

Integrating Literature into Teaching the Language Arts

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Abstract: *The ultimate purpose of teaching a foreign language is to enable learners to understand others and to make themselves understood. Foreign language teaching is primarily about enabling learners to be communicatively competent at both receptive and productive levels. To accomplish this, teachers should seek to teach all language components in natural settings. More often than not, foreign language teaching not only takes place in unnatural contexts, but it has also become compartmentalized, with each language skill taught separately. This article supports an integrative approach to language teaching where language arts can be taught while teaching literary works, including short stories, novels, poetry, and drama. This means that appreciating literature and developing language skills should go hand in hand. Therefore, this article advocates a content-based approach to language teaching where learners receive more attention, and literature is the content around which language activities revolve. Language and literature, in this perspective, are viewed as complementary to each other. More specifically, the article attempts to provide answers to the following questions: (1) Why is literature important in teaching language? (2) How can literature be used in teaching language arts?*

Keywords: authentic language, communicative approach, content-based instruction, integrated skills, language teaching, literature

1. Introduction

Language teaching is often set in an artificial context where language material is often inauthentic and unrealistic. Language arts (listening, speaking, reading, writing, etc.) are increasingly taught independently of one another. This means that language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing, have been separately taught to foreign language learners. This practice led to compartmentalization or fragmentation in language teaching, a matter which is contrary to the nature of language and language acquisition; language is learnt or acquired as a whole rather than in fragments. Although this approach to teaching a foreign language may contribute to the development of the learners' linguistic competence, it can never be adequate enough to develop the learners' communicative ability. Foreign language mastery involves more than mastering microlinguistic abilities such as producing utterances that are syntactically and

phonologically well-formed. Foreign language learners need to develop discourse abilities that will enable them to attend to contextual factors and interpersonal relationships with their interlocutors in the process of communication (see Fareh et al., 2020). They need to keep track of who says what to whom, when, where, how and why, and to note both the verbal and non-verbal aspects of the process of communication. Clearly, communication and language acquisition are highly complex processes that require learners to develop not only their linguistic competence, but also other essential competencies. A cursory glance at foreign language teaching materials, textbooks and teaching practices reveals that they are not sufficient for turning out communicatively competent foreign language learners. This can be partly attributed to the fragmentation practice in teaching a foreign language and to the partial exclusion of teaching language in context. This concern was voiced by Candlin and Widdowson (1975: vii):

For too long materials have remained at the surface patterns of linguistic text and not drawn learners towards an understanding of the layers of meaning which can be peeled off utterances; learners have seen sentences only as illustrations of grammatical patterns and have not asked pragmatic and sociolinguistic questions of what communicative value they have in given sentences.

The same concern was later reiterated by Sivasubramaniam (2006:262) who criticizes EFL textbooks saying:

Course books do not provide for any emotional and effective engagement with the target language. This is because course books, for want of interesting and engaging content, focus the learners' attention on the mechanical aspects of language learning. The form-focused practice that most course books demand, subjects the learners to a lot of anxiety, stress, demotivation in addition to monotony and boredom.

This article proposes that English language curricula shift away from surface linguistic patterns and focus more on meaning as portrayed in discourse and literature. Such a shift will engage the learner with the target language. The article seeks that the EFL curricula acknowledge the relevance of poetry, drama, and fiction to language teaching and identifies how literary works can benefit all facets of language learning.

2. Objectives of the study

A pedagogical approach that integrates literature into teaching language skills may create an authentic learning environment in which students move from simply reading and extracting information from literary texts to cognitively experiencing them. Therefore, this article argues that literature should be used in the teaching of language skills, and that discussion of literary works should enhance the learner's cognitive functions and their acquisition of literacy and meaning-making skills. It intends to demonstrate how literature can be used to raise the learners' linguistic awareness and enhance their overall communicative competence. The study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Why is literature important in teaching language?
2. How can literature be used in teaching the language arts?
3. The article proceeds as follows. Section 3 provides an overview of literature related to the topic under investigation. Section 4 highlights the importance of literature in language teaching in general, and why it is indispensable to foreign language learning in particular. Section 5 will provide illustrative examples of how literature can be used in teaching the various language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), as well as grammar, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills. Finally, section 6 provides a concluding statement.

