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APPROACHES TO TEACHING LITERATURE IN EFL CLASSROOMS: A REVIEW OF SCHOLARS' PERSPECTIVES

Alimbetova Mekhriban Muratbaevna
PhD, assistant teacher
Karakalpak State University named after Berdakh
e-mail: m.muratbayevna@gmail.com

Abstract: Literature plays an important role in the development of English language skills, especially in improving communicative competence, raising cultural awareness and motivating learners. This article reviews scholars' perspectives on approaches to teaching literature in EFL classrooms. It examines classifications proposed by Carter and Long, Maley, Van, Wellek and Warren, and Durant, as well as integrated approaches and models proposed by Lucas, Timucin, Savvidou, Divsar and Tahriri, and the Tasmanian team of scholars. The review shows that no single approach is sufficient on its own: language-based, cultural, personal-growth and critical perspectives complement one another. The article is intended to help teachers choose and combine approaches when integrating literature into foreign language lessons.

Keywords: literature, literary text, approach, language skill, language teaching

Introduction (Literature Review)

The use of literature in foreign language teaching has attracted increasing attention over the past few decades, as demonstrated by the publication of many resources for teachers. According to Carter, this renewed interest in literature in language teaching is related to the increase in the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, which, unlike traditional teaching methods, focuses on improving learners' ability to communicate through the use of authentic situations and texts [1]. The CLT uses grammar, phonology and lexicons as tools for overcoming language barriers, not as objects for studying, which distinguishes it from the more traditional grammar translation methods used in foreign language teaching. Literature is considered to be a real source of language and is positively regarded within the CLT framework because it can contribute not only to improving students' vocabulary, but also to improving learners' reading and critical thinking skills through the more creative and authentic use of language. According to Moody, the aim of the approach is to provide the framework or sequence of operations that we use when we come to actualities [2]. Whitehead suggested that teachers must have the knowledge of various approaches and techniques for making a success in literature teaching [3]. There are different approaches to meet the needs of EFL teachers who are willing to use literary works in their curriculum. Among many, some of the approaches to teach literature are discussed below.

Models proposed by Carter and Long

For the study of literature, Carter and Long emphasized three main approaches: the language model, the cultural model, and the personal growth model [4]. The cultural model focuses on understanding the historical background, author, cultural trends, and specific periods. The language model focuses on developing four skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing and motivating learners to become creative in language use. The model of personal growth aims to enshrine personality's imagination, creativity, critical thinking, and aesthetic taste.

Critical literary and stylistic approaches (Maley)

According to Maley, the two general categories of approaches are: the critical literary approach (literature as a cultural artifact) focuses on background, plot, literary concepts, motivation, characteristics, psychology and value, and the stylistic approach (literature as a language learning resource) focuses on text descriptions, language analysis, and critical interpretation. Critical approaches require linguistic expertise, but stylistic approaches focus on linguistic competence without addressing the need for four language skills [5].

Six approaches presented by Van

Van presented the following six approaches:

- the stylistic approach;
- the reader-response approach;
- the language-based approach;
- the critical literacy approach;
- new criticism;
- structuralism.

According to Simon, the stylistic approach is based mainly on the study of literature as discourse and the language perspective, which means the way literary texts represent the language system [7]. The reader response approach considers literature as an interaction between text and reader, as the changes in the reader's mind when he is reading, not as language objects printed on the page. Eco observes that "the reader as an active principle of interpretation is a part of the picture of the generative process of the text". According to Van, the language-based approach is considered as the literature is an excellent vehicle for the CLT method, which develops the development of four language skills through interaction, collaboration, peer teaching, and the students' autonomy [6]. Carter believes that role plays, poetry debates, prediction, and ranking tasks should be used to learn the language [4]. This approach is more practical than other approaches. Critical literacy enables students to learn how text is associated with class, culture, identity, gender, ethnicity, religion, and political power. New criticism is highly focused on a closer reading, especially poetry, to understand how literary texts work as self-referential, self-centered aesthetic works interpreted by readers. Barry showed that structuralism supporters analyze a piece of prose fiction relative to other related texts, including the following structures:

- a set of intertextual connections;

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- a set of conventions of a particular literary type;
- the notion of narratives as a complex of recurrent motifs;
- a model designed for the basic universal narrative structure [8].

Intrinsic and extrinsic approaches (Wellek and Warren)

Wellek and Warren presented two approaches: intrinsic and extrinsic. In intrinsic approach, reader focuses on the structure, language, form, images, symbols, style, contrasts, and development of a plot in a literary text. The extrinsic approach focuses on the author's biography, historical background and social aspects. The intrinsic approach explores the following levels:

• grammatical;
• lexical;
• structural;
• cultural.

