor docenten, was een overgang naar betekenisvol leren en onderwijzen, met gebruikmaking van "thinking development teaching". Om dit doel te bereiken organiseert de toezichthouder nascholingscursussen voor literatuurdocenten, die ten doel hebben docenten bekend te maken met benaderingen van literatuuronderwijs gericht op "thinking development". Onderwijs gericht op het ontwikkelen van cognitieve vaardigheden vergt een verandering in de perceptie van docent- en leerlingrollen, en een verandering in onderwijs- en leerstrategieën, in leeromgevingen en evaluatiemethoden. Het onderwijsleerproces gericht op het ontwikkelen van cognitieve vaardigheden is gebaseerd op constructivistische onderwijsprincipes.
In dit artikel wordt verslag gedaan van een onderzoek dat uitgevoerd is onder 79 literatuurdocenten in de onderbouw en bovenbouw van het voortgezet onderwijs in Israel, die in 2007-2008 nascholing volgden voor docenten. In het onderzoek is gebruikgemaakt van een "mixed method", een combinatie van kwantitatieve en kwalitatieve methoden. De resultaten geven een beeld van de houdingen van docenten jegens de doelen van literatuuronderwijs, van de onderwijsleeromgeving op scholen in het algemeen, en het literatuuronderwijs in het bijzonder. De resultaten laten ook zien dat docenten weliswaar constructivistische opvattingen hebben ten aanzien van het onderwijs, maar conservatief onderwijsgedrag praktiseren.
TREFWOORDEN: literatuuronderwijs, constructivisme, ontwikkeling van denken

Finnish
[Translation Katri Sarmavuori]

TITTELI. Tulla lähemmäksi kirjallisuutta: Oppiminen ja opetus konstruktivistiseen henkeen
ABSTRAKTI. Israelin koulutusjärjestelmä on sentralistinen — opetusministeri asettaa päämäärän ja tavoitteet, laatii yksityiskohtaisen opetussuunnitelman ja ylläpitää tarkastusta. Yksi opettajille suunnattu tavoite 2007 oli mielekäs oppiminen ja opetus, johon kuului ajattelun kehittäminen. Tämän tavoitteen saavuttamiseksi kirjallisuuden opetuksen tarkastajakunta juoksutti opettajat täydennyskoulutukseen, jossa heitä ohjattiin kirjallisuuden opetuksen ajattelun kehittämiseen.
Tämä artikkeli kertoo tutkimuksesta, johon osallistui 79 opettajaa yläkoulusta ja lukiosta ja heidän täydennyskoulutuksestan 2007-2008. Tutkimuksessa käytettiin sekä määrällisiä että laadullisia menetelmiä. Tulokset kertovat opettajien asenteista kirjallisuuden opetusta kohtaan ja koulun opetusympäristöstä yleensä. Se osoittaa, että opettajilla on konstruktivistiset asenteet opetusta kohtaan harjoittaessaan konservatiivista opetuskäyttäytymistä.
AVAINSANAT: kirjallisuuden opetus, konstruktivismi, ajattelun kehitys.

French

[Translation Laurence Pasa]
TITRE. Au plus près de la littérature : apprentissage et enseignement dans une perspective constructiviste
RÉSUMÉ. Le système éducatif israélien est centralisé ; le Ministère de l'Education nationale défini des buts et des objectifs, établit des programmes d'enseignement détaillés et supervise. Un des objectifs fixés aux enseignants, depuis 2007, visait la mise en place d'un contexte d'enseignement-apprentissage signifiant, à partir du développement d'un enseignement réfléchi.

Pour atteindre cet objectif, l'organisme de tutelle pour l'enseignement de la littérature propose aux enseignants des programmes de formation, afin de leur présenter les principes d'un enseignement réfléchi de la littérature.

Cet article présente une étude conduite auprès de 79 professeurs de littérature dans des collèges et des lycées en Israël, ayant participé aux programmes de formation en 2007-2008. L'étude a été menée au moyen de l'utilisation combinée de méthodes quantitatives et qualitatives.

Les résultats présentent une synthèse des représentations des enseignants à l'égard des finalités de l'enseignement de la littérature, du contexte scolaire en général et des contextes particuliers d'enseignement-apprentissage de la littérature. Ils montrent également que les enseignants ont des représentations constructivistes de l'enseignement, tandis que leurs pratiques d'enseignement restent conservatrices.

MOTS-CLÉS : enseignement de la littérature, constructivisme, enseignement réfléchi.

German

[Translation Ulrike Bohle]
TITEL. Annäherung an Literatur: Konstruktivistisch inspiriertes Lernen und Lehren
ZUSAMMENFASSUNG. Das israelische Bildungssystem ist zentralistisch – das Erziehungsministerium legt Ziele fest, erstellt detaillierte Lehrpläne und unterhält ein Supervisionssystem. Eines der seit 2007 geltenden Ziele für Lehrer ist der Übergang zu bedeutsamem Lehren und Lernen, unter Nutzung eines Ansatzes zur Förderung der kognitiven Fähigkeiten in Lehr-Lern-Prozessen (fostering thinking in learning and instruction (FTLI)).

Um dieses Ziel zu erreichen, bieten Supervisoren Pogramme für Literaturlehrer an, in denen diese während der Dienstzeit in FTLI im Literaturunterricht eingeführt werden.

Dieser Artikel präsentiert eine Studie, an der 79 israelische Junior-High-School- und High-School- Literatur-Lehrer, teilnahmen, die 2007-2008 ein solches Programm durchlaufen hatten. Die Studie kombinierte quantitative und qualitative Methoden.

Die Ergebnisse zeigen ein Bild von den Einstellungen der Lehrer hinsichtlich der Zielsetzungen des Literaturunterrichts, hinsichtlich des schulischen Lehrkontextes allgemein sowie hinsichtlich des Lehrens und Lernens im Literaturunterricht. Weiterhin wird deutlich, dass Lehrer konstruktivistische Einstellungen zum Literaturunterricht haben, während sie konservatives Unterrichtsverhalten zeigen.

SCHLAGWORTER: Literaturunterricht, Konstruktivismus, fostering thinking in learning and instruction

Greek

[Translation by Panatoya Papoulia Tzelepi]
Τίτλος. Πλησιάζοντας τη λογοτεχνία: Μάθηση και διδασκαλία με πνεύμα δομιστικό
Περίληψη. Το Ισραηλιτικό εκπαιδευτικό σύστημα είναι κεντρικά οργανωμένο. Το Υπουργείο Παιδείας θέτει σκοπούς και στόχους, καθορίζει λεπτομερή αναλυτικά προγράμματα και συντηρεί ένα μηχανισμό εποπτείας. Ένας από τους στόχους για τους δασκάλους στην αρχή του 2007 ήταν η μετάβαση σε μάθηση και διδασκαλία με νόημα, με τη χρήση διδασκαλίας που αναπτύσσει τη σκεπτική διαδικασία.

Για να επιτευχθεί αυτός ο στόχος, το σώμα των επιθεωρητών για τη διδασκαλία της λογοτεχνίας, υλοποιεί πρόγραμμα ενδοϋπηρεσιακής εκπαίδευσης δασκάλων, με στόχο την εισαγωγή τους σε προσεγγίσεις διδασκαλίας λογοτεχνίας που αναπτύσσουν τη σκέψη.