4. Theoretical framework

Current and mainstream foreign language teaching generally adopts the communicative approach in its different flavors. Content-based instruction finds its place under the umbrella of the communicative language teaching approach (Byram & Hu 2013). Therefore, content-based instruction (CBI) has the same primary characteristics of the communicative approach. Students learn the language by using it functionally and in socially appropriate contexts (Widdowson 1979). The learning activities are purposeful and with communicative intent, so dialogues, for instance, fill an information gap that the interactants may have, the participants in it have a choice as to what to say and how, and they can evaluate whether or not the conversation exchange has achieved its purpose (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson 2011). Furthermore, the learning material is authentic. CBI has the additional emphasis on mastery of both language and content. It seeks to facilitate the student's learning of authentic texts in their areas of interest, to involve them in active interaction with the texts, and to engage them in collaborative activities with their colleagues (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson 2011).

Texts in the information age are neither of the old media and modality nor of a static nature. They tend nowadays to include written symbols as well as visual images and objects, and they are sometimes two-dimensional or three-dimensional, on paper or the screen, and with sound, video, etc. In other words, texts are multimodal and dynamic; they involve multiple human senses. The old practice of segregating the language skills has been abandoned with the demise of the behaviorists' audiolingual approach. Hinkel (2010) rightly points out that content-based instruction, like other offshoots of communicative teaching, favors integrated teaching of the four skills. We continue, however, to talk of these four skills but only as operational elements of language performance (Young 2000). Content-based instruction is firmly in support of the integration of the four language skills following the principle of reciprocity of human communication; we listen then speak, read then write, read then vocalize, and vocalize then write. It is not feasible to use one skill in isolation of others. Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) assert that, in content-based instruction, "the content determines what language is worked on. The language includes not only vocabulary items and grammar structures, but also how these contribute to the discourse organization of texts. All four skills are integrated in authentic contexts" (p. 24).

Authenticity of texts has always received special consideration in content-based instruction and gained further prominence with the advent of corpus linguistics. Texts used in the language classroom are expected to be similar to what native speakers of the language use for real communication purposes. Literary texts are one type of authentic material through which language can be taught since they are a real manifestation of language; often linguists seek examples from literary works to demonstrate foregrounding, cohesion, intertextuality, context, figures of speech, style deviation. “Corpora of naturally-occurring texts provide samples of genuine language, since they are produced by speakers and writers with real communicative goals” (Gavioli & Aston 2001:240). Literary works have genuine communicative goals, and they communicate authentically with real readers.

Teaching literature in the foreign language classroom fits in quite well with content-based instruction. The teaching of literature in the foreign language classroom has gone full cycle. In previous centuries up until the start of the twentieth century, literature was a vital element of language learning. Then World War II brought the realization that the language teaching methodology of the time was inadequate as it did not produce competent communicators in the foreign language; consequently, the teaching of literature was seen as “extraneous to language teaching and to everyday communicative needs and as something of an elitist pursuit” (Carter 2015:316). However, now with corpus linguistics in full swing and with the abundance of literary works on the net, there is no excuse for teachers not to utilize these works for language teaching.

5. Why is literature important in teaching language?

Literature is vitally important to language teaching and is indispensable to foreign language learning in particular. If it has nothing to offer but authentic texts, it is sufficient, yet it offers a lot more. Literature is one of the best manifestations of language. It offers learners authentic material and shows them the skillful use of language. Moreover, literature provides learners with an opportunity to see how language forms are used to perform different functions. The relationship between form and function can be best manifested in literary works rather than in scripted texts. In this respect, Swan (1985: 85) holds that authentic material “provides students with valid linguistic data for their unconscious acquisition of processes to work on. If students are exposed only to scripted material, they will learn an impoverished version of the language, and will find it hard to come to terms with genuine discourse when they are exposed to it.” It can clearly be concluded from Swan's statement that learners can better validate their linguistic knowledge through authentic materials such as literature.

