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Abstract

This paper is a review of literature on how literature can be integrated as a language teaching material in EFL/ESL classes. First, it tracks down the place of literature in language classes from the early Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) era. The paper then discusses the reasons for the demise and resurrection of literature as an input for language classes. After that the reasons for and against the use of literature in EFL/ESL classes are enumerated and discussed. For so doing, the researchers draw upon recent ideas on language teaching practice and theories. Finally in a practical move, this paper reviews the past and current approaches to teaching literature in language teaching classes. Five methodological models for teaching literature are proposed.

Keywords: Literature, EFL, ESL

1. Introduction

Literature was initially the main source of input for teaching in language classes in the era of Grammar Translation Method but since then it has been dropped down the pedestal. In fact with the advent of structuralism and audiolingual method, literature was downplayed and ergo discarded to the periphery (Collie & Slater, 1987, p.2). Also in the era of CLT, literature was neglected and more attention was given to dialogues and conversations which were more practical and visible in the real world situation. Maley (2001) argues that this attitude toward literature is due to a paucity of empirical research confirming the significance of literary input for language classes. Maley states that what exists right now as empirical research on literature and language teaching are confined to action research in small scales.

Taking heed of all these disfavors, in the middle of the 1980s some practitioners and language scholars resurrected literature as a language learning material after a long period of being neglected (Duff & Maley, 1991). This can be confirmed by seeing so many publications heralding the coming back of literature (Maley, 1989b) in language classes (e.g. Collie & Slater, 1987; Duff & Maley, 1991; Gower & Pearson, 1986; Hill, 1986; Lazar, 1993; Maley & Duff, 1989; McRae, 1991). Besides, applied linguistics fueled the return of literature for language teaching (Belcher & Hirvela, 2000). Publications which laid a red carpet for the return of literature were prolific at this time including:

- Carter & Burton,1982
- Maley & Moulding, 1985
- Brumfit and Carter, 1986
- Collie & Slater, 1987
- Carter, Walker, Brumfit, 1989
- Carter & Long, 1991
- Bassnett & Grundy, 1993

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2. For literature in EFL/ESL: I couldn't agree more

Literature is considered as a promising tool for language learning purposes. Scholars in the field have proposed various advantages for the use of literature in EFL/ESL classes. What follows is a summary of what can be considered as the merits of literature in EFL/ESL.

2.1 Authenticity

Literature is inherently authentic and provides authentic input for language learning (Ghosn, 2002; Shrestha, 2008). According to Maley (1989a) literature deals with non-trivial things which are personally relevant to them. Authenticity is a criterion considered highly essential in the current literature in EFL/ESL which is naturally existent in literary texts. Authenticity can especially be envisaged in drama and novel. In drama we have conversations, expressions of feelings, functional phrases, and contextualized expressions. Similarly in novels, descriptive writing along with other types of writing adds to the imaginative nature of human and hence language is easily etched on our mind.

2.2 Motivation

Literary texts are very motivating due to its authenticity and the meaningful context it provides (Ghosn, 2002, Van, 2009). Literature deals with things which are interesting in nature and includes little if any uninteresting things (Maley, 1989a). Motivation is one of the elements which can drive the learners to go ahead. Motivation is especially achieved when students are exposed to what they really enjoy. Experience shows that students are highly motivated when they are exposed to literary texts for language learning purposes.

2.3 Cultural/Intercultural Awareness and Globalization

Literature promotes cultural and intercultural awareness (Van, 2009) especially in the era of globalization (Tayebipour, 2009). In the era of globalization, there is a growing concern of universally shared needs and wants rather than individual needs. Since literature deals with universal concepts (Maley, 1989a), there is an urge to grab on literature as an input source for flourishing language learners' competence. Globalization cries for joining hands not only in economy, politics, and sociology but also in language-related fields such as ELT. According to Maley (1989a), literature deals with universal concepts such as love, hatred, death, nature, etc that are common to all languages and cultures. The similarities and even differences between cultures and languages can further our understanding of the whole world.