Αυτό το άρθρο παρουσιάζει μια μελέτη με 79 δασκάλους λογοτεχνίας σε Γυμνάσιο και Λύκειο που έλαβαν μέρος στην ενδοϋπηρεσιακή εκπαίδευση στο έτος 2007-2008. Η μελέτη χρησιμοποίησε μικτή μεθοδολογία, συνδυάζοντας ποιοτικές και ποσοτικές μεθόδους. Τα ευρήματα παρουσιάζουν τις στάσεις των δασκάλων ως προς τους στόχους της διδασκαλίας της λογοτεχνίας και ως προς το διδακτικό περιβάλλον του σχολείου γενικά και ειδικά ως προς τη διδασκαλία / μάθηση της λογοτεχνίας μέσα στην τάξη. Δείχνει επίσης ότι οι δάσκαλοι, ενώ έχουν δομιστικές στάσεις σχετικά με τη διδασκαλία, στην πράξη επιδεικνύουν συντηρητικές διδακτικές συμπεριφορές.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: Διδασκαλία λογοτεχνίας, δομισμός, ανάπτυξη της σκέψης

Italian
[Translation Manuela Delfino, Francesco Caviglia]
TITOLO. Avvicinandosi alla letteratura: apprendimento e insegnamento in uno spirito costruttivista

SINTESI. Il sistema educativo israeliano è centralista - il Ministero dell'Istruzione definisce finalità e obiettivi, stabilisce programmi di studio dettagliati, e mantiene un meccanismo di supervisione. Uno degli obiettivi fissati per gli insegnanti, a partire dal 2007, è stato il passaggio verso un apprendimento e un insegnamento significativi, basati sull'insegnamento dello sviluppo del pensiero.

Per raggiungere questo obiettivo, l'organo di supervisione per l'insegnamento della letteratura conduce corsi per docenti in in servizio, con lo scopo di proporre agli insegnanti degli approcci allo sviluppo del pensiero nell'insegnamento della letteratura.

Questo articolo presenta uno studio condotto tra i 79 insegnanti di letteratura nelle scuole secondarie di I e II grado in Israele, che hanno partecipato ai corsi per gli insegnanti in servizio nel 2007-2008. Lo studio è stato condotto usando un metodo misto, che combina metodi quantitativi con metodi qualitativi.

I risultati presentano un quadro degli atteggiamenti degli insegnanti verso gli obiettivi dell'insegnamento della letteratura e dell'ambiente di insegnamento scolastico in generale e di quella di insegnamento / apprendimento nelle classi di letteratura. Si dimostra inoltre che gli insegnanti mostrano atteggiamenti di tipo costruttivista verso l'insegnamento, mentre tendono ad avere pratiche di comportamento conservatrici.

PAROLE CHAIVE: insegnamento della letteratura, costruttivismo, sviluppo del pensiero.

Polish
[Translation Elżbieta Awramiuk]
TITUŁ. Zbliżanie się do literatury: uczenie się i nauczanie w duchu konstruktywizmu

STRESZCZENIE. Izraelski system edukacyjny jest scentralizowany – Ministerstwo Edukacji wyznacza cele i zadania, określa szczegółowe programy i zapewnia mechanizm kontrolny. Począwszy od 2007 roku jednym z zadań edukacyjnych dla nauczycieli było przejście na konstruktywne nauczanie i uczenie się, z wykorzystaniem nauczania refleksyjnego. By osiągnąć ten cel, ciała nadzorujące nauczanie literatury uruchomiły dla nauczycieli programy szkoleniowe, których celem było zaznajomienie dydaktyków z filozofią refleksyjnego nauczania literatury.

Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje wyniki badania przeprowadzonego wśród 79 nauczycieli literatury w gimnazjach i szkołach ponadgimnazjalnych w Izraelu, którzy uczestniczyli w programach szkoleniowych dla nauczycieli w latach 2007-2008. Badanie przeprowadzono z użyciem metod mieszanych, jakościowych i ilościowych.

Rezultaty prezentują panoramę nauczycielskich postaw w stosunku do celów nauczania literatury oraz ogólnie do szkolnego środowiska nauczania, w tym do nauczania/uczenia się podczas lekcji literatury. Dowodzą także, że nauczyciele deklarują konstruktywistyczne postawy w stosunku do nauczania, jednak ich działania są dowodem konserwatywnych zachowań nauczycielskich.

SLOWA-KLUCZE: nauczanie literatury, konstruktywizm, rozwój myślenia

Portuguese
[Translation Sara Leite]
TITULO. Mais Perto da Literatura: Ensino e Aprendizagem num Espírito Construtivista

RESUMO. O sistema educativo israelista é centralista: o Ministério da Educação define metas e objectivos, estabelece programas curriculares pormenorizados e utiliza mecanismos de supervisão. Um dos objectivos para os professores, iniciado em 2007, foi a transição para um ensino-aprendizagem significativo, apoiado em mecanismos de desenvolvimento da capacidade de reflexão.

Para atingir este objectivo, o grupo de supervisão do ensino da literatura organiza programas de formação contínua para professores, com vista a divulgar formas de desenvolver a capacidade de reflexão no ensino da literatura.

Este artigo apresenta um estudo efectuado junto de 79 professores de literatura do 3.º ciclo do ensino básico e do ensino secundário em Israel, que participaram em programas de formação contínua em 2007-2008. O estudo baseou-se numa metodologia mista, combinando os métodos quantitativo e qualitativo.

Os resultados apresentam uma representação das atitudes dos professores para com os objectivos do ensino da literatura e o ambiente de ensino da escola em geral, bem como o ambiente de ensino-aprendizagem nas aulas de literatura. Demonstra, ainda, que os professores têm atitudes construtivistas em relação ao ensino, enquanto o seu modo de ensinar é conservador.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: ensino da literatura, construtivismo, desenvolvimento da capacidade de reflexão.

1. THE CONTEXT

Fostering thinking in learning and instruction (FTLI) has been set in recent years by the Israeli Ministry of Education as a policy and objective for the Israeli education system. FTLI is based on an innovative perception of the term *knowledge,* which, in turn, is followed by an innovative perception of the essence of instruction and learning. However, FTLI objectives are not easily obtained: It is difficult to measure achievements in the development of thinking, and, within the political context, it is difficult to achieve such objectives in the short time that the Ministry of Education allows for demonstrating a program's effectiveness. Furthermore, measuring achievements in thinking is not consistent with the measuring and assessment methods employed in the Israeli education system, measures which include national and international achievement tests and matriculation exams, all of which focus on checking knowledge.

FTLI instruction in school requires appropriate training and professional development, and is contingent upon the teacher's belief that thinking can be developed and that educational activities within a discipline can become a starting point for a higher-interest thinking process in the study group. FTLI instruction also requires new perspectives, known as *constructivism,* toward learning and instruction. Teachers in the Israeli education system do not necessarily possess all these.

In this paper I would like to address the way knowledge is constructed in literature lessons in Israeli junior high schools and high schools and to reflect of the feasibility of FTLI instruction in these classes.