Literature can also be used to raise the linguistic awareness of learners as they are exposed to the various complexities of language structure and style. Brumfit and Carter (1986:1) stress the role of literature as “an ally to language.” Carter and Long (1991:1) argue that literature provides learners with ample linguistic opportunities and allows teachers to devise teaching activities “based on material capable of stimulating greater interest and involvement” than any

other non-literary texts. Furthermore, Latch (2007) supports the use of literature as a tool and a resource for teaching language because it provides learners with authentic linguistic, sociolinguistic and cultural material. Duff and Maley (1990:6) made three major arguments in support of the use of literature in the language classroom. (1) Literature provides language learners with authentic and genuine manifestations of language with different styles from such different genres as poetry, drama, essays, novels and short stories. (2) Literary works can have different interpretations and this motivates students to interact with each other, with their teacher, and with the text in order to construct meaning that the literary work may communicate. This reason is harmonious with the principles of communicative language teaching that encourage the use of language in context. Furthermore, literary works provide students with information about the culture of the foreign language of the literary work. This information is necessary for the development of the learners' sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence. Literature can be used in language classrooms to enrich the learners' culture and to promote their cultural understanding and awareness. (3) Literary texts motivate learners to think, react, and interact with the ideas of the text they are studying. Incorporating literature in language classrooms provides learners with "opportunities to experience and use the language more creatively and to develop greater awareness of the language they are learning" as stated by Daskalovska and Dimova (2012:1182). Because motivating students poses a challenging task to them, language teachers may benefit from applying such practice to language teaching.

Literature can also be used in developing reading skills, which are essential not only for learning a foreign language, but also for academic progress and for the development of the learner's cognitive functions. In fact, literature takes the learner beyond gaining language competence and into gaining literacies and meaning-making skills. Whether these literacies are visual, aural, spatial, verbal, or non-verbal, they are central to functioning in a modern society and they are indispensable for the construction of knowledge from all the sources and modalities of representation available to modern human beings. Therefore, honing the skill of reading is linked to personal empowerment, increased access to medical care, expansion of economic opportunities, promotion of civic participation in society, and enhancement of self-esteem. Literature is instrumental in the development of critical reading skills.

Acquiring good reading skills helps learners become more competent in writing and speaking as well. The learner's lexical competence is expected to improve as they expand their repertoire of lexical items, and situational and linguistic real contexts. In addition, the use of literary texts in class enhances students' oral skills because it provides them with communicative situations in context and authentic patterns of social interaction, especially in teaching literary dialogues and plays. They can also learn from the carefully crafted conversational patterns in literary works. Literature encourages foreign language learners to see the link between language forms and functions in a manner superior to any description in a language skill textbook. Fareh and Bin Mousa (2008) used a corpus of authentic literary texts of three plays in order to analyze the discourse

functions of interrogative sentences in English. They were able to identify 35 different functions of interrogative sentences as used in real contexts. Their analysis revealed the contextual factors pertaining to interlocutors, their status, and relationships that play a role in determining the functions of this linguistic form. Such factors are prerequisites for the teaching of language functions.

Literature is quite conducive to the zone of proximal development upon which Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory of learning rests. Development of the learner's cognitive functions derives from their social interaction; what better offers opportunities for social interaction than literature? It takes the learner into the world of characters in a novel, short story, play, or film and gets them to interact with it. Teaching language through literature promotes the purposeful use of the language tool to interact with this world that the literary work creates. When the teacher guides learners to bridge the distance between their current ability to independently understand the plot and their potential ability, the learning takes place and language acquisition is realized.

McCloskey and Stack (1993:vi) state that "literature provides students with motivation to learn and models of high-quality language while it enhances students' imagination, interaction, and collaboration." Literature motivates learners because it deals with themes that may be of interest to learners: love, fear, adventure, and hope. It also provides learners with models of high-quality language and contextualized vocabulary. In addition, literature motivates learners to interact with each other and with the text in order to construct meaning. Teaching literature in language presents meaningful contexts, involves a wide range of vocabulary in context, appeals to the imagination, enhances creativity, develops cultural awareness, and stimulates critical thinking (Van 2009).

Srinivas (2014:67) demonstrates how literary works can be utilized in the language classroom by listing several activities for teaching a poem. She states that "all the language skills are available in literature. We need to step forward to avail ourselves of these if we have to be true to our profession and do justice to our students." More information on the significance of using literary works in language teaching can be found in Hismanoglu (2005), Premawardhena (2007); Pereira (2008); Khatib et al. (2011); Violetta-Irene (2015).

