

Teaching Language through Literature in ESL/EFL Classes: A Critical Study in Utilitarian Perspectives

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EFL/ESL teaching methodologies have witnessed many changes as a result of continued discussion, exploration and research. There is greater awareness and understanding of concepts, such as learner-centredness and task-based learning. Teachers have realized the need to encourage learner participation in many ways including classroom activities. The rapid changes in business, media and communications have made English the preferred global language. This has resulted in a more positive attitude in learners towards learning English to enhance their employment opportunities as well as their social standing, especially in countries where English is a second or foreign language. Emerging new technologies have also added to the repertoire of methods and techniques of teaching and learning ESL/EFL. In sequences, the field of second and foreign language teaching has seen drastic paradigm shifts and is constantly in a state of dynamic change, with new curriculum frameworks being implemented (including competency based, genre based and content based models), English being introduced at primary rather than secondary level, and teachers being asked to consider innovations (like multiple intelligences, cooperative learning, learner-centredness and task-based instruction) (Widdowson, 1983; Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Richards, 2001; Richards and Renandya, 2002; Richards and Schmidt, 2002).

On the other hand, there has been very little change over the past several decades in the field of teaching English literature. Current practices with regard to the teaching of literature to students of English major predominantly seem to encourage content-based and memory-oriented study of literature. A positive development, however, has been the place conceded for literature in an ESL/EFL classroom, although grudgingly. Literature is now viewed as one of the authentic resources that can be used in the language classroom along with other resources. As a token of encouragement ESL/EFL teachers now have access to a large number of publications that provide useful classroom techniques for using literature.

It is against this backdrop, the aim of this paper is to trace the major developments relating to the teaching of English literature, to explore the theory and practice in this field, and to examine the dynamics of change, if any. This paper attempts to examine the evolution of literature in the language classroom, then gives account of some reasons that justify its use in language classes. The paper further intends to reveal the mantras of how literature may be used in language classes to develop student's knowledge of English. Teaching language through literature calls for active involvement of both the teacher and the taught. Here, the focus is on teaching literature and the medium is the language. The context and form of a literary work brings forth meaningful discussion and enjoyment. The paper, in this context, aims to discuss the importance of teaching literature in the language teaching and learning process, the

question of choosing an appropriate literary text and some utilitarian strategies for teaching literature by creating an awareness of linguistic possibilities and sensibility. In addition, the paper describes various approaches to teaching literature and provides a rationale for an integrated approach to teaching literature in the language classroom based on the premise that literature is language and language can indeed be literary.

Key words: *Communicative competence, content, context, English as second language, English as a foreign language, innovative and creative teaching, language, literature, pedagogy, strategy, stylistic approach, teaching methodologies*

Introduction

There has been an overwhelming upsurge of interest since 1980s onwards in the integration of language and literature for pedagogical purposes in EFL/ESL context. Large number of propitious works by linguists such as Maley, Paul Simpson, Lazar, J Collie and Slater, Ronald Carter, John McRay came up, promulgating different terms of integration for language and literature. Some of them focus on 'language in literature' (Michael Toolan) while others such as Mackey, Maley, Ronald Carter, John MacRay and Lazar use the term 'language through literature'. There are other scholars like Paul Simpson and Mick Short who use the term 'language through literature' but in fact mean 'language in literature.' Such a variety of approaches attests to the fact that the matter seems to be a complex pedagogical issue. For example, in the concept 'teaching literature through language' the emphasis falls on literature rather than language, and the pedagogical approach that it presupposes, is the linguistic approach or the stylistic approach to literature. Although any such accounting cannot ignore the meaning, it is not its express aim to present an interpretation. This is in sharp contrast with what a literary critic does, who takes interpretation as his aim. He is interested in finding out what aesthetic experience or perception of reality a literary text is attempting to convey. And, his observation of how the language system is used will serve only as a means to this end, i.e., the interpretation. The stylistic approach, on the contrary, mediates between linguistics and literary criticism. It involves the application of linguistic tools to the interpretation of the artistic effects or the 'reality' of a literary text. It is concerned about relating the linguistic structures of a work to the aesthetic effects that it produces. So far as teaching language through literature is concerned, the emphasis is on language rather than literature, which clearly defines the status of literature in the language teaching programme.

A host of scholars have dwelt upon the enormous advantages of using literature as a resource of language learning. Maley (1989, p.12) for instance, gives seven reasons for using literature as a potent resource in the language classrooms. Literature, in his opinion, has universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy and suggestive power and ambiguity. Collie and Slater (1990, p.3) mention four reasons for using literature as a resource for language teaching. Literature is 'an authentic material' It is not created for illustrating a grammatical example. Each literary work is a world in itself, self-contained. The language of literature is highly contextualized, imbedded in the situations and the imaginative world that it seeks to recreate. Literature promotes cultural enrichment, language