2. DEVELOPING THINKING

All approaches that foster thinking seem to share basic assumptions and central trends. First among these is the teacher's belief and basic perception that all students are capable of thinking. This is followed by the declaration that fostering thinking is the most important education goal, and that this position must be taken by teachers and the organizational-educational environment and presented to the learners and the system (Costa, 1998). This view does not perceive thinking as being limited by intelligence tests, but rather as being able to change and develop and to be effort dependent (Costa & Kallick, 2000; De Bono, 1994; Perkins, 1992; Sterenberg, 2000).

Is thinking development a discipline to be taught on its own (De Bono, 1994), or should it be integrated into disciplinary studies in school (Swartz, 1999; Tishman, Perkins, & Jay, 1995)? There is no single answer. The question also addresses a further issue – whether the discipline affects ways of thinking or thinking skills, or whether they are discipline dependent (Greensfeld & Elkad-Lehman, 2004; Perkins & Salomon, 1989). Despite the successes of teaching thinking on its own, without subject-matter context such as in applying De Bono's approach in the CORT method

(De Bono, 1973), the main shortcoming of teaching thinking is the transfer of new knowledge to additional areas (Perkins, 1992; Perkins & Swartz, 1992).

3.   THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE, LEARNING, AND INSTRUCTION

Harpaz (2005) refers to four "atomic pictures" which are the foundation for classroom education: *Learning is listening, teaching is telling, knowledge is an object,* and *to be educated is to know valuable content*. If, indeed, knowledge is an object it follows that the act of instruction is the act of transferring or transmitting – teachers transmit the knowledge they possess to those who do not possess it – the students. Thus, learning is receiving, preserving, and retrieving when necessary (during an exam), while demonstrating a high degree of preserving the knowledge when retrieving it.

The traditional approach to knowledge and learning assumed that learning is transmitting, and that knowledge is like an object that can be transferred or purchased. Teachers hold on to this objective object/knowledge and pass it along. The same traditional approach views the student as receiving, repeating, and recycling, and assessment is an evaluation of "how much material" was transmitted from teacher to student. Harpaz questions these "atomic pictures," and suggests alternative ones for instruction of higher thinking skills based on innovative approaches to learning and knowledge, approaches sometimes referred to as constructivist. These approaches view learning as a process of active construction of a mental scheme. Accordingly, knowledge is subjective, constructed by the learner through interaction with the environment. A teacher creates a situation that challenges the learner, a situation in which the student is active, constructs knowledge through facing the challenge and maintaining a dialogue with the environment (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Fosnot, 1996). There is no simple way to evaluate such learning processes, as there is tension between summative evaluation which refers to the product and evaluation that is based on the process of learning (Richardson, 1997).

Constructivism offers theories of learning, based on knowledge gained from cognitive psychology. Although widely disputed in the early 1990s, the constructivist approach to learning and instruction is now perceived as a central trend in the study of educational and cognitive psychology in the practice of instruction (McInerney, 2005). Psychologists and educators note two main approaches – cognitive or individual constructivism, which follows Piaget, and social constructivism, which follows Vygotzky (McInerney, 2005). Some (Cobb, 1996) see these approaches as complementary; others (Richardson, 1997) view them as contradictory.

The various forms of constructivism offer a theory of learning, but this is not a theory of instruction. The application of constructivist understanding of learning processes in school or in teacher education is not simple, and changes from one discipline to the next (Richardson, 1997). Psychological constructivism's main contribution to education is that it makes the teacher take note of the learner and that the purpose of the lesson is not for the teacher to teach but for the students to learn. In a broad survey of educational psychology in the last twenty-five years McInerney (2005) notes a paradoxical situation: While studies of learning point to the im-

portance of the learner's work in constructing knowledge, research on instruction address direct instruction, based on behaviorist principles.

Anna Sfard (1998) uses an *acquisition* metaphor to describe these two approaches to knowledge – the traditional and the constructivist. Whether or not students received knowledge or constructed it, they are perceived as owners of knowledge that is specifically theirs. Sfard adds a second metaphor, *participation*, representing current approaches to knowing, which, she claims, transcend constructivist perception. *Participation* refers to social perceptions of learning that do not focus on knowledge alone, but rather on knowing and learning as activities that are done in cooperation between the individual and others (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learning means active integration into the community and participating in it, and the key words to describing it are context, discourse, practice, communication, and mutual reflection. The teacher is an expert participant in the activity, and knowledge is constructed through the interaction between partners and distributed among them.

Social theories of learning describe creating various communities, among them learners' communities (Brown & Palincsar, 1989). Created by Anne Brown and Anne-Marie Palincsar, such communities engaged in mutual instruction and discourse on the meaning that texts held for them, in a group of readers that formed a *hermeneutic community*. Other theories described communities of thinking (Harpaz & Lefstein, 2000), which focus on learning and on seeking answers to a fertile question. In such communities alternative "atomic pictures" to learning can be suggested: *Learning is understanding and being involved; teaching is creating conditions for good learning; knowledge is a "story" or a "construct" that people invent and not only find;* and *being a good student is knowing how to relate to knowledge in a manner that is empathic, creative, and critical.* There are communities of practice where constructing meaning is an ongoing, dynamic interaction within the special operating context of the community. Participation involves knowing the other, and knowing the other brings individuals to identify themselves in the other. Such a community fosters forth a feeling of cooperation where participation is a source of identity (Wenger, 2003). Sfard coined the term *commognition* – cognition and communication in learning – as regarding mathematical discourse. However, *commognition* is also relevant to the discourse of other disciplines. Sfard focuses the teacher's attention on verbal and non-verbal utterances during interpersonal, interactive learning. These utterances represent the learners' thinking processes, and listening to the discourse allows the exposure of underlying assumptions, turning "just words" into something significant, revealing thinking routines, and providing a variety of interpretations while relating to the context in which the discourse was constructed (Sfard, 2008).

4.   LITERATURE INSTRUCTION AND CONSTRUCTIVISM

It is compatible with the world of literature that knowledge of literature is subjective and relies on individual interpretations that can be in disagreement yet not cancel the other out. The subjectivity of knowledge in literature can be understood from the very existence of schools of criticism and interpretation that are not in accord with

each other both on the hermeneutic level of the single work and in the evaluation of their literary value. Thus, proponents of *New Criticism,* most notable Wellek and Warren (1968) attempted to achieve objectivity of knowledge using scientific mechanisms. However, their efforts did not yield the expected results, and the claim that literature is objective remains unproven. The *Reader Response Theory* (Iser, 1978) turned to examine the subjectivity of literature. This theory was dominant in literary research and instruction from the 1950s to the end of the twentieth century in Europe and North America, and focused on reading processes in which the readers play an active role: They build up expectations, some of which are met during the reading, others are dispelled and still others change forms and the readers build up new expectations. The reading process is dynamic, and readers activate cognitive and emotive skills that had been shaped through previous experience, and change through the present reading experience.

Bakhtin's (1984) perceptions of dialogue, formulated in the first half of the twentieth century in the Soviet Union, are consistent with the focus on culture-dependent and context-dependent personal discourse, such as the reader has with a literary text. Benyamin Harshav (2000) uses the word *constructivism* to describe the processes of reading, as based on "the constructivist model of literature." According to this model, reading is not subjective anarchy, but rather a personal process of "comprehending meanings represented in the text and experience with the non-semantic, rhetorical, or poetic aspects of the text" (Harshav, 2000, p. 25).