Literature for language education is beginning to regain its status as a learning source for language teaching and as an example of good language use. The benefits of using literature in developing language skills and enhancing the communicative competence of language learners cannot be simply denied or defenestrated. However, foreign language teachers should be trained on how to select literary texts and use them efficiently in language classrooms. The following section will explore how literary works can be utilized in promoting language learning.

6. How can literature be used in teaching language arts?

The use of literary texts in teaching language skills has been recommended by many researchers for the benefits explained earlier. Khatib et al. (2011) make a

number of recommendations for integrating literature into EFL classrooms. They put together two proposals. Firstly, teachers should aim and prepare well to get their learners interested and involved with literary texts that deal with almost universal themes such as love, separation, suffering, hardship, nature, beauty, and struggle for freedom. Secondly, the use of literature in language classrooms as a source for learning language is recommended, but not as an end in itself. Furthermore, they also suggested providing learners with opportunities to use literary language creatively. Other researchers such as Vardell et al. (2006) accentuated the criteria for selecting literary texts as follows: (1) Content accessibility (whether the literary text is familiar or helpful), (2) Language accessibility (whether the language of the book is simple and direct?), (3) Visual accessibility (whether the text has a reasonable number of illustrations), (4) Genre accessibility (whether there is a variety of genres available), (5) Cultural accessibility (whether the content is culturally appropriate), (6) Accuracy and organization accessibility (whether the text is accurate and well-organized). These criteria are essential for choosing the literary work to be used in language classrooms. If the selection process violates one or more of these conditions, teaching literature would lead to undesirable consequences because it will be tiresome, boring and demotivating to the learners.

In light of these conditions, carefully selected literary texts will constitute a useful tool for motivating students and enhancing their language skills. In this section, the use of literary works in the language classroom will be explained.

Violetta-Irene (2015) holds that literary texts can be useful in developing the three basic language skills: reading, writing and speaking. She proposed a number of activities that teachers can benefit from. These activities are the general techniques often used and recommended for teaching reading in general. They are: (1) pre-reading activities, (2) while-reading activities, and (3) post-reading activities. In what follows, the researchers will more specifically show how literary works can be used for developing not only reading, writing and speaking, but also listening, grammar and vocabulary.

6.1. Literature and listening and speaking

Pre-reading activities encourage students to understand the general background of a literary work, be it a short story or a poem. They also stimulate learners to know more about the work and to be more focused. In these activities, learners will have the chance to learn new vocabulary and to practice speaking with the assistance of the teacher who should be prepared to get them engaged in answering oral questions about the text and its theme. The teacher should also make use of the students' schemata by encouraging them to talk about their own experiences. Schema has been defined by Cook (1990:69) as the learner's "pre-existent knowledge of the world". To accomplish such a task, the teacher should come to class well-prepared and equipped with a number of questions that stimulate the students to interact orally. Many other activities can be used to motivate students to speak and to engage in conversations.

All the activities and questions that teachers pose in the while-reading

activities can also be answered orally. The while-reading activities aim at enabling students to delve into the text in order to understand the plot, characters, theme, some unfamiliar vocabulary and expressions, and the major stylistic features of the text. Again, the teacher should come to class with a prepared set of questions in order to elicit information from the learners. Students can also be asked to retell or orally summarize a short story. They can also be asked to read aloud certain poems or certain acts of a play in order to improve their enunciation and expression. These activities can be performed individually or in groups, where each member of the group could be given the chance to represent their group and to tell the entire class what the group decided. Students can be given out of class time to prepare themselves for a debate about a certain issue in the literary work.

Finally, the post-reading activities can also be used to help learners develop their oral competence. Comprehension questions regarding the content of the text can be answered and discussed orally in class. Students can also be encouraged to orally express their reactions regarding certain cultural issues that they may encounter in the text (see Zidan et al. 2018). Other activities such as dramatization, improvisation, role-playing and discussions may also be built around a literary text such that students will have the chance to practice oral skills. Students will learn contextualized vocabulary that they can use in everyday speech. They will also learn some conversational conventions and social norms when they are exposed to literary works. Their knowledge of what to say, to whom, when, and how is expected to improve when they are gradually exposed to various literary genres.

Some literary works especially plays are dramatized and recorded on videotapes or films to which students can listen and watch for the purpose of understanding general ideas and specific details. Such activities can be used as listening comprehension activities, where students will be asked to answer questions before listening to the text. Then, they may be asked to provide answers or select the appropriate answer in a multiple choice activity.

