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Conference Paper

Incorporating the Use of Literature as an Innovative Technique for Teaching English

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Abstract

This paper aims at discussing an effort to incorporate the use of literature in English language teaching. For the reason, language teachers need to know some important ideas i.e. the types of literature can be used for teaching purpose, the approach to the use of literature in language teaching, underlying reasons for using literature in language teaching and steps to implement the use of literature in language classrooms. The most fundamental idea of this paper is focused on the steps to use literature in English language teaching i.e. making decision about needs analysis to know: the types of literary works that the learners want to learn, the difficulty level of the selected literary works in terms of grammar, lexical items and text patterns, and to ensure that a literary work brings pleasure and enjoyment to the learners, formulating objectives to describe what the learners will be able to do after completing a lesson, and selecting innovative teaching teachnique i.e. Analyzing Technique, Memorizing and Producing Technique, Completing Technique, Constructing Technique, as well as Transforming Technique. The techniques may be used by language teachers for teaching English using literature.

Keywords: literature, teaching literature, using literature for teaching English, innovative technique for teaching English

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1. Introduction

Since the emergance of communicative approach in 1970s, the focus of language teaching and learning is rightly on building communicative competence which is commonly defined as the learners ability and skill to use their language knowledge (e.g. vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, as well as meaning) functionally and socially in communicative events [11]. The communicative approach has motivated many language teachers emphazise their teaching strategies on things whic are deemed relevant to the attainment of communicative competence in teaching English e.g. bringing functional language and real life based English teaching materials into ELT

classrooms. This is done to achieve one main purpose i.e. to equip the laerners with knowledge of communication and skills they need to take a part in real social interactions, by using natural English with real native English speakers. There are at least two important things in the taechers' perception regarding CLT, *the first* is the use of functional language, such as asking for directions, making requests, talking about daily activities or hobbies, discussing their jobs or families, for all level of learners; *the second* is the use of authentic materials as a way to expose the language which is used in real life sitiations by native speakers of English.

In this regard, literature starts becoming not popular when the orientation of language teaching and learning is mostly focused on the functional use of language. Besides, many language researhers suggest that if English learners are willing to speak English effectively, they must learn real English which is used in real life situations by native speakers of English [1]. Therefore, authentic materials can be an option for teachers because they are the representations of the language used for real-life purposes by real people [17]. Even if literature is recognized as authentic material, studying language through literature is deemed unable to help the development of second language competence and proficiency of the learners [7] owing to its structural complexity and lack of confirmity to standard garmmatical rules [23], as well as its lingustic difficulty which requires a lot of background knowledge English language and culture [18]. The facts have greatly affected the role of literature within the mainstream of ELT. It seems to be overlooked for inclusion in the English language teaching curriculum today. Ilyas (2016) comments that literature nowadays is widely neglected in ELT due to the popularity of communicative approache. Consequently, many teachers feel anxiety about using literature in the classrooms that they distract the practice of using literary texts from the business of English language teaching [25]. It stands to reason that Literature and English Language Teaching are in a difficult relationship all these years. However, Benegas (2010) is of the opinion that all the controversies and different stances taken by linguists, literary critics and practitioners have not been able to hide the reasons for incorporating Literature into the English Language classroom.

Many language parcticioners (e.g. teachers, researchers, and linguists) support the inclusion of literature in the English language classroom for some plausible reasons e.g. literature is useful in developing the students' linguistic knowledge both on a usage and use level, it may increase their motivation to interact with a text and thus, ultimately increase their reading proficiency. It may also enhance students' understanding of a foreign culture and perhaps "spur their own creation of imaginative works [15], literature provides valuable authentic material, develops personal involvement and help contribute to readers' cultural as well as language enrichment (Collie and Slater,

1987), the use of literature in language teaching as an interesting and worthy concern (Sage, 1987), literature is beneficial for ELT learners, and ELT students can benefit from the role of literature in promoting, among other things, language acquisition and language proficiency [10], This article therefore attempts a reconciliation between literature in ELT because literature is too important to be ignored in teaching English. However before making decision to use literature for teaching and learning purposes, there are at least four fundamental questions to answer i.e. what is literature?, what approach is requred to use literature for teaching English?, what are the reasons for using literature in ELT?, as well as how to use literature for teaching English?