These approaches to literature instruction, which were dominant worldwide, as well as in Israel, since the mid 1980s, provide an opportunity for literature instruction that is closely related to personal reading processes. These approaches have been replaced, to a large degree, by critical approaches (Eagleton, 1983) that focus on the role of the critical reader. Likewise, the critical approach endows subjective knowledge and contextual position with major significance to reading literature. Yet, despite the subjective and social attitude toward knowledge of literature, the teaching of literature, both in schools and in academic institutions, is ruled by the "transmitting of knowledge" approach. This approach views the learner as one who memorizes given information, and not one who constructs knowledge out of comprehension, subjective response, or a critical attitude toward literature. At times the learning by rote relates to material *about* the literature, without any intimate encounter with the literature itself. Technical repetition seems to us to be the major problem that literature instruction now faces in Israel.

Theory and research on literature instruction have shown constructivist tendencies for many years, even before the concept *constructivism* was coined, as evidenced by Louise Rosenblatt's *Literature as Exploration,* published in 1938. Rosenblatt's ideas were revolutionary for her time, especially as they were in opposition to the New Criticism that was at the helm in literature instruction in the academic world. These ideas were formed through her experience in literature instruction in university, her unique personality, and her studies of anthropology at Columbia University. Rosenblatt was also influenced by Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934) and by Charles Pierce's semiotic theories (Karolides, 1999). To this day, her book influences the discourse on literature instruction. In Israel, however, her influence is limited, as her writings have not yet been translated into Hebrew.

Alongside the growing understanding of the importance of culture and multiculturalism in education and educational psychology (McInerney, 2005), a change has taken place in positions toward literature instruction and research on literature instruction. Traditionally, literary texts were perceived as a completed entity, one which readers could explore; the reader was perceived as a person seeking to comprehend, one who has certain interests in reading, as well as practices and aims. Today, however, research *transcends* the theory of reader response and relates to the context of reading in the student's cultural space (Galda & Beach, 2001). The cultural tools that the students bring along to reading are varied, and may, at times, be alien to the teacher. The challenge facing contemporary instruction and current research of literature instruction, according to Galda and Beach, is in the cultural space that stretches between learner and text.

These variations in literature instruction combined to become groundbreaking trends in instruction. One such trend is the formation of communities of learners who together construct an interpretation of texts (Brown & Palincsar, 1989). These trends also include approaches that encourage reading that is free of guidelines or assignments SSR (sustained silent reading) (Krashen, 1993), books that suggest integrating thinking into teaching of the humanities (Fisher, 1966, 1997; Swartz, 1999; Tishman et al., 1995), or literature instruction using constructivist approaches (Beach & Myers ,2001; Beach, Appleman, Hynds, & Wilhelm, 2006). These changes should be seen against the background of studies conducted in the United States that revealed difficulties and successes in the instruction of literature. A series of studies (Nystrand, 2006; Mercer, 2000) revealed that classroom discourse affects overall learning, thinking, and particularly reading comprehension. Previous studies (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991) showed that focusing on the skills associated with answering exam questions was hindered by authentic discourse in a literature class. The studies indicated the appropriateness of changing present patterns of interaction in the classroom: Unlike frontal instruction, where teachers determines the order of questions they will ask the students and how they, the teachers, will react to each answer, there is space for authentic questions that increase the chance for classroom discourse, and for the fact that students might ask questions. The efficiency of discourse is measured in that the meaning of the text is constructed in a process of active comprehension in interaction between the learners, and classroom discourse significantly enhances students' achievements in literature and in reading comprehension (Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991). Nevertheless, it was found that despite the knowledge regarding the importance of authentic dialogue, many classrooms in the United States still adhere to the Q&A discussion pattern, where the teacher asks and the student answers.

Social constructivism is the basis for books on literature instruction, published recently in the United States. Beach and Myers (2001) view adolescents' social context as their starting point, a context that is ethnically, racially, and religiously mixed and within which they are seeking their identity and relationship to the community. Following the reader response theory, Beach and Myers assume that in the literature class, in response to various texts, students also learn about their personal world and about various social worlds. The authors aim to teach literacy in an authentic context, and thus achieve a better understanding of individuals and society. According

to Beach and Myers, *text* is not only canonical literature, but also popular texts of all sorts. They perceive *literacy* in its broad view, relating it to reading, writing, speech, listening, photography, painting, creating and watching films, and use of technology. They suggest a cooperative learning that clearly defines the individual's responsibility to doing, as doing is the expression of the knowledge constructed by the individual and the group. Cooperative learning also includes setting objectives and a schedule to ensure that the process of knowledge construction will not be vague and lack a proven product.

Teaching Literature to Adolescents (Beach et al., 2006) is intended as a course outline for a methodical course on literature instruction, and for teacher education or teachers' professional development. The book begins with innovative socio-constructivist and socio-cultural theories and approaches to learning and literacy, and relates them to literature instruction. The curriculum is arranged by subjects in a multicultural context, and aims at education toward critical reading, integrating drama, music, and films with writing and creating dialogue, all the while relating to the differences among learners and to special cultural and personal difficulties that learners may have in literature classes.

In their comprehensive paper, Galda and Beach (2001) survey changes and challenges in literature instruction in the United States. Similar changes in literature instruction have taken place elsewhere, for a variety of reasons, for example in Australia (Mellor & Patterson, 2004) and the Netherlands (Janssen, 2002).

5. LITERATURE INSTRUCTION IN ISRAEL

De-Malach (2008) lists four realms that represent the goals of literature instruction in Israeli curricula: (1) the aesthetic aspect, where the goal of literature instruction is examining the uniqueness of literature as an art; (2) the ethical-national-Jewish aspect, which views literature as a means to instill values and shape identity; (3) the skills-acquisition aspect, according to which literature instruction is a tool to teach and develop language, reading, thinking, and critical thinking and reading; and (4) the aspect that relates to developing individuals and supporting their emotional world using the reading experience that literature provides as a means to have the reader respond personally to the aesthetic text. The various curricula for literature instruction in Israeli schools all related to these goals, with the goals having different priorities in different periods and in different curricula (De-Malach, 2008). The current junior high-school and high-school curricula set teaching goals in the spirit of social constructivism:

> Literature instruction in school is meant, first and foremost, to awaken the love of literature and to educate learners to view reading various literary works and exchanging opinion on them as activities that bring joy and enrich a person throughout life…. As literature teachers it is incumbent upon us to be the important link connecting… reading as an internalized activity and reading as a social, cultural activity that takes place in speaking and writing. (Shirav & Levy, 2007, p. 11)

The curriculum outlines the goals of literature instruction, suggests ways of instruction of literature, and establishes the literary repertoire for this instruction. The objectives direct the teacher toward means of instruction that allow space for group

discussion, as well as other methods that would provide space for students' active response to readings: oral or written presentation of a response to a work, reading out loud of literary works, self-study of literary works, and developing the reader as a reader-interpreter. The curriculum encourages teachers to incorporate first-hand experience with art into their instruction of literature, for example, by surveying relevant works or art or watching films related to the subject matter. However, despite the constructivist spirit of the curriculum, the method of assessment – the matriculation exam – reflects perceptions of knowledge transmission.