enrichment and also personal involvement. Because of these advantages, Maley too in his famous article "Down from the Pedestal: Literature as Resource" by implication exhorts the teachers of literature to come down from the high pedestal of a scholar unraveling the hidden treasures of literature and to employ learner-centred strategies and avoid the teacher-centred approach. Amid large number of advocates of literature based language curriculum there are some dissenting voices too. Linguists like Topping are in favour of excluding literature from ESL and EFL curriculum because literature has a complex structure; it does not conform to standard grammatical rules, and includes remote cultural perspectives. Charles Blanchard thinks that 'the study of literature is a luxury that cannot be indulged during the limited amount of time allocated to English.' Some of the linguists, however, do not reject literature altogether. They question the efficacy for certain levels of language proficiency of learners. Leech, for instance, believes that there are many literary texts in prose or poetry that are written in a language which includes vocabulary, grammatical structure, and syntax considered to be too complicated to be incorporated into the syllabus for learners at lower levels. These learners may come across rhetorical devices such as complex metaphors and symbols, which they may not be able to decode. Jonathan Culler also objects to using literature at lower levels and attributes the difficulties of lower level learners to their lack of literary competence at this stage. Hence these linguists prefer the conventional ELT programmes to the literature based programme. But linguists like MacRay think that the conventional ELT programmes beyond primary level of course, though targeting 'fluency and accuracy' (McRae, 2010) are unable to provide a greater 'linguistic competence', that is, according to McRae, an ability in the learner not only to use the target language with force and effectiveness but also 'the ability to think...and work freely within its language system', if not the ability to feel and dream, which is special prerogative of native speakers.

Historical Evolution: A Glance

Literature and language are closely related and this is a dominating fact none can deny. Literature is constituted by language and it represents one of the most recurrent uses of language. Language and linguistic analysis can also be employed to access literature from the learner's point of view. Brumfit and Carter (1986, p.1) already emphasized the role of literature as "an ally of language". This technique is by no means novel, since literature has been a widely used teaching tool in different language teaching methods. However, here the perspective changes giving more relevance to the literary text as a work of art. First of all, let us go over the changing role of literature in the tradition of second language teaching to end with an account of its current situation within the communicative approach. In the grammar translation method, literature was the central component. Literary texts of the target language were read and translated, used as examples of good writing and "illustrations of the grammatical rules" (Duff and Maley, 1990, p.3). The focus of this teaching method was on form, on learning the rules of grammar and the lexical items as they appeared in the text. There was no literary interest, nor interest on content. After this method fell in disuse, literary texts also went forgotten for teachers of second languages.

For the structural approaches to language teaching, literature was discredited as a tool, because it represented the old tradition. The functional-notional method ignored literature, because in this method the importance rested with communication and the focus was to put forth authentic language samples. Literature was not considered either to have a communicative function or to be authentic example of language use. Nonetheless, in the last decade or so the interest in literature as one of the most valuable language teaching resources available has revived remarkably (Duff and Maley, 1990, p.3). This is in consonance with the new currents within the communicative approach that envisage in reading literature the perfect realization of their principles, namely developing communicative competence, that is teaching learners to communicate in the second language and accounting for real, authentic communicative situations (Sanz and Fernández, 1997). Literature reading is, no doubt, a communicative activity. Many authors, among them Brumfit and Carter (1986) and Lazar (1993), reject the idea of the existence of a specific literary language and claim that the language used in literary texts is common language with a high concentration of linguistic features like metaphors, similes, poetic lexis, unusual syntactic patterns, etc. (see Lazar, 1993, p.7 for a more detailed account of the characteristics of the literary use of language).

Key Issues in Teaching Language through Literature

The following striking issues pertaining to the teaching of language through literature emerge from the deliberation of teachers, discussion among teacher educators and researchers:

- A. Objectives of teaching literature
- B. Perspectives of teaching literature
- C. Role of literature in language teaching
- D. Approaches to teaching literature
- E. Text selection and strategy
- F. implementation of non-native varieties of literature
- G. Evaluation of students' learning

A. Objectives of teaching literature

The goals of teaching literature, according to the teachers surveyed by Akyel and Yalcin (1990, p.175), are: exposing students to literature to achieve a broader educational and cultural goal, and developing 'literary competence'. There is no mention of developing language competence. It is either assumed to exist in students a priori or expected to result as a by-product of literary studies. At the tertiary level, however, the goal of teaching literature seems to be to transmit the cultural and social values embodied in literary works considered to be the literary heritage, a goal more valid for teaching literature in the L1 situation. The problem with this goal is that the term "culture" refers to manifold concepts and experiences of cultural life in diverse settings (Eagleton, 2000). There has been a shift towards a conception of 'culture' which is more open to the variety of cultures and social existence (Pieper 2006). At the tertiary level, literary studies have been influenced by critical theory and sociology of literature.

Literature can only be understood if the student has 'literary competence'. It has not been easy to define the exact nature of this competence, which refers to the ability of a good reader of literature: "the fundamental ability of a good reader of literature is the ability to generalize from the given text to either other aspects of the literary tradition, or personal or social significances outside literature" (Brumfit, 1985, p.108). The process of reading is a process of meaning-creation by integrating one's own needs, understanding and expectations with a written text" (ibid, p.119). The meaning of a text is conferred on it 'inter-subjectively', i.e. as a group of professional critics, academics, or the community of readers (Fowler, 1986, pp.174-180). In recent times there has been a discussion of the use of competence frameworks and statements for describing achievements in literary study (Fleming, 2006). The goal of teaching literature should, therefore, be to develop in the learners an adequate capacity for responding personally to literary texts, and interpreting and appreciating them appropriately.

