



Article

The Role of Literature in Developing English Language Proficiency: Methods and Applications

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Abstract

Current trends in teaching language stress the idea of developing communicative competence as the goal of language instruction. This implies a knowledge both of linguistic competence and of culturally appropriate behavior. Literature can make an important contribution to the development of cultural awareness. The value of literature for language learning is supported by numerous studies and more recently by linguistic theories which emphasize that language must be viewed both in context and as interaction. The linguistic, cognitive, and affective role of literature as well as the methodological framework within which it can be used is the subject of this article. The characteristics of authentic and simplified literary texts applicable in academic situations and the procedures of implementing them are described in detail. The future of literature and the importance of teacher education are also considered. The overall purpose of this study is to provide sufficient information to make instructional sequences possible. Literature is a recreation of reality for the reader. As such, it can make a significant contribution to the writer's perception of acts, feelings, and reactions which create the human experience, where primary emphasis on interactions with literary texts. Accordingly, it assists in developing a sociocultural, cognitive dimension to language studies by recreating representative pieces of the experience including social mores and individual behavior.

Keywords: Cognitive Benefits, English Language Learning, Literature, Proficiency

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Introduction

Integrating literary texts in teaching English as a foreign language has been a constant variable throughout the history of language teaching. Credit is given to the importance of introducing literature into the English language classroom for the significant benefits it offers learners in nurturing a grasp of language arts, developing an awareness of and an appreciation for English linguistic and literary heritage, reinforcing cultural and societal aspects of the language, improving language competencies, providing linguistic, cultural, and psychological insights into native English speakers, and providing insights about oneself, providing interesting opportunities to teach and to learn about language, and finally, providing educational, cultural, and personal enrichment. Numerous notices of the inefficiency of modern English language teaching materials and syllabuses have prompted this study. It has been acknowledged that the efficiency of EFL results depended upon the teacher's approach, method, and, to a certain extent, the textbook materials offered. There are many new methods that EFL teachers may use to enhance their teaching and increase language understanding and fluency. However, they are scarce in offering links between language skills and literature. At the crossroads of these two needs, using literary texts in their class might help teachers focus on the falsity of the present communicative and student-oriented language teaching methods. Thus, the teacher's understanding of the literary text as a part of the teaching process might increase. (Appleman, 2023)

Theoretical Framework

The concept of foreign language learning continues to be an actual concern, not only because it influences the shaping of education systems, but also because it plays an important role in society and the individual's formation. In today's education, learning a foreign language is a basic objective of every individual's training. Language is now considered a discipline that has a role in the proper general formation of the individual; it is a prerequisite for integration in any circumstances, a cultural relay with value, and a means of communication and training. On the other hand, people are generally unaware of the new ways of expressing feelings, objects, and phenomena that language creates or transplants into circulation. People do not understand the close connection between the language of words and the picture of things. However, formal and content originalities prove that language interprets each object, social reality, or phenomenon differently. The result is restricted knowledge and a partial interpretation of language phenomena likely to create linguistic and

socio-cultural discrimination. In this respect, one should consider creating a foreign language culture and domesticating language differences. The idea of creating a foreign language culture interests us, as recent approaches towards learning a foreign language also consider the importance of the cultural aspects of linguistic competence. They stress the existence of a close relationship between language and social life. Language is not only a mirror of social reality; it produces representations, values, and social identities. Succeeding in a foreign language does not simply mean knowing the language's phonetic, morphological, and lexical peculiarities but also understanding and interpreting the speech. These give their expressive characteristics and nuances, which condition the quality of access to the ideas expressed in the foreign language. (Nazarov, 2022)

Literature as a Language Learning Tool

Literature has traditionally been warranted in language learning by its cultural, historical, informational, and aesthetic content. It has been introduced to advanced students specifically for what can be learned. It is increasingly being acknowledged, however, that from the era of eclectic language teaching and partial language immersion to that of the mainstreaming of language teaching objectives, literature, both in the simple form of storytelling and of more sophisticated and stylistic uses of language, provides concrete opportunities to see language used in its variety in complete and often complex texts where the range of expressive functions to which language can be put, and thus the particular linguistic, syntactic, grammatical, and rhetorical choices aesthetic uses of language make, is limitless. In the context of the current literature, such a realization activates the fitness. It starts with the use of secondary literature at all levels of language instruction, for which adult literary education has had few opportunities to develop adequate preparedness. Indeed, literature as a language learning tool falls entirely into the scope of transferring the unique benefits of literary engagement into the domain of adult learning, be it cognitive, social, or instrumental. Suppose the issue of legitimacy in learning curiosity has traditionally inhibited the more widespread practical use of such rather unexceptional affinities for motivated language learning. In that case, the present communicative emphasis on individual needs-based, task-embedded, and case-based language education presents numerous new opportunities. (Roth et al., 2023)