A follow-up report on the application of the literature instruction curriculum in junior high schools indicates that teachers applied it partially (Hirschfeld, Raz, Shirav, Netanel, & Hochberg, 1998). The report reveals a discrepancy between the goals of curriculum writers, who aimed for encouraging reading and reading comprehension, personal involvement, and authentic experience, and teachers' perceptions of literature instruction, which focused on become acquainted with the terminology of literature. A comprehensive study of literature curricula for junior high schools and high schools illustrates gaps between policy, as reflected in the curricula, and classroom practice (De-Malach, 2008). A comprehensive classroom study of literature instruction in Israel has not yet been conducted.

The present study aims to understand the perceptions and practice of literature teachers in Israeli junior high schools and high school, taking into account the desire of educational policy makers in Israel to integrate thinking development into instruction in general, and particularly in literature instruction, and to fostering instruction for meaningful learning. To do so, the study will present part of the findings from a research on teachers in Israeli junior high schools and high schools.

6.   RESEARCH METHOD

This is a mixed-method research, combining quantitative and qualitative methods.

Research questions: What are the literature teachers' attitudes toward instruction, learning, and means of knowledge construction? In addition, we sought to learn about the teachers' actual instruction methods, as they themselves describe their lessons.
Study population: For the quantitative study, the population included 79 literature teachers in Israeli junior high schools and high schools (77 women and 2 men), from all over Israel. All teachers had participated in in-service programs offered by the Ministry of Education. The qualitative data were also collected from a focus group of 6 high-school literature teachers in a small town, and 7 leading literature teachers holding tutoring positions in the Ministry of Education.
Research tools: Questionnaire, observations, conversations with the teachers, researcher's reflective journal, and interviews.

The findings presented here are based, for the most part, on the answers to the two-part questionnaire developed for this study. Prior to answering the special questionnaire developed for this study, participants answered a demographic questionnaire

which referred to their age, teaching experience, etc. The first part of the special two-part questionnaire was taken from a research tool developed by researchers in the Levinsky College Research Unit for a study of perceptions (constructivist and conservative) of instruction and learning among student teachers (Shimoni, Gilat, Elkad-Lehman, & Sagi, 2004). The second part was the result of cooperation between a literature researcher and an expert in quantitative research. This was aimed specifically at literature teachers and was intended to reveal teacher and student behavior during lessons, assuming that these behaviors would enable us to learn about the nature of instruction in literature lesson.

Data collection

In a pilot research conducted in 2007, 10 literature teachers in junior high schools and high schools were given questionnaires. This pilot study aimed to ascertain the clarity of the questions and their relevance to the teachers. In 2008, questionnaires were distributed to 120 teachers (divided into six groups) who participated in in-service (PD) programs. The teachers received the questionnaire at the beginning of a four-hour meeting with the researchers. Following the meeting, each group held a conversation about the aims of the questionnaire and the relationship between the questions and the research aims and assumptions. The researchers received 79 filled in questionnaires; the teachers who filled in the questionnaire had given their consent to participate in the study and were assured that the questionnaires are anonymous and used for research purposed only.

During the meeting the teachers held conversations amongst themselves, and also talked to the researcher. The researcher documented all conversations in her diary after each meeting. More qualitative data were collected in open dialogues (face to face, and via email) that the researcher conducted with seven leading literature teachers, all of them holding administrative and tutoring positions in the Ministry of Education. Data were also collected through observations of literature lessons, and from a focus group of six literature teachers, during a visit in one high school in a small town in central Israel.

Data analysis

Quantitative gathered data were examined by an expert on literature instruction, and were then coded according to her guidelines. A statistical analysis of the answers to the questionnaire was then performed. The statistical analysis combined descriptive statistics (which presents frequencies, means, and standard deviations of each of the questionnaire items) and an examination of the relationships between the teachers' background attributes and the questions addressing attitudes to literature instruction. These relationships were examined by using correlations, χ^2 tests, and analyses of variance.

Qualitative gathered data were examined for categorical content analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Categories were identified, and relationships between the various categories studied. For the most part, this paper is based on the answers to the quan-

titative questionnaire, and we will therefore present those findings first. The qualitative findings will follow the quantitative ones.

7. FINDINGS

The teachers in the study ranged in age from 26 to 67 ($M = 46$, $SD = 10.47$), and had all participated in six learning groups in 2007-2008. They taught in schools in central and southern Israel – in major cities, small towns, and peripheral locations. When asked to describe the size of their schools, 52% said they taught in large schools, 33% in medium size schools, and 15% in small schools. Teaching experience in this population was 1-42 years ($M = 20.5$, $SD = 10.18$). All teachers have higher-education qualifications – 96% hold a teaching certificate, 67% have graduate degrees (M.A. or M.Ed.), 28% are college graduates, and 3% have a Ph.D. Of the teachers, 82% are married, 13% divorced or widowed, and 5% single. Most (83%) of the teachers in this study worked full time or more, with only 17% working one-half to two-third PFT, and 11% hold a second job in addition to teaching. For the most part, the second job is in a school-related situation – private high schools that are geared for preparing students for their state matriculation exams, colleges, or supervisory position in the Ministry of Education. Two teachers were self-employed in addition to their teaching position – one as an expert in treating learning disabilities, the other as a personal coach.

It is interesting to note that despite the load carried by teachers at work and at home, most of them have a sense of vitality. They love teaching in general and particularly literature instruction, and do not have a sense of burnout – 94% stated that they are not burnt out, and 83% that they love to teach, with 40% noting that they are passionate about their work, a feeling that is characteristic of people who are expert in their field (Alexander, 2003). At the same time, two said they are "both tired and satisfied," "still, I'm tired of checking exams, and I'm tired of the many demands and of the fact that if I want to have a full-time position I have to teach seven literature classes in addition to being a home-class teacher." Only one teacher sounded a different chord – "I'm not all that excited about teaching and about literature."

We asked participants: "If you had to choose your profession all over again, would you become a literature teacher?" The answer to this question was Yes (87%), despite the fact that the question was asked after a long teachers' strike for better pay. Among other issues, the positive answers referred to the fact that the choice suits their personality, to satisfaction with teaching and with the interaction with the students that is a result of the discourse on literature, and the variety in the profession. The relationship between teacher's enthusiasm and coming back to choose this profession was examined using a χ^2 test and was found to be statistically significant ($p < .05$). A full 100% of those who described themselves as enthusiastic said they would choose literature again, a claim made by 76% of teachers who did not define themselves as enthusiastic.

Participating teachers met for in-service afternoon sessions over the course of the year. The 3-4 hour sessions were held in the teachers' living vicinity. An analysis of

their answers revealed that they participated primarily because of a desire "to learn" (81%), to "become updated on literature" (84%), and to improve their teaching methods (75%). However, 18% participated because of pressure from the supervising authorities or another external body, and another 12% stated that they felt moderate pressure to participate. Nonetheless, 70% came to the in-service session of their free will.

Not all literature teachers in Israeli junior high schools and high schools participate in such in-service programs. As most participants in this study came to the in-service program of their free will, it can be assumed that they were a special group of literature teachers who are committed to their work and who find time to learn after working hours, and are interested in doing so. Therefore, they cannot be taken as representing all literature teachers.