According to Collie and Slater (1990:3), there are four main reasons which lead a language teacher to use literature in the classroom. These are valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement. In addition to these four main reasons, universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy and suggestive power and ambiguity are other factors requiring the use of literature as a powerful resource in the second language classroom context.

B. Perspectives of teaching literature

Literature can be viewed in at least three different ways: literature as text, literature as messages, and literature as discourse. At one extreme, the linguist treats literature as text by drawing attention primarily to how a piece of literature exemplifies the language system; at the other extreme, the literary critic treats literature as messages and searches for underlying significance or the essential artistic vision the literary text embodies. There is a third and middle view of literature as discourse that shows specifically how literary texts function as a form of communication (Widdowson, 1975, p.6).

Literary discourse, an important aspect of literature-teaching, is distinguished from other types of normal discourse in several ways. In conventional discourse, i.e. day-to-day communication, one counts on 'schematic knowledge' of contextual meaning and seeks to get some kind of convergence of these 'schemata' or frames of reference. Literary schemata, on the other hand, are created internally, within the literature itself, and are not projected from outside the text (Widdowson, 1983, p.30)

Secondly, there can be no shared meaning in literature, because we cannot refer to anything outside literature as a point of reference. Literature has no referential truth value, but only representational meaning – it is representative of meaning and does not refer to any meaning outside of itself. This implies that literary discourse is dissociated and dislocated in that sense from any normal social context, and therefore requires the reader to create his or her own schematic information obtained through interpretative procedures different from those required for making sense of texts in the normal reading process.

Thirdly, the writer of literature is in a way deliberately trying to keep the reader in suspense, so the reader has to be constantly searching for meaning. The literary writer creates realities which engage people's interest and attention (and interpretative abilities) without their participating in those realities in the 'real-world' sense. In essence, the writer of literature is in the problem-setting business, and the reader of literature is in the business of problem-solving par excellence.

C. Role of literature in language teaching

Literature was removed from most language syllabuses as linguistics increasingly became the point of reference for language teaching. Linguists and applied linguists dismissed literature as irrelevant to language curricula because it did not seem to be down-to-earth and practical (i.e., based on flights of fancy and imagination), or related to the everyday world of the language users and hence did not offer good models for language learners. This was regrettable and literature was banished from language curricula as a result of such "hasty decisions about language teaching methodology", based on "very facile grounds, ill-considered grounds" (Widdowson, 1983, p.34). Gradually, however, it was realized that, if literature of its nature could provide a resource for developing in learners an important ability to use knowledge of the language for the interpretation of literature as discourse, then it ought to be one element of the language curriculum. In other words, literature is an authentic discourse, readily available to be exploited in the language classroom in a variety of ways. This is not to imply that a 'literary approach' to language teaching should replace other approaches like the functional or structural approach.

At present, literature is not treated as a separate and optional entity in the language classroom, but as an integral and vital part of it. This is the result of consistent efforts of applied linguists for over three decades (including but not limited to, Brumfit 1982, 1985; Gower and Pierson 1986; Rodger 1983; Sage 1987; Maley 1989, 1993, 1995; Carter et al. 1989; Brumfit and Carter 1986; Short 1996; Collie and Slater 1987; McRae 1991; Carter and McRae 1996; Carter et al. 1997; and Falvey and Kennedy 1997). This is evident in the integration of literature with skills work, the use of media with literature and the way in which recent developments in understanding discourse (both spoken and written) are drawn upon (Paran, 2000, p.87).

Some underlying issues emerge from the literature on the language-literature interface in relation to using literature for language teaching (Paran, 2000). First, the role of literature within the mainstream of EFL/ESL is still not firmly established. In spite of the sincere and commendable efforts of the applied linguists mentioned above, there are those who argue against a special and specific function for literature in language teaching and learning, dismissing claims for such a specific role for literature as serving merely an external justification for learning modern languages, an educational rationale tied up with a historical tradition, suggesting that such extraneous goals, aspirations and traditions be abandoned (Edmondson, 1997).

That the role of literature in language teaching is still not firmly established is also evident in a number of ways. For instance, the fear of using literature in the language classroom is still prevalent

(Bouman, 1983; Paran, 1998). The number of hours devoted to literature on university courses for English majors is cut down, thus minimizing or reducing its importance. A majority of EFL/ESL teachers are not convinced that literature is a useful and integral element within language teaching and learning. Many teachers seem to have some resistance to, or misgivings about, incorporating literature in English language teaching (Falvey and Kennedy, 1997; Paran, 2000). Thus, there is a need to view both language teaching and the part that literature has to play within it as part of the whole educational process and endeavour, and not apart from it (Paran, 2000).