2.4 Intensive/Extensive Reading Practice

Literature is good for extensive and intensive reading. Novels are good for extensive reading purposes. Students can be given a weak just to go through a novel without extensive use of dictionary. Such a practice will double up their reading speed and also encourage meaning guessing in reading. Subsequently learners learn how to read a lot in a short period of time. One of the authors of this paper enjoyed his own experience of reading 'The Adventures of Huck Finn' in a week or so which was a thrilling and helpful know-how for extensive reading.

On the other hand, the best literary text for intensive reading purposes can be poetry. Poetry is good for close analysis. In this way, students can be assigned to read each stanza closely to delve into the text and dig out hidden meaning expressed through literary elements such as metaphor, simile, allegory, etc. Intensive reading can lead the learners to extract deep meanings embedded in texts.

2.5 Sociolinguistic/Pragmatic Knowledge

Due to its authenticity, literature can develop sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge as manifested in communicative competence models (McKay, 2001). Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic competence are two of the main components of the communicative competence models. Hence, special attention is needed to be directed to this component. Literature due to its authenticity is equipped with sociolinguistic and pragmatic information. These two features are more related to 'appropriateness' in language which can be found only in contextualized language such as literary texts especially dramas and plays.

2.6 Grammar and Vocabulary Knowledge

Maley (1989a) says that literature deals with a potpourri of language types and varieties from slang to formal and various subject matters. Also Arthur (1968) believes that syntactic knowledge and vocabulary enrichment can be accelerated through literary texts. In other words, literature involves a profound range of vocabulary, dialogues and prose (Van, 2009). Though poetry is usually criticized for its complex and far-fetched syntactic structures, it can simultaneously be a good source for practicing grammatical structures. One such drill is asking the students to change the complex structures in a poem to the Standard English structure. Literary texts are the major sources where complex structures such as dangling structure, inversion, subjunctives, etc occur.

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On the other hand, vocabulary knowledge can be expanded through considerable exposure to literary texts which treat both formal and informal language. Reading short stories and novels is a good exercise for enlarging your vocabulary domain of knowledge. The authors' own experience of reading novels such as 'Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness' which is replete with so many new words was very beneficial and it can be prescribed for intermediate and upper-intermediate language learners.

2.7 Language Skills

Quite in line with the principles of CLT (Van, 2009), literature is rich with innumerable authentic tokens of language for the development of reading, writing, speaking and listening skills (Belcher & Hirvela, 2000, Crain, 1993, Erkaya, 2005, Fitzgerald, 1993, Knight, 1993, Latosi-Sawin, 1993, Nasr, 2001, Spack, 1985, Stern, 2001, Vandrick, 1996).

For writing purposes, literature shows to set a good ground for writing practice. Having the learners complete a poem or short story in cloze form is very encouraging. Also we can have the students write the end of a story in their own words or narrate a story from the point of view of another character in a short story, novella, or novel. Other similar creative activities can be developed for writing practice.

For speaking purposes, the events in a poem, novel, or short story can be associated with the learners' own experience in real life. Such a practice paves the way for hot topics for discussion in language classes. Having the students freely reflect on the events and having them critically comment is also facilitative for advancing speaking proficiency.

For listening purposes, the learners can be exposed to the audio versions of the poems, short stories, or novels. Also the musical elements in poetry stimulate the learners' desire for approximating their speaking patterns to the native speaker norms by adhering to the principles of rhythm, rhyme, and intonation.

For reading purposes, as above-mentioned, novel and poetry can provide good opportunities for extensive and intensive reading. Also it is good for practicing reading subskills including skimming, scanning, and finding the main ideas. Reading in literature is a combination of reading for enjoyment and reading for information. Therefore, it bridges the lacks in non-literary texts. In fact, literature is not only facilitative for language learning purposes in general but it can also accelerate language learning in content-based instruction (Shang, 2006).

2.8 Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

Reading literary texts foster emotional intelligence (Ghosn, 2002). Daniel Goleman is the pioneer in EQ. He believes that IQ and even multiple intelligences did not cater for this aspect of human intelligence. EQ is specifically related to human ability to control and manage their emotions and feelings in difficult situations. An example for EFL/ESL context is how far EFL/ESL learners are able to control their anxiety when it comes to taking high-stake tests. Hence; dealing with affection, feeling and emotion, Literature is a good source for nurturing our EQ.