Teachers' attitudes toward knowledge, instruction, and learning

As FTLI relies on constructivist-type assumptions of the nature of knowledge, learning, and instruction, we set out to examine teachers' attitudes toward these issues. The teachers were presented with statements on learning and instruction and were asked to rate their level of agreement, *as learners,* with the statements (6 – *Agree very much*, 1 – *Not at all*). Table 1 presents the teachers' responses (*M* and SD).

The statements which had the highest agreement rating were "I love to organize my learning process." "For me, the main thing in learning is integrating new knowledge into existing one," "For me, learning means creating new and personal meaning for new content," and "I love challenge in learning, situations to be solved." These statements are indicative of a constructivist perception of learning among the research participants, while other statements (except for # 8) represent a conservative-traditional perception of learning and instruction, in which the teacher is perceived as a source that transmits knowledge and the student as one who receives this knowledge, learns it by rote, and contains it. However, traditional perceptions are inseparable from the teachers' world, as they attribute importance to the accumulation of knowledge, to the teacher's guidance, and to receiving knowledge from their lecturers. A comparison of the present findings to those of a previous study of teacher students (Shimoni et al., 2004) indicates that according to all statements, teachers' perceptions of learning and instruction are more constructivist than students' perceptions. As seen in Table 1, this distinction is true for younger students (pursuing their B.Ed.) and older ones (who hold a B.A. or B.Sc. and are studying to obtain a teaching certificate).

The findings presented here would lead us to expect the teachers to be willing to use constructivist methods in their instruction. The findings would further lead us to expect that the teachers would foster independent learning and creativity and thinking in instruction.

Table1. Teachers' and student' attitudes toward learning and instruction

Statements on learning and instruction	Literature teachers		B.Ed. Students		Teaching certificate students	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
I love to organize my learning processes	5.5	0.7	5.0	1.06	4.5	1.3
I expect that the teacher will guide me to look for knowledge needed for learning	4.1	1.5			4.8	1.2
Memorizing and repetition are important for my learning	3.9	1.5			4.8	1.1
I love to have a clear framework and set objectives for learning	4.1	1.5			4.5	1.2
For me the main thing in learning is integrating new knowledge into existing one	5.5	0.9	5.0	0.8	4.0	1.4
Learning is mainly knowledge accumulation	4.7	1.4	4.3	1.2	4.3	1.3
I hope to get from my teacher most of the knowledge I need	3.9	1.5			4.3	1.3
Understanding theoretical aspects of my discipline is important to me	3.6	1.3				
For me, learning means creating new and personal meaning for new content	5.1	1.3			4.7	1.1
I love challenges in learning, situations to be solved	5.3	1.1			4.5	1.1

Literature instruction in the classroom

While the present study is not a field study, we wished to understand the teacher's perspective of what actually happens in the classroom during a literature lesson. We asked the teachers on question: "Imagine we filmed, at random, one of your lessons (not an exam). In your opinion, which of the following would we see? The situation you indicate must last at least three minutes. Please rate the likelihood that we'll see what the statement describes (6 – *Always*, 1 – *Never*)." In other words, the question "positioned" a camera in class, transmitting through the teacher's eyes and hands, and reporting on the learning environment during the lesson. These "transmitted photos" reflect the teacher's perceptions of instruction, learning, and the nature of knowledge. Table 2 presents the findings, in descending order of importance.

Table 2. Learning environment and interaction in instruction and learning
in a literature lesson

Statements: What happens in my literature lesson?	M	SD
1. I read aloud, students listen.	5.1	0.8
2. I handle conversation, students listen.	4.9	0.9
3. I ask students raise hands, answer, I ask again	4.5	0.9
4. I ask, students look for an answer, think, write and answer.	4.2	1.0
5. I talk, students take notes.	4.0	1.3
6. One student reads aloud. Class and I listen.	3.4	1.2
7. Students ask questions and look for answers.	3.4	1.2
8. I talk, I comment, I ask. Some students write, others read; some participate, others disrupt and some are otherwise engaged.	3.3	1.5
9. Students read and write. I walk around.	3.2	1.2
10. Class discussion. I do not interfere.	3.2	1.0
11. Only students do the talking, I write notes on the board.	3.1	1.2
12. Students perform in front of the class.	3.0	1.1
13. Students discuss, I walk around listening.	2.8	1.3
14. One student handles a discussion; I stand in the corner without involvement.	2.6	1.3
15. Students read and write, I sit next to one of them.	2.5	1.2
16. Students read literary work silently.	2.4	1.1
17. Everybody watches TV.	2.2	1.2
18. Everybody listens to music.	2.2	1.3
19. Students work on computers, I walk from one to another.	1.8	1.2
20. I give an assignment. Class splits up and performs assignment in different part of the school.	1.7	0.9
21. I stand and talk; students do whatever they want.	1.6	1.0

A look at the *SD* column reveals that there are no exceptional teachers here. The group, as a whole, represents behavior that is accepted and common in literature instruction. The more prominent statements on the scale are: "I read aloud, students listen," "I handle conversation, students listen," "I ask, students raise their hands, answer, I ask again," "I ask, student look for an answer, think, write and answer," and "I talk, students take notes."

The teacher usually runs the class, reads out the literary work, and conducts the class dialogue. The instances of having a student read out loud, or devoting time to silent reading in class, are limited. The study shows that the most common learning environment in a literature class is that of a room, students, and teacher. In most classrooms there are no computers, and lessons included neither film watching and listening to music, nor use of a library. The students participate in a discussion directed by the teacher – teacher asks, hands are raised for answering, and so on.

Does an interactive discourse develop among students? This point is not clear. Very little activity is led by the students in the classroom, and very little reading,

writing, or conversation in which the teacher facilitates for the learners. The source of knowledge in these lessons is the teacher, and no attempt is made to glean knowledge from any other source (internet, other learners, etc.). "Young people learn a great deal about how to think collectively from interaction with each other" (Mercer, 2000, p. 165). Interaction among students as part of the learning procedure is essential for the construction of meaningful knowledge (Vygotsky, 1986) – even on the social discourse level – is limited. Further studies, especially observation-based studies, are needed to explore the quality of classroom dialogue between teacher and students and understand whether it is dialogical (Bakhtin, 1984) or a false dialogue as revealed by Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeiser, & Long (2003).

Can the methods of instruction presented in Table 2 be reduced to a small number of general categories? In an attempt to answer this question we conducted a factor analysis with orthogonal rotation. The analysis identified five factors that included statements with a loading higher than 0.40. Each of the factors represents learning/instruction of a different character – learning/instruction focused on the student's action (Statements 7, 12, 16, 14, 15, 9, 13, 11), learning/instruction focused on the interaction among learners (Statements 10, 6, 4, 3), learning/instruction focused on the student who is activated by the teacher (Statements 18, 17, 5), teacher-centered learning/instruction (Statements 2, 1and Statement 19 in the opposite direction), and lack of order or lack of control in learning/instruction (Statements 21, 8). Pearson inter-correlations calculated for the factors showed statistically significant positive relations between the factor that testifies to the teachers' perception of the student activated by the teacher and the factors that testify to the perception of the learner as active in the learning process. These findings indicate that even when the student is activated by the teachers, the teachers perceive the student as being central, as if the student is indeed active. This seems to reflect a conservative perception of instruction and learning, according to which whatever the teacher has taught was learned, without understanding the processes of knowledge construction. It is also possible that this represent the routine work of literature instruction in the traditional manner of knowledge transmission.