A second major issue is the understanding of what 'literature in language learning' actually means. At one extreme, it is understood as the transmission of knowledge about literature and the literary canon; at the other extreme, literature is given no special status, but it is used as just a resource like any other texts to further students' communicative competence. Between these extreme positions, there are those who interpret it as the study of literature as literature, with a focus on developing students' literary competence; there are also those who 'use' literature (rather than 'teach' it), but nevertheless acknowledge its special status within the language. It is thus clear that 'literature in language learning' is interpreted and understood in different ways (Paran, 2000, p.76). There is also a "tension . . . between an instrumental view of literature as beneficial to the learners' language and a more general, humanistic view of the role of literature (including literature in a foreign language) within a public education system"

The third major issue is the methodology used with literary texts and its role in language learning. With the explosion of interest in the use of literature in EFL/ESL teaching, there has been a corresponding explosion of interest and enthusiasm in the use of language teaching techniques and methods in teaching literature. Such overenthusiastic attempts have, however, come in for sharp criticism. For example, the use of stylistics on literary texts within EFL has been questioned (Gower, 1986); techniques like jigsaw reading cannot be automatically applied to literary texts, which are representational by nature (McRae, 1991, p.111); the use of cloze technique, specifically with poems, has been rejected as 'lexicide and goblin-spotting' (Mackay, 1992).

D. Approaches to teaching literature

Despite these sporadic efforts, however, the teaching of English literature at the undergraduate level as the Literature Major has remained essentially the same throughout this long period – teacher-centred and teacher-directed, the literary texts being presented to students through lectures, summaries and paraphrases, with little or no involvement of students in understanding and appreciating those texts on their own. The situation, in the past, was not different. Traditionally, the language teacher was educated in its literature, who often forced particular works of literature on students who were not yet ready for them and attempted transmission of irrelevant information about books and authors, i.e. knowledge about literature, and has nothing to do with the ability to profit from reading the literature itself (Pattison, 1963).

The teaching of English literature to students majoring in English, however, has seen very little change over the past few decades. In many classrooms, the teaching of literature has remained unchanged with emphasis on teacher-centred and text-directed approaches and methods (e.g., lectures; period and genre surveys; biographical summaries; teacher's explication and 'critical analyses' of canonical texts; stereotyped exam questions requiring stereotyped answers). Teachers continue to teach literary texts "as finished products, to be unilaterally decoded, analyzed, and explained" (Kramsch, 1985, p. 356; cited in Harper 1988).

Such an approach tends to minimize learner involvement, engagement and participation, and undermines the value of learners' responses to literature as readers in their own right, resulting in frustration and a lack of interest and motivation on the part of learners. Most of our undergraduate students also have limited linguistic and critical-analytical skills for responding to literary texts as works of art and for articulating their experiences of reading such texts when asked to do so. For them, the course in English literature may become a "painful lesson in deciphering" (Santoni, 1972, p. 434; cited in Harper 1988).

The methodology has been confined almost to lectures. Classroom teaching usually consists of a long monologue by the teacher on a piece of literature, this monologue taking the form of the teacher primarily attempting to explain the meaning of the text (often several meanings!) preceded by a 'brief' introduction to the author and his works. Teachers are not adequately trained to teach literature in innovative and creative ways. The teacher may be much admired for his erudition or scholarship, but his lectures are little understood. As a result, students rely almost exclusively on guidebooks and resort to rote learning. In other words, there has been very little reading and study of literature with clearly spelt out objectives and methodology.

Teachers who belong to the 'literature establishment' wish to follow teacher-centred activities, such as informative background lectures, reading the text (mostly aloud) in class, paraphrasing the content, presenting the critical views of established scholars and critics, leading and loaded questions for 'understanding' the text, and requiring students to produce text-related essays (Akyel and Yalcin, 1990, pp.176-177). This 'old' or traditional method of teaching English literature as a body of received knowledge to be learnt largely through the lecture mode is frequently criticised as being too product-centred, tending to impose the meaning of texts (established by academics and professional critics) on the student (Elliott, 1990, p.192).

The alternative linguistic approach to literature, i.e. stylistics, it is claimed, will help students 'appreciate' literature more, because 'linguistic analysis' will help make students' 'intuitions' about literary texts more conscious, which will in turn help students talk about texts more articulately and convincingly (Carter, 1982; Cummings and Simmons, 1983). This approach to literature through stylistics has also come in for criticism similar to the one on the traditional teacher-centred approach: stylistics also tends to focus narrowly on the words on the page as a self-enclosed system, requiring complex linguistic analysis (which is beyond the ability of most EFL/ESL students) for discovering a fixed meaning (Elliott, 1990, p.192). Stylistic activity, instead of aiding students' reading as it is often claimed, may

actually impede it. It may run counter to reading, impeding students' reading potential. Analysis can help only if it is totally subservient to reading, as a supplementary tool that helps greater understanding and promotes better reading. "If we are talking about helping students to read, we need to look at what we are talking about in the classroom from the teacher's, not the academic's point of view" (Gower, 1986).

It thus becomes clear that neither the traditional approach (transmission of knowledge about literature) nor stylistics approach (linguistic analysis) directly helps students develop literary competence, because both of them tend to impose meaning from without, the literary critic's or the linguist's meaning, as the case may be. Literary competence, on the other hand, comes from the student's ability to confer meaning from within. It is therefore essential that the approach to literature and the classroom activities should help students with the process of developing this ability of a good reader of literature discussed earlier (Brumfit, 1985). The essential requirement for an effective approach to literature from this point of view is to create conditions for students to discover the meaning of texts from within themselves, develop genuine personal response to them, define and articulate their response, and negotiate their meaning as a group (i.e., intersubjectively), rather than having to receive meaning imposed from without (Elliott, 1990).

