

Teaching literature :why , what and how

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The present paper aims at showing why is literature beneficial in the language learning process? What works are appropriate in Foreign – language classroom? How can we rethink the way we present and use literature in order to develop a broader range of activities which are more involving for our students ?

Literature invites you to share in human experience. It makes you more fully aware of how other human beings think and feel.

Literature “hold the mirror” up to life ,but it is more active than a mirror .Unlike a mirror ,it selects what is important . It finds a pattern in what it sees ; it meaning .Readers who love imaginative literature know that it enriches their lives .It helps them understand what it means to be human .(Guth & Rico , 2003 ,p.1)

A literary text usually begins with a writer’s need to convey his or her personal vision to reader .Even when a writer uses factual material , historical documents newspaper stories , personal experience – his or her primary purpose is not just to convey information but to give a unique view of experience , one that has significance beyond the moment .Literature is the news that stays news .To convey his or her view of experience , invents characters , and creates dialogue.

Literature invites you to see , and to think about what you see , but it also invites you to feel .It activates the empathy , or imaginative sympathy , that makes you share in the range of human emotions. Responsive reader do not merely register sights and sounds and events , like a camcorder . They get into the spirit of poem or story , reliving in some way the tensions or anxieties a situation bring into play . Like a good audience in the theater , they gasp , sigh , look grave , sob , or burst into laughter as the script prompts .

Why

Why should a language teacher use literary texts with classes , especially if there is no specific examination requirement to do so and little extra time available ?

One of the main reasons should teaching literary texts in our classes might body written material which is important in the sense that it says something about fundamental human issues , and which is enduring rather than ephemeral . Its relevance moves with the passing of time , but seldom disappears completely : the Shakespearean plays whose ending were rewritten to conform to late seventeenth – century taste , and which were later staged to give maximum prominence to their Romantic hero figures , are now explored for their psychoanalytic or dialectical import . In this way , though its meaning does not remain static , a literary work can transcend both time and culture to speak directly to a reader in another country or a different period of history (Collie & Slater , 1991 , p.3).

The aim behind teaching literary texts of another culture is to give our students a chance to know much about different cultures that have different interests and values making no intersection between our culture and other foreign culture , and this will pave the way to understand others well.

Literature creates world and invites us into them so that we can how they work . If the people and situations are like us we can identify with them and learn about ourselves ; if they are net , we can learn about those who are different from us . We can see what happens without living through the event they deficit.

Art can help us celebrate , commemorate , grieve , analyze , argue , and play .(Ferster , 2005 , p.21) .

Language enrichment is one benefit often sought through literature . While there is little doubt that extensive reading increases a learner's receptive vocabulary and facilitates transfer to a more active form of knowledge , it is sometime objected that literature does not give learners the kind of vocabulary they really need.

Literature provides a rich context in which individual lexical or syntactical 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. The extensive reading required in tackling a novel or long play develops the students' ability to make inferences from linguistic clues, and to deduce meaning from context, both useful tools in reading other sorts of material as well. (Ibid, p.4)

At a productive level, students of literature may become more creative and adventurous as they begin to appreciate the richness and variety of the language they are trying to master and begin to use some of that potential themselves.

What

What sort of literature is suitable for use with language learners? The criteria of suitability clearly depend ultimately on each particular group of students, their needs, interests, cultural background and language level.

It is important to choose books which are relevant to the life experiences, emotions, or dreams of the learners – language difficulty has, of course, to be considered as well.

When pupils learn to read, it is good for them to read materials that have a familiar background. This is because it is not fair to weigh pupils down with learning a new language or new skill like reading, and learning about new things at the same time. As they read more, the books should still be relevant to the way they live, and to what their lives are really like (Kirsznar & Mandell, 2001, p.27)

As pupils' reading skills improve, it is possible for them to read stories which have different themes, and which help them to expand their imagination and their knowledge of the world. This is one of the principal functions of a library: to provide books which are not on the

syllabus , but which should be available as part of an extensive reading programmer .

A reading club or literature club is a good way for staff to help pupils who have a special interests in reading .It can be a substitute for a poor library and , with a little organization , can enable a limited numbers of pupils to read a great deal .

In their meetings the numbers of the reading club should report to each other on books they have read , and what they liked and did not like .