An additional analysis revealed significant correlations ($p < .05$) between the teachers' personal attributes and events in the classroom. The more years of teaching experience the teacher has, the greater the space ($r = .250$) accorded to student activity in the classes and the smaller ($r = -.243$) the teacher's space. A higher degree of teacher burnout was related to less interaction ($r=-.268$) among learners, and classroom behavior is more chaotic ($r = .276$). These are interesting findings that seem to bear witness to the fact that the more veteran teachers are will to provide more meaningful space to students' knowledge-construction processes. However, further research is needed to obtain an in-depth picture of this assumption.

Research participants' perspective on literature instruction

"In your opinion, is it important to teach literature?" 90% of the participants answered in the affirmative, 5% negative, and 5% did not respond. Thus, in this select group of literature teachers, who engage in teaching daily, there are almost none

who do not believe in the importance of literature instruction, although there are a few dissenting voices. Nonetheless, despite the fact that teachers have constructivist perspectives on the nature of knowledge and learning, in practice their instruction is traditional and not constructivist. This is not a surprising finding. It has been revealed in previous studies, and is consistent with the studies that indicate that constructivism explains processes of learning but not of instruction (McInerney, 2005). A constructivist approach and a constructivist perspective are a necessary – but not sufficient – condition for constructivist instruction.

Pearson correlations were used to calculate the relationship between teachers' approaches to literature instruction and means of instruction and their background attributes (with teachers' age) and one-way analysis of variance (for size of school). Regarding teachers' age, our findings reveal that there is a significant, although not high, correlation ($r = 0.24$, $p < .05$) between teacher's age and instruction that could foster thinking: the older the teachers, the more they reported on instruction methods that could foster thinking. This is an interesting finding, because it would seem that it is the novice teacher who would be innovative and the veteran conservative. Possible explanations for these findings are the conformism of novice teachers as to school instruction culture, and their desire to satisfy and to prove themselves through "covering" all material for the matriculation exam. This would lead to conservative instruction. Conversely, the veteran teacher feels confident not to "get it all in" but to teach in a manner that is meaningful and experiential.

As for size of school – it was found that teachers who work in large schools tend to be more conservative in their instruction than those who teach in medium-size or small schools. Those who teach in small schools showed more integration of media (music, TV, and computer) in their classes. However, there are no data to explain this pattern – it could be related to a different instruction culture, the availability of equipment, or some other reason. A negative relationship was found between the teacher's level of burnout and thinking developing instruction – the higher the teacher's reported burnout (using our scale), the less thinking fostering instruction was included in the classes. In addition, a negative relation was found between level of burnout and use of media (music and TV) – the more burnout the teachers, the less they integrate media into their classes. A t test for independent samples revealed that high-school teachers have more constructivist perceptions than their colleagues who teach in junior high school.

Qualitative data: To dream the impossible (?) dream

Qualitative data were gathered from the researcher`s diary, as well as from collected dialogues and emails, observations, and from the focus. The data were examined for categorical content analysis, followed by the identification of categories and a study of the relationships between them. For the most part, this paper is based on the answers to the quantitative questionnaire. The qualitative findings will be presented here in brief.

Through categorical content analysis we identified eight main categories, strongly related to one another: teachers' concerns, students' difficulties, the official Min-

istry of Education curriculum, teacher's goals, assessment, the methodology of literature instruction, attitude toward changes in education, and the time issue. These categories will now be presented in detail:

Teachers' concerns: Teachers expressed feelings of stress, often using the phrase "I feel pressure." One of them said that she would "have to bend the schedule" if she were to foster thinking skills in class. Another frequent reaction to the new policy referred to the difficulties presented by the large classes and the heavy work load: "How can I teach like that when I have 40 students in my classroom?" "I have to teach six classes for my position to be considered full time" (bringing the number of students per teacher to 240 a year). Teachers' tutors, who work mainly with teachers and not with school students, articulated different opinions. Some tutors expressed empathy with teachers, while others observed resistance to top-down change, as one said: "Teachers will always gripe… they'll always resist change."

Student's difficulties: The main finding in our observation, and teachers' great concern as expressed in the focus group, was that high-school students find it difficult to read literature, and, in fact, do not read at home. The students' Hebrew is shallow, and the teachers reported that the Hebrew spoken by students in multicultural classrooms is very different from the Hebrew in the texts in the literature curriculum. In class, the teacher reads the literary work – be it stories, novels, or plays, complete or excerpted. When teachers read out loud, they also mediate, which includes explaining words. Because they are concerned that the high register of the text will be difficult for the students, teachers read out loud rather than allowing the students to have an unmediated encounter with the text, thus depriving them of an opportunity to create their own experience. Teachers feel that the world of the literary work is culturally and mentally alien to the learner, and one of the teachers said: "Our students have a poor cultural echo chamber." Consequently, the reader's initial contact with the text is no longer an intimate one, but rather an adult-mediated encounter. Reading in class is time consuming, and students are expected to listen, but for some students listening without reading, or engaging in another activity, is difficult. In addition, listening only is not enough for knowledge constructing, but after reading there is only a little time left for learning activities.

The Ministry of Education curriculum seems to be another concern of teachers and teachers' tutors. The Israeli curriculum demands that teachers choose a certain number of literary works representing various periods, writers, and genres out of a prescribed selection. The works are fine works of literature, but are very remote from the learner's world. The question of "what," of the actual content of the material to be taught, came up time and again in the focus group and in the professional development sessions. In addition, the literature curriculum – even in its modified version – requires a great deal of reading and learning. Teachers feel obligated to get through a vast quantity of "material" required for the matriculation exams, whereas constructivist instruction or FTLI require a great deal of instruction time (Marsh &

Willis, 2003). Students and teachers alike complain that the reading list is not relevant to the students' lives. In our meetings with teachers, we heard questions like "Why do we have to teach the Classics?" and, conversely, "Is it possible not to teach the Hebrew classics like Bialik[1]"? One of the teachers said: "Why wait fifteen years for a new curriculum? Refresh it right now" and another complained: "My students want science fiction – why can't I teach it?"

The actual *goal of teaching literature* is often stated, both by teachers and teachers' tutors, as "doing the best we can in matriculation achievements, having a good average… that's what matters." Students' success on exams is the common measure for teachers' professional success. The matriculation exams were cited as the main reason for traditional instruction of the "material transmission" type lecture (be it actual dictation, or a synopsis on the school website in addition to the lesson). The students learn this material by rote in preparation for the exam.

Assessment became an end onto itself instead of being an educational tool. The statements "I have no *time* for thinking," or "We have no time to teach in a way that consumes time, when we must finish all the material for the exams," were often heard in the professional development workshops. It is not only the exam itself and the amount of material that one is required to memorize that dictate the methods of instruction – these are also dictated by the types of questions in the matriculation exams. To date, with the exception of one unseen text, the questions practically did not generate any individual or critical thinking, nor did they encourage students to express an opinion. Rather, they were a repetition of information gained in the classroom or information learned specifically for the exam. In answer to our questions about the nature of exams, one of the teachers' tutors replied that the complexity of creating an indicator for evaluating creative, unusual, or critical answers has been an obstacle. Consequently, exams remain in a format that calls for predictable answers.