Having recognized the need to focus on the student, literature teachers are increasingly using techniques and classroom activities associated with a communicative approach to language teaching that provide possibilities for adopting a student-centred approach, such as pair work, group work, problem-solving, information gap, attitude gap and opinion gap activities as a supplement to, and sometimes instead of, the traditional lectures, tutorials and seminar discussions (Mackay, 1992, p.199). Such techniques and activities will help to foster a greater level of interaction between the student-reader and text, and between and among students. Such interactions, which are of great importance, are precisely absent in the traditional teacher-centred, lecture-dominated literature classroom. The activities should get the learners involved at the procedural level of making sense of literary discourse through interaction of some sort and get the learners to relate this procedural activity to their knowledge of the language and of the world. Activities presenting a piece of literature as a problem to be solved provide plenty of scope for discussion and interaction among learners because there is no single right solution to the problem presented (Widdowson, 1983). This implies that the development of communicative competence should be the last aim of any language activity. The relevance of literature in this approach is, on the one hand, that it transmits messages. It is a way of communication between the author and the reader. On the other hand, literature pays special attention to form, and this helps the learner reflect about language, another principle and goal of the communicative method. It is important that the learners develop their linguistic competence by learning how to express meanings in English, but also that they develop their communicative competence, that will allow them to transmit messages, to use the language to interact, to communicate with other people, which is, in the end, the basic function of language. The use of literature as a teaching tool is legitimated by the facts mentioned above, namely, because it provides with authentic linguistic (also sociolinguistic) and cultural material,

and because it motivates the learners to interact.

The prevalent communicative language teaching principles emphatically suggests that literature is an easily exploitable resource for language instruction. The great potential of literature as a context for pleasurable as well as useful language practice lies in its intrinsic appeal to youthful creativity, its inclusion of all the four basic language skills and more, and its wide scope for collaborative engagement among the students, in addition to individual interaction with the texts.

Whatever strategies a teacher adopts in the class, the rooted aim is that students gain a fuller understanding of the text and have linguistically and conceptually prepare themselves to study it for interpretation and evaluation. Using the strategies discussed above, students learn how to make predictions and check them against the details in the given text. They also learn how to derive meaning of a text and form a semantic chain from the key words, examine how language is used to describe a setting and create desired effects, analyze how to assess them, and also find out ways of transferring the text and reconstructing its specific and literal meaning. Thus, with awakened language sensitivity and improved literary insight, they gain the ability to read a literary work critically as a creative expression with aesthetic sensibility. In short, they have learned “literature through language”.

E. Text selection and strategy

One of the challenges teachers face is regarding the selection of a suitable literary text for the students. The types of literary texts that can be used are plenty. However, a teacher should be extremely careful while choosing the text that he wants to deal with in the classroom. The needs of the students, their motivation, interest, and cultural background should be taken into consideration while selecting a literary work for the classroom teaching. First of all, the teacher should enjoy the text that he/she chooses. It is also important to select a text of an appropriate length. Texts need to be appropriate to the level of the students' comprehension. Shorter texts may be easier to use within the class time available, but longer texts provide more contextual details, and development of character and plot. According to Sage (1987, p.87) lengthy texts might pose “the question of how to maintain students' interest”. Extracts from a novel, abridged versions of a play or a novel and selected poems can be used in the classroom.

It is in league with this fact it is safe to opine that the literature syllabus, meant for undergraduate students as well as advanced students majoring in English, has been hitherto spelt out only in terms of texts and historical periods; learners' needs and interests are neither documented nor considered at the time of preparation of English literature syllabuses. If literary texts are to be used successfully in the language classroom, they must be carefully selected and approached in a manner which promotes an aesthetic interaction between the reader and the text (Gower, 1986).

Despite their limitations in the sense that they are supposed to teach only the prescribed topics/materials/texts, most teachers (or curriculum planners) choose a text because it is ‘good’ or ‘great literature’ and because they like it. Much of the confusion in the selection of literary texts in an

ESL/EFL situation stems from a failure to be clear about the goal and purpose of literature in the curriculum, i.e., whether literature is to be used for developing the language skills or for developing students' literary competence. A conflation of these purposes in an ESL/EFL situation will result in students not really benefiting from their exposure to literature because the texts would have been selected for the wrong purpose.

The selection problems are likely to be more tricky if the level of students in terms of their language attainment is low (Widdowson, 1983, p.31). The texts chosen should expose students to good works without frightening them or putting them off literature altogether (Hirvela and Boyle, 1988, p.181). They should demonstrate fundamental aspects of literature, such as setting, theme, plot development, characterization and point of view. They should be contemporary, accessible and meaningful; they should also have direct relevance to the students' situation/life. Learners will be most motivated and most open to language input (even through literature), when their emotions, feelings and attitudes are engaged (Tomlinson, 1986, p.34). Texts that are likely to engage the interests of the learners (Widdowson 1983:32) and their attention and feelings (Gower, 1986, p.128) should be chosen. Texts which are extremely difficult on either a linguistic or cultural level will have few benefits (Vincent and Carter, 1986, p.214). In an EFL/ESL situation, one would also look for literature which is in some sense "consistent with the traditions that the learners are familiar with" (Widdowson, 1983, p. 32).