2.9 Critical Thinking

Literature is a good medium for critical thinking enhancement among language learners (Gajdusek & van Dommelen, 1993, Ghosn, 2002, Van, 2009). Ghosn (2002) maintains that literature can bring about changes in the attitudes of the learners. According to Langer (1997), literature allows students to reflect on their lives, learning, and language. Literature can open "horizons of possibility, allowing students to question, interpret, connect, and explore" (p. 607). Literature among other text types is fertile with ideas to critically look at. Here the role of the teacher is very significant in developing such higher-order thinking skills. Today, critical thinking is the cornerstone of education particularly at advanced levels of education. Critical thinking prepares us not to take things for granted and to attempt to unravel the hidden agenda of texts. Critical thinking informs Critical Discourse Analysis in Language Studies and similar fields in philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, psychology, and law.

3. Against Literature in EFL/ESL: I beg to differ!

Taking into account the advantages of literature in EFL/ESL, there are some scholars who have posited the possible potholes literature might cause in language classes. The criticisms made include:

3.1 Syntax

Syntactic difficulty inherent in literary texts makes reading a cumbersome task. This is one of the main criticisms leveled against literature in EFL/ESL. McKay (1982) and Savvidou (2004) contend that literary texts are far from the conventions of Standard English and hence can induce problems for language learning purposes. It is argued that literary texts are loaded with complex structures sometimes miles away from Standard English. The irregularity of syntax is particularly evident when it comes to (old) poetry. Poems are usually written in a form deviant from the

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norms of speaking or even writing and hence they make understanding them a herculean task. Bearing all these arguments in mind, we should remember that this complexity itself can become a source for practice especially for the learners at the intermediate and the above levels. In other words, the syntactic complexity should be given to above intermediate levels so that it becomes a source for language practice.

3.2 Lexis

Some argue that lexical difficulty of the literary texts adds fuel to the fire. Robson (1989, p.25) argues that due to its syntactic and lexical difficulty, literature is seen to be able to do "little or nothing to help students to become competent users of the target language". Some others also argue that literary texts are teeming with old and outdated vocabulary not practiced in today's English. Words such as "thee and thou" are not normally found in today's English. Again there is a counterargument that this is only working in old literature such as that of Shakespeare. Teachers are not obliged to use old literature only. There are so many modern literary texts that can be used as a source of input including short stories written by Hemingway and the like which are closer to the Standard English.

3.3 Phonetics and Phonology

Similarly some practitioners believe that literature is replete with instances where there is a deviation from normal phonetic and phonological system .Some words have gone though minor or drastic changes in their pronunciation which might bring about misunderstandings. These inconsistencies can be thorny for language learners. An example is the word 'love' which was pronounced as /lūv/ in old English. However, the authors believe even these fluctuations can be intriguing for our language learners and eventually making them aware of these phonetic or phonological changes is revealing.

3.4 Semantics

Some words have changed semantically including the word 'gay'. Such changes in meaning can also be a hindering point for language learners. Therefore some scholars consider this as a pitfall in literary texts. Similarly however, we content that these semantic changes are not considered to block the learners' previous knowledge but an appendix to their earlier semantic repertoire. As long as they are not impeding language learning, no harm is expectant from these semantic variations. Nevertheless, the primacy of learning these words should be attended to.

3.5 Selection of Materials

Literary texts are usually difficult for both the students and teachers to select. In this respect teachers should be wary about such factors as the learners' language proficiency, age, gender, and background knowledge so that children or young adults are exposed to certain types of literary texts in comparison to the adult learners. The learners' gender and background knowledge likewise should come under close scrutiny when it comes to selecting the materials. Also factors related to the text itself should also be considered. For example is the text old or modern, is it from escape literature or interpretive literature, what is the genre of the work, who is the author, which dominant literary school does the work allude to, is it short or long, and other similar questions.

Considering all the aforesaid problems built-in literary texts, Carter & Long (1991) argue that these problems can be overcome by selecting an appropriate text for an appropriate group of language learners.

3.6 Literary Concepts and Notions

Unfamiliarity with certain literary genres and conventions might also bring about certain sorts of problems (Maley, 1989a). An example is exposing the beginners to James Joyce's "Ulysses" which is abundant with stream of consciousness. Lack of knowledge about these literary concepts makes the texts bewildering and demanding to understand. A solution to this problem is to select the texts that best suit the learners' current and potential level of literary knowledge doing away with complex literary canons, or teaching these new literary concepts and notions prior to having the learners read the related literary text.