2. Literature for ELT

What literature is seems to be the first important thing to know when a teacher is interested in using literature to teach English because it provides useful information on the most appropriate types of literature to be selected for teaching purpose. Some language practicioners define literature as cultural documents of a country or countries [3], but some consider it as art (Eagleton 1983). Regardless of the perceptions, John McRae (1994) makes a clearer and more specific definition regarding literature. He distinguishes between literature with a capital L which is then defined as the classical texts (e.g. Shakespeare and Dickens) and literature with a small l, which is then recognized as popular fictions, fables, song lyrics and so on. It is important to emphasize that the literature suggested to be used in ELT classrooms nowadays is no longer restricted to "Literature", but "literature' which includes the works of many writers from different background of countries and cultures using different forms of English such as Short stories, Poems, Novels, Plays, as well as Songs.

According to Edmondson (1997), Literature (with capital L) is commonly written with high structural complexity and lack of confirmity to standard garmmatical rules which brings the linguistic difficulty to learners who need to learn grammar. Hence, many teachers may be reluctant to benefit from the language of such literature. On the contrary, Hişmanoğlu, M. (2005) is of the opinion that the language of the literary works (i.e. poems, short stories, plays) is simpler, this may facilitate the comprehensibility of the literary texts and enable the students learn practically the figurative and daily use of the target language in the literary works. It should become the main underlying reason for selecting literary works in English classrooms since the kind of works will make the learners familiar with the language of the works. In a nut shell, language teachers should use 'laterature' (with a small l) for novice, and intermediate learners, but should use 'Literature' (with capital L) for high intermediate and advanced learners.

3. Approach to the use of literature in ELT

Having known the sort of literatute to be used for teaching purpose, it is then essential to decide what approach the language teachers employ to the use of selected literature. Approach in this context refers to teachers' way of dealing with the selected literature. To describe this thing, the writer would present one of the most well-known classifications of approaches to the use of literature that is the one proposed by Lazar (1993). According to her, the first step to do when a teacher plans to incorporate the use of literature in ELT is to identify the needs of learners. identifying needs refers to a systematic process of gathering information on the learners' necessities (what sort of literary works they prefer), lacks (what sort of problems they have in language knowledge and skills) and wants (how they want to learn the literary works). After identifying the learners' needs, the next step is to select the most appropriate approach model and to apply the model.

In order to assist the language teachers in selecting the approach, she mentions three kinds of approaches to the use of literature in language teaching context i.e. language-based model, literature as content and literature as personal enrichment.

a. *Language-based model*: In this model, the language teachers focus on the language components available in a certain literature, e.g. the use of grammar (syntax), types of vocabulary (morphology), and discourse functions and meaning (semantic), to be taken into account in designing syllabuses and teaching materials.

b. *Literature as content*: In this approach, the language teachers are required to suit the genre of the literature with langugae components to teach in the classroom. For example, when the learners prefer to learn poetry, so this genre is generally appropriate for practicing pronunciation skills, when the learners is interested in learning short stories, so this genre is commonly suitable for practicing translation skills, etc.

c. *Literature for personal enrichment*: In this model, the language teachers may use a certain literary work as the basis for selecting a particular activity to be apply in the classroom. The aictivity is aimed at giving the laerners an opportunity to express opinions, feelings, personal experinces regarding the literary work. For example, when the learners are interested in learning drama, the drama can be used as a stimuli for the learners to perform drama in English classrooms. From this activity, they have a chance to express their feelings, practice some new expressions from the drama, and so forth.

Regarding the three approaches, the language teachers may select one approach or even integrate the approaches for teaching purposes.