In other words, there should be a balanced selection of texts that cater for the linguistic level and interests of students on a variety of themes that can be exploited for group activities. There should also be a planned approach to the selection of a variety of texts suitable for out-of-class or 'extensive reading' (Moody, 1971; Hafiz and Tudor, 1989; Akyel and Yalcin, 1990). Such an exposure to literature outside the classroom will provide opportunities for sustained, rapid, self-directed reading and broadening students' appreciation of literature (Akyel and Yalcin, 1990, p.178). Encouraging students to read literary texts, especially fiction, at an early stage will help develop stable habits of reading in their spare time and contribute to reading literacy. Extensive reading of fiction will also lead to automatization of word recognition and extensive textual knowledge on a general scale (Pieper 2006).

Literary texts are usually chosen to familiarize students with representative masterpieces of British and American literature, often referred to as the 'canon' (Akyel and Yalcin 1990). The tendency towards canonical texts still seems to prevail, as shown in the National Curriculum in Britain, which stresses the 'English literary heritage' (Goodwyn and Findlay 2002). This is generally to be expected since the introduction to genres and to literary history will rely on exemplary texts. The canon has also been reintroduced where central assessments take place (e.g., Germany) (Pieper, 2006). The emphasis on the canon has, however, been often criticized. The canon of the heritage of a particular nation, such as Britain, often seems exclusive and hence inappropriate, especially in an ESL/EFL setting. Instead of following an explicit canon, criteria which reflect the learning process and its purposes should inform and direct text selection (Pieper, 2006).

The most important criterion is of course to select texts that stimulate interest in the students.

According to Brumfit (1986, p.32), “of equal importance, however, is the choice of texts that lend themselves to student discussion and personal experience”. Different themes will, of course, have different degrees of popularity at different levels. For example, a play like Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, with its theme of youthful passion, might interest students a lot. However, a text chosen should be culturally significant and appropriate. This is especially important while choosing texts for those students from the Gulf region.

F. Implementations of non-native varieties of literature

In many EFL/ESL situations, the English Major students, a vast majority of whom have low proficiency in English, are exposed to challenging and often unsuitable canonical texts, which are beyond their understanding and linguistic competence. The teacher, therefore, resorts to lecturing, explicating and translating the texts, and dictating notes. The current practices tend to promote content-based and memory-oriented study of literature; examinations also seek to test students’ memory of reproducible content (Carter and Long, 1990). The inevitable result of all of these is that the students hardly feel the necessity to have a direct encounter with the texts – they are passive listeners, and are not encouraged to react to what they read, or think critically, or do any original writing on the texts.

In this context, the necessity of knowing students’ needs and attitudes towards studying literature in an ESL/EFL setting should be considered. Student’s attitudes towards studying literature and their literary competence are not given due importance in literature curriculum design, and an analysis of learner needs is usually neglected (Hirvela and Boyle, 1988; Akyel and Yalcin, 1990). Students have many fears and anxieties about studying literature, especially poetry – poetry was found to be most difficult, problematic and intimidating. These fears are based partly on their lack of background or previous exposure to poetry, and partly on a certain mystique about literature (Hirvela and Boyle, 1988). Student attitudes, along with teacher goals and suitable texts, will make the course satisfying to both students and teachers.

In countries where non-native variety of English is popularly used as a second language and widely spoken with all zeal, wider functions can be served by the use of literary works written in those countries (e.g., India and Africa). The use of such texts will make it easier for the teacher to enhance students’ awareness of their own society, their sense of self-identity, their communicative competence within their community and their command of the standard language itself. A pedagogy which recognizes that people learn things best when they want to learn them may justify using teenage novels and even pulp fiction (Ronnqvist and Sell, 1994). It is here quite appropriate to cite India where we have prescribed poems, stories, prose-pieces, novels, etc. written by our own authors, primarily exhibiting and illustrating Indian culture, social realities and traditions. These India English texts, incorporated with British English literature and American English Literature have proved several advantages, especially this concentrated step makes students enjoy and understand texts fuller, and because of their active involvement during learning this also prompts to enhance their language skills to their high

expectations.

There is a strong case for incorporating multicultural literature including postcolonial literature in the literature curriculum. Multicultural literature refers to world literatures either originally written in English or translated into English (including minority and immigrant literature); postcolonial literature is defined more narrowly as writing by the peoples formerly colonized by Britain (e.g., Africa, India) (the term 'commonwealth literature' is also used), but much of it is also of interest and relevance to peoples colonized by other European powers like France, Portugal and Spain.