3.7 Literature and Academic English

Along with McKay's (1982) argument, so many language teachers conclude that literature has little if anything to serve the needs of our learners in academic settings or specialized fields such as biology and zoology where educational goals are given priority over aesthetic values of literary texts. As Maley (1989a) himself later clarifies such is not necessarily the case because we can use literature as a motivating tool for instigating the learners to explore different text types. Also as Shang (2006) indicates, literature can even be integrated in content-based instruction classes. Though literature cannot directly serve ESP/EAP courses' needs, it can be a positive catalyst for quickening language learning process.

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3.8 Cultural Barriers

Drawing on McKay's (1982) contention, we can drive home the fact that literature is saturated with certain cultural concepts which hence makes understanding literature much frustrating. Currently language teachers and materials writers are on the horns of a dilemma about which culture to present, L_1 culture or L_2 culture. As Tomlinson (2001) maintains there is a need to humanize the textbooks and one way to actualize this want is to localize the textbooks with interesting L_1 topics and themes. However, others (Brown, 2007) take side with the other camp and consider language as culture and culture as language where L_2 culture is essential for EFL/ESL. With the rise of English as an International Language (EIL), this quandary has become more contentious. However, the authors believe that treating both L_1 and L_2 culture in a contrastive way will make the differences more elaborate and distinct for the learners. Capitalizing on contrastive cultural studies can be very much illuminating for our language classes and hence respect both cultures. McKay (1982) offers three ways to wipe out the problems of linguistic and cultural complexity:

- Using simplified texts, i.e. texts which are simplified for language learning purposes
- Using easy texts, i.e. texts which are by nature more readable than others and are appropriate to the level of the learners
- Using young adult texts because they are stylistically less complex

4. Methodological Approaches to Teaching Literature: Five Models

4.1Maley's (1989a) approaches to teaching literature:

- *The critical literary approach*

According to Maley (1989a) in this approach we focus on the literariness of the texts including such features as the plot, characterization, motivation, value, psychology, background, etc. Adopting this approach we should be cautious that our learners should have already mastered the intermediate levels and are currently at a level above that. Furthermore, the students should have the knowledge of literary conventions.

- *The stylistic approach*

Maley (1989a, p.11) states that in this approach we focus on literature as 'text'. This approach is closely in tandem with what EFL/ESL teachers need for their language classes. Contrary to the first approach here we have description and analysis of language prior to making interpretations.

4.2Carter and Long's (1991)

- *Language-based Model*

As the name speaks for itself, this model mainly considers literature for language development and awareness purposes. In other words, in this model the aesthetic aspect of literature is achieved only through the linguistic and discoursal quality of literature (Lazar, 1993). However, care should be taken into account not to let the linguistic facet vitiate the pleasure of reading literature (Lazar, 1993). This approach to teaching literature is similar to what Maley (1989a) calls the *stylistic approach.*

- *Literature as Content or Culture Model*

In this model, literature is an ideal vehicle for presenting the cultural notions of the language such as the history, literary theories, theory of genres, biography of the authors (Carter & Long, 1991; Lazar, 1993), geography, custom, politics, art, etc.

- *Literature as Personal Growth or Enrichment*

Finally in this approach personal experience is capitalized upon as a way to engage the students in literary works (Carter & Long, 1991; Lazar, 1993). Here the learners are not to churn out the new words or solely work out on the linguistic features, but cherish the *literary experience* which is associated with the learners' own real-life experience.

4.3Amer's (2003) approaches to teaching L1 narrative texts in EFL/ESL literature

- *The Story Grammar Approach (SGA)*

This approach is based on the idea that there is an interaction between the reader and the text. In other words the reader gets aware of the text structure. It is closely associated with genre-awareness in textual analysis and how this knowledge is conducive to a better understanding. Knowing the difference between two different text types, e.g. narrative vs. expository will help the learners make better guesses about the text types and how ideas are developed in a text.