4. Reasons for Using Literature in ELT

Many language practitioners provide detailed explanations of the reasons for the use of literary works for language teaching e.g. McKay (1982), Maley (1989), Collie and Slater (1990), Lazar (1993), but this section will only present the reasons for using literature in ELT proposed by Collie and Slater (1990) since their ideas have covered all reasons for using literature in ELT. Collie and Slater (1990) state that there are at least four major underlying reasons, which enable language teachers to use literary works in English classrooms i.e. literature as a valuable authentic material, literature gives cultural enrichment, literature give language enrichment and literature gives personal involvement. For details, let's take a look at the following discussion.

4.1. Literature as a useful authentic material

It is already known that authentic material refers to any items which are produced not for teaching purposes. Referring to the definition, literature can be actegorized as an authentic material since most literary works are created not for the purpose of teaching English. All this time, many teachers simply know that authentic language is the language used in real-life contexts such as conversations, discussions, interviews, speeches, advertisements, newspapers articles, magazine etc) and those are then included in designing or developing instructional materials. Literature can become an innovative complementary material which exposes the laerners with authentic linguistic expressions intentionally produced for native English speakers. The linguistic expressions available in the literary works will give many different linguistic forms, communicative functions and meanings which are probably nor available in naturally occuring communications.

4.2. Literature for cultural enrichment

Most language learners assume that in order to understand the culture of a language, the most likely way is to go to the country where the language is spoken for a visit, stay in the country for some time, interact with the native speakers of the language, and use the language for daily communications. However, there is another easier and cheaper way to know how the culture of the use of a language takes place that is

by reading and learning literary works such as short stories, novels, plays, poetry etc. Through reading a novel for instance, the learners may get cultural information because the novel presents characters from different socio-cultural backgrounds. At least, the learners will know some different aspects regarding how the characters live in the world described within the novel such as their feelings, thoughts, believes, traditions, customs and so on. In addition, the learners will recognize how th characters speak and behave in their daily lives. In short, literature may be best considered as an important complement to other instructional materials used to develop the learners' knowledge of language culture being learned.

4.3. Literature for language enrichment

Learning English may not be separated from learning two important language components i.e. the fuctional grammar and the linguistic expressions (e.g.vocabulary, phrases, and common expressions used by native speakers of English). The two components are essential since they are the determinants for making the learners' language natural and intelligible. Literature contains the language components required by the learners. A short story is written not only with a wide range of individual lexical or syntactic items, but also with various sentences containing different discourse functions. When the learners read and learn the short story, they will soon become familiar with the language components available in the texts of the short story. They automatically learn about the individual lexis, the discourse functions in the texts, the variety of syntactical structures, the different ways of connecting ideas in the short story. Those things are belived able to enrich the learners' skills in reading or writing. Having knowledge of the language components makes the learners more productive and creative in using the languaage in terms of speaking and writing because the richness and the variety of the language components they are learning from the literary work have facilitaed the development of their language productivity and creativity.

4.4. Literature for personal involvement

Personal involment means to be drawn into things that the learners are learning. Having the feeling of involment is very useful to help the learners stay focus and increase concentration on speaking, writing, listening, and reading. When the learners are reading a literary work e.g. novel, they have to learn to stay focus and concentrate on the texts. As they succeed in saying focus, they are then drawn into the texts. In

this situation, understanding the meanings of individual vocabulary, and phrases is not more important than finding out how the story goes on and how it finally ends. They get involved further and further to find out the peak of events in the story. They even can feel close to certain characters and shares their emotional responses. They sometimes really like and admire a certain character and hate another character when reading the texts. Of course, this potential can have a very positive effect on development of the whole language learning process. However, Hişmanoğlu, M. (2005) suggests that at this point, the selection of a literary text in relation to the needs, expectations, and interests, language level of the students is very important to do.