There is a possibility that multicultural literature may be trivialized, or misused to reinforce misconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices rather than to promote understanding of the 'self' and 'other', if teachers are not oriented to teach such texts (Cai, 2002; cited in Mohammadzadeh, 2009). The benefits of inter-mixing multicultural literature, however, are many. Students will be introduced to an exciting and challenging range of non-canonical world literature, and to the relationship of culture, history and politics to the study of literature as literature. This exposure will help students develop not only a critical understanding of literary variations, but also a better appreciation and critical awareness of regional and global varieties of English (Mohammadzadeh, 2009).

G. Evaluation of students' learning

The teaching and study of literature are largely exam oriented and the evaluation of literary learning has only been emphasizing rote memory and reproduction of borrowed critical opinions with little or no attention paid to students' spoken skills. The wash back effect is negative. The focus is not on learning and liberal education, but solely on passing examinations and acquiring a meaningless and valueless paper qualification.

Comprehension of literary texts is often assessed with general text-comprehension tasks. Attempts are sometimes made to assess students' understanding of isolated features, such as metaphor, of narrative structures, or of genre specifics (Fleming, 2006). It is more common for assessment tasks to rely on exemplary texts where students can make use of their acquired knowledge and skills. Conventional tests, based on content, context, paraphrasing, searching hidden meaning, description, evaluation, are surely to be retained, but not at the cost of ruining language exposures. Such conventional tests, in my objective estimation, should be supplemented, if not replaced, by others which are obviously more language-based, i.e. dealing with general comprehension, textual focus and personal response. The assessment methods should make students go back to the text and the uses of language in it as the centre of their experiences (Carter and Long, 1990) and within the classroom, the teacher needs to devise activities that will assist in the process of developing the skill that might be measured finally in the literary essay. Assessment tasks, to be effective, should use literary texts which presuppose little background or contextual knowledge (Pieper, 2006).

Reasons for Using Literature in the Language Classroom

Literature is rooted in a language and language gets life through literature. So Literature and language are closely interconnected. Literature is an important window letting one to have a view of the world and realizing the expression of culture by means of sharing individual or collective life experience. Though the world of a novel, play, or short story, for instance, is an imaginary one yet it presents a setting in which characters from many social backgrounds are described. A reader can discover the way the characters in such literary works see the world outside i.e. their thoughts, feelings, customs, traditions, possessions; what they buy, believe in, fear, enjoy; how they speak and behave in different settings. This world in a literary text can help the second/foreign language learner to feel for the codes and preoccupations that shape a real society through visual literacy. Literary texts provide aesthetic, intellectual and emotional pleasure. Because of its symbolic density literature provides much impetus for language learning. Literature provides ample opportunities to develop students' interpretative power and it can familiarize students with many features of the written language. Study of literature is not merely concerned with skill acquisition. According to Lazar (1993), "Literature should be used with students because it is motivating stimulus for language acquisition, students enjoy it, and it is a fun, it is found in many syllabuses and the like." Literature, a convenient source of content for a course in foreign language, provides motivating materials for language teaching. According to Carter and Long (1991), "Literature is a legitimate and valuable resource for language teaching."

In view of all this contention, we could argue that there are three main criteria that justify the use of literature as a second language teaching tool (Duff and Maley, 1990, p.6). In the first place, the linguistic criterion defends that literature should be used in language teaching, because it provides the learner with genuine, authentic samples of language, and also with real samples of a wide range of styles, text types and registers. It is extremely important for foreign language learners to be trained in a variety of registers, styles and genres and to be able to discern the function of each of them. These different manifestations of language are not only distinctive linguistically, but also socially, they all have a social communicative function (Sanz and Fernández, 1997). This has to do with the notion of adequacy. It refers to the fact that a message needs to be linguistically correct and situationally appropriate, as regards not only its content, but also its form.

The second criterion is methodological and refers to the fact that a literary text has multiple interpretations, these generate different opinions among the learners and this leads to real, motivated interaction with the text, with the fellow students and with the teacher (Widdowson, 1983). Interaction is one of the bases of the communicative approach which defends that it is by interacting, by communicating, that the language is learned (Sanz and Fernández, 1997). From the methodological point of view, further aspects that favour the use of literature in the language classroom are the active role of the learner and the literary text as the central focus of attention. Learners become active, autonomous, and central to the learning process. One aspect of special importance within the communicative approach, and that is magnificently reflected in the poem at stake, is the idea of literature supplying the learner with cultural information about the country whose language they are

learning (Lazar, 1993, p.16). Poetry is fictional and, therefore, we must be very careful when treating this point in the classroom, for sometimes its relation to the real world is rather lax. Our response to the cultural aspect as reflected in literature should be critical (Lazar, 1993, p.17).

Finally, the motivational criterion is of great relevance because the literary text shows the real feelings of the writer and this generates a powerful motivation in the learner. With the literary text the student accesses this personal experience, if he is touched by the theme and provoked, he will be able to relate what he is reading to her world, to what he knows and feels. Designing stimulating activities that motivate the learners is the greatest challenge for language teachers, and literature has a strong motivating power due to its calling on to personal experience.