- *Reader Response Approach (RRA)*

This approach is based on a premise of teaching literature for literature's sake not for language learning and development purposes. It is similar to Maley's (1989a) *critical literary approach*. According to Ali (1994) this approach is rooted in constructivism where each individual constructs his/her own version of reality when

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encountered with the text. In other words, each individual respond differently to a single text. Therefore, we can have multiple interpretations rather a single correct interpretation of a text according to RRA (Amer, 2003). As cited in Amer (2003) there are different ways to implement RRA in literature classes including:

- *Reading Logs* (Benton and Fox, 1985; Carlisle, 2000);
- *Response Journal*(Sheridan, 1991);
- W*riting Prompts* (Pritchard, 1993);
- C*ritical Questioning and Writing* (Probst, 1994; Hirvela, 1996);
- S*elf-questioning* (Davis,1989);
- *Role-play, Drama and Letter-writing* (Elliot, 1990; Baxter, 1999); and
- *Rewriting Narratives from Another Character's Point of View* (Oster, 1989)

As Amer (2003) argues though SGA favors the cognitive aspect of the learners and RRA favors the affective aspect, these two approaches should not be considered as totally separate but they should both be used judiciously depending on the language ability level of the students.

4.4 Van's Approaches (2009)

• *New criticism*

In this approach literature is conceived devoid of its author's intentions, and the contextual factors such as the political, social, and historical background of the text. Texts used for analysis in this approach are usually adopted from Old literature which contains long texts irrelevant to the learners' immediate needs.

• *Structuralism*

This approach generally focuses on the linguistic and structural aspect of a text. In other words, the concern here is more the form of the text. This approach has a scientific approach to literature.

• *Stylistics*

In this approach aesthetic experience is achieved through the linguistic knowledge. In this approach the conventions of language are treated.

• *Reader-Response*

In this approach the reader's interactions with the text result in the interpretation. In other words, the interpretation is achieved through the interaction between the text and the reader.

• *Language-based*

In this approach literature is contacted through a set of activities including cloze procedures, brainstorming, summarizing, jigsaw reading, etc.

• *Critical Literacy*

It is rooted in critical philosophy and critical pedagogy especially Freire's critical pedagogy. The main objective of this approach to literature teaching is to foster the learners' critical awareness and hence not take things at face value. Learners should acknowledge that there is always a hidden meaning behind the text which is controlled by social and political reasons.

4.5Timucin (2001) and Savvidou's (2004) Integrated Approach

Apart from the above approaches, Timucin (2001) and Savvidou (2004) propose an integrated approach to teaching literature where some or all of the above-mentioned approaches are reconciled in a systematic way. It seems that this alternative approach can be very promising for EFL/ESL classes. Timucin (2001) adopted an integrated approach comprising language-based approach and stylistics in the Turkish EFL context. He investigated the students' attitudes towards this integrated approach and how much it agrees with their tastes. The results of his study indicated that there was a significant relationship between the methodological approach the researcher adopted and the students' level of motivation, involvement, and appreciation of the literary texts. Savvidou (2004) offers the following as the stages in her integrated model:

Stage 1: Preparation and Anticipation
Stage 2: Focusing
Stage 3: Preliminary Response
Stage 4: Working at it – I
Stage 5: Working at it – II
Stage 6: Interpretation and Personal Response

Each of these stages is conducive to the betterment of teaching literature in EFL/ESL classes. According to Duff and Maley (1991) as cited in Savvidou (2004), there are three main rationales namely linguistic, methodological and motivational for adopting such an integrated approach to teaching literature. A more recent model for integrating literature in language classes is proposed by Khatib, Derakhshan, & Rezaei (in press). They provided how

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task-based language teaching stages can be applied to literature as an input for language classes through a "Whole Literary Involvement" experience.

5. Conclusion

This paper discussed the position of literature in EFL/ESL classes. Both advantages and drawbacks of using literature for language teaching and learning purposes were deliberated and carefully reflected upon. The authors of the present paper believe that literature, in spite of some weak points it might have as any language teaching material might possess, provides a motivating drive for language learning and teaching due to its spectacular features not readily found in any other texts. Finally, in order to practically establish these merits, some of the main methodological approaches to teaching literature were put forward. Relevant practical classroom techniques can be discerned from these models.

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