5. How to Use Literature for Teaching English

This section discusses in what manners literature is used for teaching English. There are at least four steps proposed to be taken into account for using literature in ELT namely:

5.1. Making decision about a needs analysis

In this first step, the teachers are required to analyse three things regarding the literary works i.e. *The first,* the teachers need to know the types of literary works that the learners want to learn. This will help the teachers to identify the learners' interests, preferences, and motivation. When the learners reveal their needs, prefernces, and interests in learning a type of literary work, it will rise their personal involvement and positive reactions to learning the literary work. The result of this analysis should be taken into account for the inclusion of a certain literary work in the course of ELT. *The second;* the teachers need to analyse the difficulty level of the selected literary works in terms of grammar, lexical items and text patterns. The results of the analysis must be related to the learners' levels of proficiency in English. If the language of the literary work is simple and relevant to the learners' proficiency level, this may facilitate the comprehensibility of the literary text. *The third;* the teachers need to analyse and ensure that a literary work brings pleasure and enjoyment to the learners. In this regard, Thom (2008) assumes that pleasure and enjoyment factors should be given a greater notice since they serve as "a motivating factor" which inspires readers/learners to read, to be interested in reading and to interpret the works.

5.2. Formulating learning objectives

Analyzing the three items as specified above will result in the identification of three things i.e. the types of literary works mostly preferred by the learners, the difficulty level of the literary works which is suitable for the level of learners' English proficiency, as well as delightful literary works. Another crucial thing to do is to determine the learning objectives. Stating objectives of using literature in ELT helps to bring into focus the teachers' vision and targets for the course. Richards (2001) is of the opinion that objectives have four main purposes i.e. to provide a reason for a program, to provide guidelines for teachers and learners, to provide a focus for learning, to describe important and realizable in learning. In short, the learning objectives describe the learners will be able to do after completing a lesson. However, it is important for the teachers to know that the learning objectives should be formulated based on the results of the needs analysis.

5.3. Selecting teaching techniques

Once the learning objectives have been formulated, the teachers may start selecting the special technique used to implement the selected literary works in ELT. Technique in this context refers to basic procedures of the application of literature in Englisn language classrooms. Related to this, the author proposes some useful techniques to apply literature in the language classrooms among other things:

Analyzing Technique: the centre of attention is the lingustic expressions of the text such as lexical items and phrases.

The implementation of this technique can be seen in an activity called 'Strong lines' written by Ibsen (1990). In this activity, she suggests the learners to identify words by doing the following procedures:

- Students are required to read a short story before hand. In the class, however, they are not allowed to look at the story when following this activity.

- In the class, teacher asks students to have a quick look at the whole story and underline "strong lines" that is the words and expressions that they like or that disturb them.

- Divide the class into groups of three or four and ask students to share the strong lines with other members in their group.

- All the members in one group discuss and choose one "strong line" favoured by most members (they can vote if needed.)

- Use the "strong line" as the title or the topic for an expressive piece of writing. For example, write your comments on the sentence above.

- Ask each group to report their project. Make a class exhibition if possible.

(Note: All the group members are supposed to contribute to the group's project. The teacher may help students when they have difficulty in interpreting the title or the topic of their strong line.)

Memorizing and Producing Technique: students have to memoririze some lexical items and retell the story by using the words. the students may retell the story in spoken or written discourse.

The use of this technique can be seen in an activity proposed by Thom (2008) called 'Storytelling' this activity is carried out by using the following procedures:

- Students are required to read the short story before hand.

- The teacher picks up 10-15 words from the passage. Write the words (in the sequence of occurrence in the ext) on the board. For example, these are 10 words derived from a passage 'The Corn Planting by Sherwood Anderson: news, knock, killed, gentle, message, blurted, loitered, nightgown, farmhouse, bang.

- Give students one minute to memorise the words.

- Cross out all the words. Ask students to rewrite the words in order within 1 minute.

- Check students' word list. Those who can write the most words are the winners. (Gifts should be available in this activity)

Note: in fact, one effective way of memorising all the word is that students put the words in sentences related to the passage. If so, they can recall the content of the passage.