A well-known technique that is often used in developing argumentation and critical thinking skills is usually referred to as the Socratic Method, the “dialectical method of inquiry and debate by means of a carefully constructed series of leading questions to arrive at logical responses and to stimulate rational thinking” (Gogus 2012:3147). This type of activity helps learners develop their oral skills as well as thinking skills.

6.2. Literature and reading

Although many a teacher is of the opinion that reading is the easiest skill to teach, it nevertheless is a fairly complex process. It involves several sub-skills: skimming; scanning; drawing inferences; predicting; figuring out meanings of unfamiliar lexical items; disambiguating senses; recognizing the writer's purpose, attitude, tone, and mood; understanding the communicative value of sentences and sentential roles; identifying cohesive devices; identifying the theme and thesis; and recognizing the flow of ideas.

Such sub-skills can be developed and honed through while-reading

activities and questions. Through individual and group activities, the learner may ask and may answer questions about specific and general ideas and facts that relate to characters, plot, and setting in a literary work. Students can also be asked to identify the referent and antecedent. Furthermore, the skills of figuring out the meaning from context and making predictions are best developed while teaching literature. Learners at different levels can also be trained to identify the functions of connectives and their roles in signaling sentential functions and logical relations that hold between discourse units . It is obvious that literary texts can be used in teaching almost all language aspects. Carter and Long (1991:7) refer to this model of teaching as the language-based approach to the teaching of literature as it allows learners to focus on linguistic features including lexical items and syntax.

Literary works can also be used to encourage students to practice extensive reading and to become life-long readers. These activities will never be fruitful unless teachers prepare relevant activities and questions that guide students in their attempt to unravel the complexities of the text and make it more meaningful to them.

6.3. Literature and writing

Teaching students to write usually starts with teaching them to read because reading well-written texts of any type serves two functions. The first is that written texts provide students with good models of writing from which they can learn how paragraphs and essays are structured and how topics are expressed and developed. Selected texts can be analyzed for students as models in order to build their competence and enable them to recognize paragraph and essay structures before they can start writing something similar. The second major contribution of literary works to teaching writing is that they can be used as sources for developing writing activities. For example, students may be asked to do the following activities in order to develop their writing skills:

1. answer comprehension questions in writing,
2. summarize a short story or part of a novel or a play,
3. re-write a poem in their own words,
4. develop an incomplete sentence into a short story in light of what they have read, or write a story that ends in a given statement,
5. write a short story or a poem similar to what they have studied.
6. predict the end of a story or a play in writing
7. describe the plot of a story,
8. describe how the conflict between characters developed,
9. express their own feelings or reactions towards certain events, incidents, or cultural issues they may have encountered in a literary work,
10. practice writing plays individually or in groups,
11. practice creative writing,
12. outline a short story or play,
13. select a certain theme and relate it to their personal experiences.

These activities can be implemented at different levels. Controlled writing activities can be designed to meet the needs of low-level students with the assistance and supervision of the teacher. More open and less controlled activities can be designed to help intermediate students develop their writing skills. Finally, free writing activities should be used with advanced students who will be asked to write freely with little assistance from the teacher. These activities can only be useful if teachers are willing to prepare activities and questions that direct learners in their effort to explore the intricacies of the text and make it more meaningful to them.

6.4. Literature and grammar

Since literary texts use language in context, it is hard to separate them from language. Literary texts constitute a useful source for illustrating grammatical forms and their functions (see McGlynn & Fenn 2018). Therefore, teachers can use short stories, novellas and novels, plays, poems, and other forms of literature to teach grammar. These texts can provide students with authentic illustrative examples for syntactic complexities. Collie and Slater (1990:5) make a strong case as to why literary texts should be used to teach grammar:

Literature provides a rich context in which individual lexical or syntactic items are made more memorable. Reading a substantial and contextualized body of text, students gain familiarity with many features of the written language - the formation and function of sentences, the variety of possible structures, the different ways of connecting ideas - which broaden and enrich their own writing skills

Various aspects of syntax can be taught through literary works. For example, a teacher might select a short story from *Dubliners* by James Joyce and teach various grammatical notions like kinds of nouns, attributive and predicative adjectives, (in)transitive verbs, simple, compound, and complex sentences. Tenses and their uses can also be examined in any text to show students the various uses of these tenses. Complex structures can also be manifest in literary works. Syntactic transformations that serve rhetorical functions can be explained through examples from literary texts such as stylistic fronting, clefting, thematization, passivization, ellipsis and substitution, etc. These syntactic processes are usually performed to accomplish certain pragmatic functions in real contexts.