The methodology of literature instruction most often used is the transmission model, through teachers' lectures in the classroom. Most teachers we met expressed their desire for changes in literature instruction in school, but their concern was *what*, not *how* to teach. Some wished that students would "enjoy literature class" or "learn for understanding and not for passing an exam." The teachers reported that most classrooms are crowded, with 36-40 students in each. Trying to organize into study groups is difficult because of the limited space and the short breaks between lessons. In most schools, literature lessons are held in the home class, and not in a special literature classroom where an appropriate environment could be created. The learning environment lacks resources (library, computers, TV, tape-recorder), and if these are available in school, getting them ready for the lesson requires additional effort on the part of the teacher: "Last year I had my classes in a multi-media room. This

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[1] *Hayyim Nahman Bialik (1873-1934) is the foremost Hebrew poet of modern times, often titled "the national poet."*

year I teach in the home classroom, which is why I don't use any TV, movies or computers. Students can watch these at home" said one of the leading teachers. This comment explains the low use of media and computers we found in the question-naires.

Attitudes toward changes in education were felt, by some of the teachers and teach-ers' tutors to be an imposition, "a top-down policy" "a passing fad." Some said that all they have to do is weather this storm until the next policy arrives. One teachers' tutor told the researcher: "Constructivist literature teaching is your dream, not the teachers' dream, and I think you're dreaming the impossible dream."

The time issue links all categories - "If I only had more time" was often heard in our talks. Teachers professed that without the time pressure of "covering material" for the matriculation exam, they would be more willing to try various methodologies of teaching. Such methodologies would construct knowledge through small-group dia-logue, social activities or artistic performances. The freedom of time constraints would also allow them to be flexible about the literary repertoire.

8.   DISCUSSION:
WILL THEY LEARN BY ROTE? WILL THEY READ AND THINK?

The analysis provided us with partial answers to our research questions. The first question addressed the literature teachers' attitudes toward instruction, learning, and means of knowledge construction. We believe that the study revealed some answers, but they are not in conjunction with the answers we have for the second research question, how the teachers themselves describe their instruction methods.

The assumption underlying programs for enhancing thinking is that teachers must change their perception of the nature of knowledge, instruction, and learning. According to our findings, the teachers who participated in the study regard knowledge as subjective, constructed upon previous knowledge to which infor-mation accumulated from external sources in added. They hold simultaneously con-structivist and traditional perceptions about knowledge and learning.

Dominant contemporary theories on reading literature are clearly constructivist. However, the present findings show that a teacher's progressive perception of learn-ing and instruction is not sufficient, and that the essential question is what actually happens in the classroom. Despite their progressive perceptions, findings indicate that teachers tend to employ traditional methods of instruction, of the type that focus on transmission of knowledge and not in actively constructing such knowledge.

The second research question looked at how the teachers themselves describe their instruction methods. The four "atomic pictures" Harpaz (2005) refers to are actually not alien to them, and the descriptions of teaching literature classes in Israe-li high school are the transmission and acquisition metaphors (Sfard, 1998).

Teaching and learning culture and the learning environment in Israeli schools are barriers to constructivist instruction. For the most part, school culture encourages traditional instruction where the student sits in class, and the teacher stands and

teaches – in other words, talks or reads – in front of rows of chairs. We observed and then talked with teachers who reported that their lessons are held as "discussions," and attempted to understand the nature of classroom discourse. On the whole, genuine classroom discourse, in which four or five students have a discussion before the teacher intervenes (Mercer, 2000), is rare. In most cases, the discussion is nothing more than a Q&A discourse (Nystrand et al., 2003). One of the teachers had conducted a self-study and analyzed her classroom discourse. She was confident that discussions were part of her classes, and was unaware of the discrepancy between her definition and that of the literature (Mercer, 2000)

Schools in Israel are multicultural linguistically and ethnically, and there is an awareness of the importance of students' culture and of adolescents' social context in literature class. Nevertheless, it is the text itself and its literary, moral, historical, and national values that is the center of the literature class, not a personal transaction with it (Rosenblatt, 1938). In such learning and instruction culture, it is almost impossible to expect to face an active hermeneutic community (Brown & Palincsar, 1989). Students' personal voices, their social worlds (Beach & Myers, 2001; Galda & Beach, 2001), or critical reading (De-Malach, 2008) almost always remain outside the literature high-school classroom. The obvious reason for this picture of teaching is the content, character, and importance of the matriculation exam, but there may be other and different reasons. The situation is different in elementary schools, but these are not the subject of this paper.

Because assessment is an essential educational tool in curriculum planning, it is hard to assume that without a change in the nature of the matriculation exam, literature instruction could encourage thinking. Evaluation based on a combination of exam, portfolio, or papers together with additional means of evaluation such as those used in the UNESCO-sponsored[2] international baccalaureate (I.B.) could be a step toward constructivist literature instruction that integrates thinking. This format could decrease the amount of material required, while maintaining an appropriate level of acquaintance with literary works, and integrating higher-order thinking questions that would give expression to the learner's own voice. The portfolio and the paper would demand that learners express themselves and think for themselves. Such changes in evaluation could be an incentive to meaningful instruction and learning of literature.

Although the literature on fostering thinking in learning and instruction as an end in education is quite impressive, there is skepticism regarding the chances for its application in schools. "When schools were invented, they weren't set up for anything so ambitious. They were designed to teach children routine skills […] they were not meant to help students interpret unfamiliar texts" (Kohn, 1999, p. 116). School was expected to teach what society regarded as important texts, principally religious, and memorize them. Our high expectations of today's school demand a change in its nature. Not everyone believes such change is possible.

We believe that the goal of fostering thinking in literature instruction is more than an educational philosophy only – it is essential if one believes that reading liter-

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[2] See http://www.ibo.org/diploma/

ature is a source for constructing personal meaning for one's existence. Giving up reading as a dynamic process of meaning construction between reader and text, and as a source for a meaningful dialogue between people of all age – will be ignoring the unique qualities literature offers us.

When we wrote this paper, we thought that if the Ministry of Education would set FTLI as a long-term goal, the teachers who participated in this study might be those who lead the change. We believed (and still believe) that this change in instruction must be accompanied by changes in the methods of assessment, by processes that would affect the formation of a thinking culture in schools (Tishman et al., 1995), and by meaningful processes of developing the teaching teams and designing learning environments that support thinking. However, reality dictated a different direction. Ministers of Education have changed and with them educational goals and policies. Do changes in government mean that there is no longer a need for fostering thinking in learning and instruction of literature?

The limitations of this study originate, a priori, with the participants. In the quantitative part of our research, we examined only 79 teachers of literature, and these were teachers who participated, of their own free will, in in-service programs held in central and southern Israel. This is not a geographically representative sample, nor does it represent Jewish religious schools and Arab schools in Israel. In addition, the participants were a highly motivated group who choose to participate in the in-service programs. However, when the findings in a group of teachers who are knowledgeable and motivated, and who hold constructivist ideas, reveal the conservative nature of literature instruction in Israel, these findings should be seriously considered by policy and decision makers on literature instruction.

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