- Ask students to tell the content of the passage (they can work individually or in pair/group works), using the word lists. Then, ask them to write or:

- Ask students to use the word list to make up a new story. It would be more challenging if the teacher asks them to work in pairs and each pair creates 2 stories by using the words from top to bottom and from bottom to top.

- Students should make use of their imagination. For example:Student A: "Last night, I got a terrible piece of news. My beloved pet bird got killed by a neighbour's fierce cat...." Student B: "I was sleeping last night when I was suddenly woken up by a bang. I got out of my bed and went into the kitchen to see what happened. There I saw a stranger in a white nightgown..."

- Ask students to tell their stories (The class may choose the best stories) or

- Ask them to write their own story as a home task.

Completing Technique: students are required to complete a story in which some liexical items of the story have been omitted.

The application of this technique can be found in an activity created by Thom (2008) called 'Gap Filling'. This activity suggests to carry out the following procedures:

- Students are required to read the story before hand. In the class, however, they are not allowed to look at the story when following this activity.

- Teacher prepares another copy of the text in which there are some gaps for the students to fill in. The gaps can be passive vocabulary, adjective vocabulary, etc so that students will have a chance to revise the lexis later.

- Ask students to fill in the gaps, exchange the answers in pair/group.

- Remind them of the related grammatical focus.

- Give them a chance to drill in the language/grammar if possible.

Example:

Teacher can leave out the relative pronouns (who, which, where, when...) or adjectives of describing the people (Later, ask students to use those adjectives to describe the characters in the story.)

Constructing Technique: The students are required to construct a story based on key sentences given by teachers.

This technique is implemented by Malley (2000) in his suggested activity fo using literature in teaching English. The activity is called 'Storylines' and is carried out by using the procedures as follows:

- Students are not provided with the text before the lesson.

- From each part of the story, select one or two key sentences, that is, ones which give an indication of the storyline. Write out these sentences in order and make them up into a task sheet. If teacher wishes to make the activity slightly easier, he/she could also add the opening paragraph and the ending.

- Ask students to work in groups of three. Give each group a copy of the task sheet. Students discuss what they think happen in the story, and find a possible explanation for each of the sentences.

- The groups compare their different versions of the story

- Class discussion: Ask the class to call out those sentences from the story which they found most difficult to explain. Let them compare their suggestions. Finally reveal what actually happened in the story.

Transforming Technique: In this techniques, the students are asked to transform a certain literary work from its original form to another form. For example; from song lyrics to short stories. This type of technique has ever been applied in the author's own teaching English experiences.

- The students are split into several group (e.g. a group of four) and given song lyrics to learn (It is possible to listen to the song together while practicing how to articulate the lyrics).

- They are then required to identify and to make list of some unfamiliar words from the song lyrics.

- After finding the unfamiliar words, they are then allowed to open dictionary to find out the meaning of the words.

- Then all groups are given some time to discuss the possible storyline of the song lysrics.

- After that each group has to write a short story which represents the storyline of the song.

- Each group appoints one of the group members to come before the class to tell the short story and the members of the other groups are given an opportunity to ask questions regarding the story (this may be done in turn).

6. Conclusions

The author here has described the importance of making reconcilliation between literature and English language teaching. For that purpose, language teachers need to know several important points i.e. *The first*, the most appropriate types of literature to be selected for teaching purpose. *The second*; the type of approach the language teachers employ to the use of selected literature. *The third;* the reasons for the use of literary works for language teaching. The fourth; the steps to do to use literature for teaching English which cover four proposed steps i.e. *Making decision about a needs analysis, Formulating Learning Objectives, Selecting Innovative Teaching Techniques.* Therefore, the

author believes that the proposed steps could be applied quite reliably in using literature to teach English. However, researches are still needed to determine two things i.e. *Firstly*, if these steps could bring about a positive effect on the students' progress in mastering English. *Secondly*, if these steps could be used for developing teaching materials for literature-based English courses e.g. reading, writing, and listening which integrate the use of literary works.

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