Other grammatical notions such as parallelism and inversion can also be taught through examples from literary texts. We treat parallelism and inversion as grammatical notions which have rhetorical functions. In support, we quote Crystal (2008:350) who uses the term “parataxis” to refer to parallelism. According to Crystal, parataxis is a “term used in traditional grammatical analysis, and often found in descriptive linguistic studies, to refer to constructions of equal status (co-ordination) which are linked solely through juxtaposition and punctuation/intonation.” Crystal (2008:54) also defines “inversion” as a term “used in grammatical analysis to refer to the process or result of syntactic change in which a specific sequence of constituents is seen as the reverse of another.”

Furthermore, one can see why an author opts for the use of the passive voice rather than the active voice in a certain context. Furthermore, a certain context may entail the use of simple sentences rather than complex ones. The relationship between form and function can be best illustrated in literary works.

6.5. Literature and lexical competence

Knowing a word involves not only learning its meaning but also its association, collocation, register, grammatical behavior, written form, spoken form and frequency, etc. (Schmitt 2000; 2010, 2014; Coxhead 2006; Hoey 2005; Nation 2001, 2005, among others).

English Vocabulary is fundamental to language teaching and learning because insufficient vocabulary constitutes an obstacle for students to understand others or express their own ideas. In fact, there is a consensus among researchers that vocabulary knowledge constitutes, according to DeCarrico (2001:285), an essential part of “communicative competence”. Wilkins (1972:111-12) wrote that “. . . while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”. Lewis (1993:89) went further to argue that “lexis is the core or heart of language”, and Schmitt (2010:4) noted that “learners carry around dictionaries and not grammar books”. Therefore, lexical knowledge is essential for learners to develop competency and proficiency in English. Nation and Meara (2002) assert state that proficiency in English has been found to be closely related to vocabulary knowledge. Consequently, students need large and rich vocabulary knowledge to be able to use language effectively and to achieve better language performance. Simply put, lexical knowledge facilitates fluent speaking and effective writing.

Most learners and researchers agree that competency and proficiency in basic grammar and pronunciation can be attained relatively quickly, but lexical competency and proficiency appear to be endless. Crystal (2011:1) captures the endless and arduous task of vocabulary learning in a powerful metaphor by saying that “Vocabulary is indeed the Everest of language. And it is a mountain that has to be scaled if fluency is to be attained.”

A huge body of research emphasizes the incremental effect of lexical knowledge on reading comprehension (Laufer 1997; 2001; Nation 2001; Nation & Coady 1988). Not only does lexical knowledge facilitate comprehension and communication, but it also plays a substantial role in the overall academic success (Lehr et al. 2004). Undoubtedly, limited lexical knowledge constitutes an enormous obstacle to success in reading comprehension (Graves & Graves 2003). Tankersley (2005:66) asserts that “Vocabulary is a vital foundational thread in the tapestry of reading; it should be woven into the fabric of everything that is being studied”. However, vocabulary is not taught enough and is too important to overlook. Teachers assume that students will get vocabulary on their own, and overestimate their students' understanding (Folse 2005).

Research conducted on vocabulary learning indicated that multiple exposures to words in a variety of oral and written contexts are the most effective vocabulary instruction (Anderson & Nagy 1991; Beck & McKeown 1991). A

substantial amount of word knowledge is learned incidentally through extensive reading, dialogue with friends outside the classroom (Nagy & Herman 1985; Miller & Gildea 1987).

Studying vocabulary through exposure to literary works may develop learners' lexical knowledge at both the recognition and production levels. However, some studies claim that studying English through literary works does not develop the learners' lexical competence. Din and Ghani (2018) conducted a study on 600 Pakistani college students and concluded that foreign language learners “remain unable to develop lexical competence when they are taught English through literature” (p.126). However, the researchers also stressed the fact that students can “develop their word bank in learning English through literature so far the synonyms are considered in the given context” (p.172). These conclusions indicate that the problem does not lie in teaching vocabulary through literature, but in the method and techniques of teaching literature.