Relevance of Literature for Meeting Learners' Needs

The challenges faced by language teachers in the way of integration are enormous as discussed above; yet the advantages of using literature are also vast, even if difficult to achieve in the present state of affairs in the academic institutions with the kind of syllabuses they have and the amount of time allocated for those syllabuses. We as teachers need to develop strategies that impart not only linguistic proficiency but also encourage the learners to appreciate the ideational content of literature that undoubtedly promotes the diffusion of more humane sentiments. No doubt linguistic skill makes a learner employable but the literary values contribute to the success in employment as well as in real life. He does not ever see the world from another point of view. His success depends on how far they are able to leap over the wall of self and to look through another's eyes. This is a potential ability that literature fosters in a fruitful way.

No doubt, the EFL/ESL learners need the ability to use English with force and effectiveness. The force and effectiveness will remain an eluding ideal unless the energy, enlightenment and illumination of literature are transferred from literature to the learners. This is possible not just by teaching language through literary texts but also by teaching literature as literature enabling the students to appreciate and imbibe the values that literature celebrates and the perceptions of reality that it embodies.

Surely, literary texts give us much aesthetic, intellectual and emotional pleasure in that the writer often seeks to express his/her vision of human experience through a creative, emotive use of language and this in turn provides much impetus and motivation for the students to learn the language. Learning Literature not only improves the basic skills like reading, writing, listening and speaking but also other language areas like vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. One of the pre-requisites for language learning is that students should have a feeling for the language which can be achieved through creative and critical use of literary texts where they can experience language in use. For such experience to facilitate language learning, "the language experience needs to be contextualized and comprehensible" (Krashen 1985, 1993, 1999) and the learner needs to be motivated, relaxed, positive and engaged. Literature provides such rich experience to language learners and gives ample opportunities to develop their interpretative power- an important asset to language learning. It also provides a rich source for both teachers and students of shared experiences that can stimulate

discussion. Literature also can introduce the students to the varieties of English; it can be a source of linguistic and communicative enrichment, and it can be a powerful source of inspiration and motivation from which students may develop an interest for practical criticism.

Moody (1971, p.7) is of the opinion that literature also helps students improve their listening skills. The various topics in literature give students a chance for discussion which encourages oral practice. And often, a literary text is read out in full or in part by the teacher, or a record or tape version of it is played for the purpose of bringing out its rhythmic quality and stimulating interest. Thus, when used orally, Literature can develop the students' listening ability. Next, literature, as a matter of fact, magnificently helps students acquire a native-like competence in English, express their ideas in good English, learn the features of modern English, learn how the English linguistic system is used for communication, see how idiomatic expressions are used, speak clearly, precisely, and concisely, and become more proficient in English, as well as become creative, critical, and analytical learners. Collie and Slater (1990, p.30) point out four main reasons for using literature in a language class – literature is authentic material, it is helpful in cultural and language enrichment and finally students will have a lot of personal involvement. According to Maley (1989, p.12), the themes that literature deals with are common to all cultures in spite of the different approaches of the writers – death, love, human relationship, belief, nature etc and they are relevant to all human beings at all times. In short, literature is authentic material that can generate a new creative learning experience in the class and the students in turn will come out as competent learners of both language and literature.

Conclusion

It will be clear from this brief account of the current status of the teaching of literature in ESL/EFL situations that a lot of work was done during the 1980s and the 1990s, and that almost all of it was focused on using English literature in an ESL/EFL curriculum for teaching the language. It looks as though none of this work has had any impact on the practice of teaching literature as literature to the English major students. Humanistic approaches suggest that learning should take place in a stress-free, fun-filled and interesting atmosphere. It is, therefore, high time that the advocates of innovative and creative teaching methods and teachers of literature work together to make literature teaching less teacher-dominated and more learner-centred, so that the business of teaching and studying literature becomes relevant, interesting and meaningful to both teachers and students. It is hoped that such cooperation and coordinated efforts will take the field of literary studies at the undergraduate level forward. In the EFL or ESL classrooms teaching language through literature seems to be a very useful proposition because the learners' exposure to language outside the classroom is the minimum and, most of their exposure to language can be only through written texts. Hence the more the learners are exposed to a wide variety of texts, the more linguistic awareness they will be able to have. Such an approach to language teaching has an obvious edge over the conventional language teaching programmes like the grammar- translation method, which originated in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century, or the method of Reform Movement, which began towards the end of 19th century, or the communicative approach to language teaching that uses functional or notional syllabus or the

eclectic method, which is, in fact, a hybrid method consisting of the features of all the previous language teaching programmes.

Language through literature is a subject that has been discussed among academicians for quite some time. However, the notion of literature through language may raise a few eyebrows. Many universities around the globe offer a number of literature courses as part of the undergraduate program. Teachers who teach these courses often use the traditional method of lecturing on topics like theme, characterization, plot, motifs, etc. directly without giving any emphasis on the stylistic/linguistic aspect of the literary texts that they teach. Of course, students must be taught literature and it must be taught by creating an awareness of linguistic possibilities and sensibility. It is in this context that the idea of literature through language becomes relevant. Teaching and learning literature through language demands active involvement of both the teacher and the taught in bringing the literary text to life. The medium is language and the context and form of a literary work arouse interest in the meaningful use of that medium. This, in the words of George Eliot is “aesthetic teaching”. Here, the role of the teacher is crucial. His role is to support the students’ efforts to establish intensive relationship with literary texts without interfering too much in their act of creating meaning.

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