Cognitive Benefits of Using Literature

The most obvious benefits of language growth in terms of vocabulary and structure can be realized through literary activities. However, these are a relatively

minor part of the cognitive benefits of using literature in the second language classroom. The cognitive aspect of literature may be the most frequently overlooked area. Literary texts, even those previously unread by the student, often represent a challenge in their intrinsic structure. The reader must deal with abstractions, such as themes and tones, which differ from those presented in a literal text. It can be receptor works, and the emotional range involved with a variety of concepts and experiences, as suggested by a literary text when there is real meaning in that text for the student. The increase in learning time that results from the student's motivation due to the emotional interest stimulated by the selection of works themselves may also contribute to this eventual benefit. (Grimm2024)

A meaningful array of techniques and applications in literary learning studies has been shown to have practical and positive effects in the second language classroom. These are suited to a wide variety of student levels and educational settings. Furthermore, literature is unique in blending both cognitive and affective learning strategies. The presentation of such techniques should be of enough variety to suit various educators. The pre-reading activity is designed to focus the learner on the expectations and predictions of the reading event. These topics must be relevant to the individual student. Reacting through less stressful group or pair discussions represents an opportunity for students to consolidate ideas, concepts, and vocabulary before producing second language clauses or sentences. Such needs and periods of writing to stress a personal reaction of the reader may encourage learners with some writing resistance to work more comfortably. The manner of writing and expression of sentiment may also prepare students for a later, more formal analysis of the perceived presentation of characters, general ideas, and themes. Finally, when individual writing activities have begun, students may be prepared by positive small group discussions to significantly refine their independent writing activities, conferring an even greater degree of personal meaning and satisfaction. (Bizami et al., 2023)

Methodologies for Using Literature in Language Teaching

Several practical approaches are suggested to demonstrate the efficiency of literature in ESL/EFL teaching. It is important to convey the idea that learners are developing their language through a focus on the meaning of the text. Thus, vocabulary and grammar become the focus of the discussion and will also help students appreciate the language in the text. Making literature the starting point for promoting vocabulary and grammar is not as important. It will enhance students' reading comprehension and increase their retention of new language. Depending on

students' reading abilities, teachers can also introduce new words or phrases from the reading material. Teachers can teach various reading strategies that can help students increase their reading skills. (Korkmaz & Öz, 2021)

Before the activity, teachers can provide all the words for students to learn and then communicate the content of the story, poem, or text together as a group. Then, teachers start to introduce vocabulary items. These words are usually related to the subject in the reading material, or the new language can be helpful when discussing the reading material or performing the follow-up activity. One of the many functions of any foreign language is the ability to tell and communicate a story. This concept makes any literary text an excellent starting point if it is an English-as-a-Second (or First) Language program. Indeed, stories do not just represent some reflective outlet; the stories that survive in our culture have become classics because of their subject matter and the universal themes that human beings like to discuss or listen to. All literature, drama, and film have this power and hold this fascination for readers of all ages. (Membrive & Armie, 2020)

Close Reading Techniques

Close reading is a literary analysis technique that enables college-level international students to build vocabulary while developing analytical skills to enhance English language proficiency. While close reading has been gaining popularity, not every educator agrees on the best method, definition, and principles that should guide instruction. Generally, close reading involves reading a passage and stepping through it several times, considering the passage in isolation, then in the context of the paragraph, and again in the context of the complete document. Different aspects of close reading may apply to academics in contact with diverse populations. A unique aspect of close reading may be the high segmentation and scrutiny of the language, prompted by the need to understand it to answer the questions well. This intensity of language focus makes close reading a relatively slow way to accomplish language instruction, but the rewards seem greater in other ways. (Ma, 2022)

Close reading works better than more casual readings for developing English language proficiency because analysis prompts neuropsychological networks in the learner where words are interlinked with many other words, each linked differently. This connectivity multiplies language learning for an ELL, who may have long observed and absorbed the use of particular words in some contexts but failed to truly comprehend the words in others truly. Absolute mastery, synthesis, and language generation are skills that prior passive learning may not generate across diverse skill situations. Meanwhile, even a quick recall of the word's meaning in each recitation of the simple story should also build a more robust infrastructure, which complex analysis can reveal. However, are these theoretical justifications confirmed in practice? (Watroba, 2022)