Learning vocabulary through exposure to literature can hone the students' lexical competence if teachers accord adequate attention to teaching multifaceted aspects of vocabulary items, including the words denotations, connotations, form, collocations, formal and informal uses, their uses in idioms and metaphors as well. To maximize the use of literature in teaching English vocabulary, literature instructors need to be trained in integrating the different techniques of teaching vocabulary into teaching literature. These days, corpora provide a rich source of authentic material for teaching vocabulary since they “identify target words as they are authentically used” (Zimmerman 2014:290). There are many freely available online corpora like COCA that can be utilized by teachers to teach, for example, collocation or vocabulary in context.

It is necessary to mention that deductive learning with the use of corpus is also known as corpus-based learning whereas inductive learning via corpus data analysis is called corpus/data-driven learning. These two learning styles are crucial processes of critical thinking, a skill we discuss in the following section.

6.6. Literature and critical thinking

One of the prime functions of any educational program is to develop critical thinking. Teaching languages is no exception. It aims to develop in the learner “reasonable, reflective, responsible, and skillful thinking that helps individuals decide what to believe or do in a given situation” (Seel 2012:1797). With the focus being on language, the teaching is focused on the development of the skills of analyzing and evaluating arguments, deductive and inductive reasoning, and decision making. This can easily be achieved through the systematic analysis of a literary work where all these thinking skills are exercised (Halpern 1998, 2001). Little do students learn from teaching methods that merely mention the figures of speech, the imagery, plots, etc.

To develop critical thinking skills, students must first learn to recognize and recall key information. These two skills are vital for the application of higher-level skills such as analyzing arguments, judging or evaluating arguments, making inferences using deductive or inductive reasoning. A good example of

'Recognizing and Recalling Key Information' is to ask students, who have already read Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, to provide a chronology of the events related to Marlow's journey, starting from the time when he left Europe, to his trip up the Congo, and then back to London. An activity in critical analysis would require students to read an excerpt from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (p. 40; Webster's Thesaurus Edition, 2005), in which Conrad provides a description of the Congo River and the jungle around it.

By carefully reading the excerpt, students learn about the way in which Conrad uses words imaginatively to paint a picture of the river and the jungle. Afterwards, the instructor can pose the following critical questions about the description of the river and jungle that Conrad provides (Watt 2004:175):

1. Is it visual? (i.e., Does Conrad make you see the river?)
2. Is it conceptual? (i.e., Does Conrad make you *think* about how he portrays the river and the jungle?)
3. Is it aural? (i.e., Does Conrad make you hear the *sound* of his words?)

By trying to answer these questions, students are engaged in an activity of inductive reasoning, which uses a particular set of details or facts to produce a general statement. Crucially, the development of the skill of performing critical analysis of a literary work requires developing other crucial skills, such as learning how to recognize rhetorical devices used at various levels: word, sentence, and textual levels. It also requires knowledge of the social, historical, and cultural contexts that gave rise to a particular literary work.

7. Conclusion

This article has shown the multitude of ways that literature can be integrated into the language curriculum. Numerous activities have been proposed for the development of language competencies in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

The article has made the case that literature should be an integral part of the language curriculum. Literature constitutes the model that language learners may emulate. Furthermore, it is a vast reservoir of texts that language activities may be designed around. All language skills can be taught while teaching a literary text if carefully selected. However, the use of literary texts in the language classroom is challenging. Teachers need to be highly competent in the foreign language and methodologically well-trained. They should be careful in their selection of a literary text. It should neither be too simple nor too challenging in terms of both content and language; otherwise, the text would make the learner less eager to acquire the language, and cause reluctance and indifference towards the subject matter.

Texts should also be culturally appropriate, because if they challenge the learners' cultural norms, they may be rejected. Literary texts should not be the only texts through which language skills are taught since non-literary language is ubiquitous. Non-literary texts should include multiple text types, not only for variety but also for functional purposes and for meeting student needs and interests. Literature in the language curriculum is not a substitute for the text types

utilized in modern textbooks but rather a complementary addition that will enlarge the text spectrum and expand the learner's horizon.

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