One of the most dramatic changes in the teaching of English in the last few years has been the increasing range of selections offered to young readers . The rang of selection , made possible by the low cost of paperback books and the availability of inexpensive hard – cover volumes , has made it possible for many teachers to meet the wide range of differences in their classes with varied choices (Flower , 1965, p.229)

Indeed , permant to the reader's attitude may result if teachers disregard the level of maturity and experience of pupils .

In selecting literature , teachers avoid yielding to the ephemeral and the meaning less . Not all books written for adolescents attempt to communicate genuine experience . Not all are stylistically acceptable . Many – to many – are trite , contrived commercial ventures feeding on stereotyped preconceptions existing in the adolescent's mind . In selecting literature , teachers will not encourage the reading of the best books which immature readers can respond . Realistically , teachers recognize that the level of quality will not always be as high as is desired and that here as elsewhere in the program they can raise the student's level of response only through sound and organized guidance . (Loban and others , 1961, p.279)

How

Certainly there is no royal to the organization of significant experiences in literature . Beyond recognizing that instruction in literature , as in the skills of communication , is most effective when organized by units of instruction , teachers find different kinds of

arrangements to be appropriate at different times . Many units are based on literature , since poems , essays , stories , and the like provide content for discussion and writing .

It is clear that any approach used exclusively to teaching literature can turn to tedium in the classroom . Enjoyable student centered activities is particularly important when working with student who are literature and who many not as yet have developed a wish to read literature in the target language on there own initiative .

Moreover , the availability of a variety of activities enables the teacher to concentrate on meeting students' weaknesses in particular skill areas – in speaking or listening , for example .

For many language learners , the ideal way to deepen their understanding of life in the country where that language is spoken – literary works . It is true of course that the 'world' of a novel , play or short story is a created one , yet it offers a full and vivid context in which characters from many social backgrounds can be depicted . A reader can discover their thoughts , feelings , customs , possessions ; what they buy , believe in , fear , enjoy , how they speak and behave behind closed doors . Reading the literature of a historical period is , after all , one of the ways we have to help us imagine what life was like in that other foreign territory : our own country's past . Literature is perhaps best seen as complement to other materials used to increase the foreign learner's insight into the country whose language is being learnt . (Collie & Slatter , 1991 , p.4)

Teachers who discuss with students books which treat the difficult topics of prejudice , intolerance , discrimination , and persecution must have skill and if class discussion are to increase instead of lesson tolerance .

Teachers of literature must be particularly skillful with language and must be able to understand how to help young people handle their encounters with worlds which lead to stereotyping and prejudice – such as the "loaded" terms for national , racial , and religious group – and they must be able to show that some problems have no easy solutions but require understanding .(Flower, 1965 , p.223)

Suggested Techniques to Teaching Literary Text :

1. It is a good idea to vary the mode of presentations silent reading , for example , can be following by listening to the passage on a cassette , so that this ‘revisiting ‘ of the text feels like a different experience and challenges other areas of the learner’s abilities.
2. Choose literary texts that you know and which are likely to appeal to the students you teach .
3. Help students to explore their own responses to the literary texts. This means , that through this process we received opinions and therefore more able to assess other perspectives .
4. It is preferable to give learners the maximum chance of entering the universe of any selected literary text . This can be facilitated if , instead of trying to transpose it into their own language and cultural experience , they try to put themselves imaginatively into the target situation .
5. Integrating language and literature . Let the student derive the benefits of communicative and other activities for language improvement within the context of suitable works of literature .
6. A good teacher of literature should put into his / her considerations of making a meaningful impact upon its reader . It should have a meaning which the student should be able to grasp , to understand and explain .
7. When teaching world literature or books which present foreign countries or their people , the teacher must know how to help his / her understand the wide cultural differences which such literary text often represent . The reading of books alone will not in itself ensure increased understanding or insight .
8. Encourage students to record significant impressions by introducing aids which enable students to record the significant details suggesting themes in characterization , plot development, or situation .
9. Encourage your students to write their impressions immediately after reading any literary text .
10. Provide opportunities for your students to listen to record literature .

Conclusion

It is clear that if we want our students to have a better grasp of literature , they must have proper training of the four basic skills : listening , speaking , reading and writing .

By careful selection and well – planned and varied procedures , we can contribute to the students’ cultural advancement .

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