Literary Analysis and Interpretation

Teachers who use this method encourage students to offer their opinions on the text. This requires that they connect their own lives to the material being analyzed. This strategy aims to make students identify with the characters and their various plights, which could lead to a better understanding of the story and an enriching classroom discussion. Reading can and should be a personal activity, and literary experience can and should be social. The students' responses and the ways they articulate these responses will likely be unique, mirroring the diversity and richness of both the students themselves and the stories they are reading. This method has been implemented in classrooms. When involving the students in the novel selection, it was found that their motivation rose dramatically, subsequently their comprehension. Furthermore, the fact that the students had already chosen the novel with which they identified made the discussions livelier. It increased their participation as they realized that by taking part, they were helping themselves and their classmates. (Herrero-Curiel & La-Rosa, 2022)

Applications in Language Teaching

The central purpose of applied linguistics is to develop practical ways of solving the language problems encountered in life. Most of these practical solutions take the form of pedagogical techniques and language learning materials, and applied linguistics has become closely associated with language teaching for this reason. If learners are engaged in a task that motivates them sufficiently, their exposure to language is likely to be productive. Language can help pupils in reading tasks in several ways, but pupils need to be aware of these. It is no good to tell pupils to look at the words on the page or the print of the book unless they are shown what to look for and why they are to look and given some reinforcement for looking. Moreover, pupils need to become aware that they have an active role in making sense of what they read, that good readers take an interest in what they read, and that this interest is sustained at least in part by reading what the author has to say. Guidance on effectively deploying all these resources is a necessary part of reading instruction. It cannot be assumed that, at least at the beginning stages of reading development, this awareness will be available to them until they have been given the necessary instruction. (Amanov, 2023)

Role of Literature in Vocabulary Acquisition

There are several categories of vocabulary instruction, such as indirect and direct vocabulary instruction. In the context of this research, indirect vocabulary instruction is most important. Exposure to words and the many contexts in which words appear in literature contribute to indirect vocabulary instruction. Free reading leads to vocabulary growth, and dictionary use is one of the key strategies that

metacognitive readers learned concerning awareness of word meanings through context, morphology, or reference sources. The strategies for obtaining the meaning of vocabulary are required to promote reading comprehension. Independent readers employ metacognitive strategies; they decode automatically, enabling them to engage in effective comprehension monitoring and use all activities to perform research. In other words, they are not distracted or slowed down in the reading process by fundamental disputes. The strategies for obtaining a sense of vocabulary are required to promote understanding of printed messages. Thus, the facilitator awakens the novice reader to an awareness of the usefulness of vocabulary in literature. It is therefore important for the facilitator and the teacher to convey that fostering a supportive environment for literature study will engage students in using language well and gaining further vocabulary knowledge, as found in literature. A comprehensive, beneficial strategy is the examination of context clues. Though not part of the lexicon students brings to literature, they can deploy this strategy as one of the valuable academic vocabularies to develop the extensive context in teacher-directed enriched lessons for new vocabulary to be built and refined to enhance reading comprehension. (Wallace, 2022)

Enhancing Reading and Writing Skills through Literature

A crucial point is that reading must form a regular part of the classroom experience. It is as unnatural for students to be expected to write without exposure to the writings of others as it is for them to be expected to write before and without being allowed to write for personal expression, enjoyment, or information. Not providing occasions for reading, for exposure to shared texts and texts created by students, smacks of shame. A growing concern about the reluctance of teachers to pilot the language process and convey culturally enriched language models of high quality to their students has led to an increase in the utilization of children's literature in language teaching. Literature has, and should be, embedded into the formal English language syllabus, and a literature component must define, not simply refer to. The inherent worth of literature to children can no longer be ignored; teachers are responsible for developing successful literacy skills and providing the kind of experiences that shape their students' social and psychological behavior. (Greenleaf et al.2023)

A literature component incorporated into an English course can cater to various student needs and interests. Children's literature provides opportunities for holistic language development. Literature provides appropriately high-quality language. Literature is authentic language used in context and provides the best possible models

for language development and practice. Reading or listening to these texts provides exposure to and practice of language forms, functions, and concepts, including vocabulary, spelling, writing, pronunciation, intonation, and inflection. Literature can be a source of content and cultural knowledge, of comfortable language, of escape, and ultimately, of motivation. Using literature in English language teaching opens the door to extra, non-language benefits. Variety and fun can be easily achieved, and they are also self-evident by adopting literature-based shared reading skills. The particularly complex process of publishing to an audience is amply rewarded, and creative writing is naturally encouraged when building upon theme-related interdisciplinary work. The real presence of literature itself is enriching. The wonder and awe in quality children's literature goes beyond any native tongue. This gorgeous aspect motivates and enhances the language learning process through its natural charm. (Naveed et al.2023)

Case Studies and Best Practices

Many case studies blend literature with language learning. The Chilean government requested a literature teacher to create a series of short literature classes. The classes are offered to communities nationwide during two-month courses, and students learn spoken English as an additional activity. Students always make significant gains and great improvements in motivation. This and similar experiences have generated great enthusiasm and commitment among Chilean literature and language teachers. Various institutes and universities request the professor to give talks, seminars, and debates. This supports research that found that a characteristic of professional development and practice that emerges from adult mentor scenes in professional settings is that teachers characterize their learning as unconscious and an incidental by-product of participating as members in these scenes. (Mystakidis et al., 2021)

The joint perception by both mentor and mentee, in the educational microculture of language class, of both its professional supportiveness and foci sets the stage for the development of a growing collaboration between them. When mentorship involves teachers from both language and literature and is integrated in a language class, metacognition, dialogue, the testing and expanding of personal and cultural identity, as well as the relevance of the elements which research shows are present in professional development in workplace settings, are also present between the dialogic pairs of mentor teachers. The relational view of language learning and teaching underpinning the method applies equally well to the mentors, the many

dialogic inner mentors, principal curriculum participants, the relationships, teaching, and learning involved peers, and nascent young professionals. (Hiver et al.2021)

Successful Implementation in Classroom Settings

Several studies of the past few decades acknowledge that extensive reading of authentic literature, if applied to foster communication inside and outside classroom settings, could provide numerous benefits to English language learners. The California Department of Education funded a three-year project that improved student proficiency in English by encouraging their interaction with literature, particularly literary works they could relate to and personally experience. Teachers in schools that had adopted the program observed that their students benefited from improved reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Another project recognized dramatic literature as an effective means of developing non-English-speaking students' language and civic skills (Muftah, 2024). Literature also has a bearing on immersion programs designed for English-dominant students. Some practitioners of the Total Physical Response Storytelling utilized a system called Look to Learn, which applied modern versions of the storytelling teaching tool to show how effective it could be with third graders. In another approach, research has shown that more literary text was needed in successful literacy programs. It notes that when teachers help their students to use strategies they need in real life, writing ability advances to the highest level. These and other studies support the view that stories should be utilized as the primary motivation and method for fostering the English language, irrespective of the students' mother tongue. (Karakoç et al., 2022)

Incorporating Diverse Literary Texts

Incorporating literary texts from culturally diverse sources satisfies several dual-language learning objectives: it enables second language learners to take pride in their cultural heritages and learn about other cultures and attitudes from them. It raises awareness of possibilities for growth and civic participation within them. Literary texts written by authors from diverse racial, ethnic, gender, and linguistic backgrounds can evoke broader and deeper discussions of universal human experience. Literary texts enlisting characters with distinctive gender and racial backgrounds aid in exposing and redressing stereotypes and biases. Although engaging texts that target culturally diverse students are crucial, literary works representing second-language learners' viewpoints and language varieties have been slow to emerge and find their way into curriculum materials. Today, however, many teachers of second language learners enrich the curriculum of their dual language classrooms in myriad ways. (Weiss, 2024)

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Conclusion and Future Directions

More research is needed to investigate effective literature use in language teaching and learning. In this review, we survey various approaches to using literature in English language teaching. These approaches come from different perspectives: language analysis and skill development for teaching language with literature; developing student agency, culturally responsive pedagogy, and intercultural communicative competence for teaching literature and language. We argue for teaching language skills and strategies in the context and content of literature, and literature teaching should focus on engaging students in discussion and activities that lead to developing student agency, intercultural communicative competence, and a holistic understanding of literature. More research is needed to explore the use of annotation in developing student analysis, dialogic writing, and literature comprehension, as well as providing supplementary language instruction aligned with in-depth literature education. Our exploration of corpus work has demonstrated that the frequency profile of a relatively small corpus derived from a particular type of literature can be advantageous in providing insights into the levels of language proficiency required for literature courses. With this empirical evidence, literature educators gain more confidence while designing their courses or making

recommendations for students and colleagues. We plan to explore more distinct disciplines, genres, levels, and literature syllabi for various educational contexts, including secondary and tertiary education. This should help students further understand the specific language needs for literature courses by students and educators when dealing with an increasingly diversified literature training.

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