The main emphasis of extrinsic approach is as follows: • biographical;
• historical;
• aesthetic;
• philosophical [9].

Methodological approaches (Durant)

Durant described four methodological approaches to literature teaching: lectures, informal dialogues, workshops, and self-learning [10]. He conducted the following activities in the classroom:

• silent reading;
• comprehension task;
• listening tasks;
• personal response;
• dictionary learning and study skills and dictionary work;
• talk in the target language;
• stylistic analysis;
• creative writing and written response.

Materials and Methods

This study is a qualitative narrative review of the scholarly literature on teaching literature in EFL classrooms. The materials comprised books, book chapters and journal articles by the scholars cited in this article (see References), including the works of Carter and Long, Maley, Van, Wellek and Warren, Durant, Lucas, Timucin, Savvidou, Divsar and Tahriri, and the authors of the Tasmanian model.

The method of content analysis was used. The sources were read and compared, and the approaches described in them were grouped according to the following criteria: (1) the main focus of the approach (language, culture, personal growth, critical awareness); (2) the role assigned to the literary text and to the learner; (3) the language skills and competences developed; and (4) whether the approach is presented as a single-focus approach or as an integrated model combining several perspectives. The results of this comparison are presented below.

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Results

The analysis shows that the scholars' perspectives fall into two broad groups: classifications of single-focus approaches (language, culture, personal growth, stylistic, critical, intrinsic and extrinsic, among others), described in the Introduction, and integrated approaches that combine several of these perspectives in one teaching framework. The integrated approaches are presented below. The works of linguists who supported the integrated approaches are discussed in this section.

Integrated approaches

Lucas divided texts into two main types: artistic and functional. Artistic texts include novels, short stories, essays, poems and plays. Functional texts are composed of any text other than the artistic. Functional texts consist of six categories:

1. Casual texts include newspapers, magazines and non-fiction;
2. Personal texts include letters and diaries;
3. Transactional texts include business letters, legal documents and reports;
4. Reference texts include dictionaries, catalogues, directories and inventories;
5. Pedagogical texts include textbooks and encyclopedias;
6. Academic texts include research papers, books of specialists and journals [11].

Timucin integrated the stylistics and language-based approaches into a single educational framework and noticed the benefits of this integrated approach in terms of learners' participation, preference for literary texts, and increased motivation. This approach has opened the way to further research into the integration of literature into language teaching [12].

According to Savvidou, the following six-stage model can be employed to teach literary texts in language classroom:

Stage 1: This is to elicit the students' literary knowledge on the context and themes of the text.

Stage 2: This familiarizes learners with the text via reading and listening.

Stage 3: This is directed towards learners' response to the literary text: spoken or written.

Stage 4: This is focused on comprehension through intensive reading.

Stage 5: This motivates learners to explore deeper into literary texts to analyze the text.

Stage 6: This takes learners to individual understanding of the text followed by analysis [13].

According to Divsar and Tahriri, the integrated approach is three models for teaching literature: literature as content or culture, literature as personal growth, and literature based on language [14]. The researchers emphasized three factors: linguistic considerations, cultural considerations, and communicative considerations, as a prerequisite for literature teaching. Following are the three phases for teaching literature:

1. The Preliminary Phase: This is language-based activities for developing comprehension.

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2. The Content-cultural Phase: This makes learners know cultural aspects in the text.

3. The Synthesis Phase: This leads learners to evaluate the text and express their understanding.

The Tasmanian model

The above-mentioned approaches are systematically combined in the Tasmanian teaching model of literature, developed by an Australian team of scholars. Although it was initially intended only for the L1 classes, it could also be a promising model for the EFL. In the Tasmanian model, literary texts must be viewed not only from a linguistic point of view, but also from a social, cultural and literary point of view [15]:

1. Cultural heritage perspectives support the notion that literature represents the history, tradition, wisdom and beliefs of a particular society. 2. Language skills perspective considers that students work with texts to acquire reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. 3. Personal growth perspectives are defended by the idea that language learning is a holistic and natural process in which students are constantly building meaning. 4. Functional perspective focuses on analyzing the grammar structure of language and identifying the relationships between language forms, registers, and contexts. This also gives students the control of a repertoire of linguistic forms, and thus over meaning and interpretation.

5. Critical literacy perspectives support the idea that texts are social constructions reflecting the beliefs and values of time and culture, with a variety of meanings conditioned by the structure of discourse, emphasis and absence. They provide partial versions of selected realities, producing, reproducing and maintaining different social ideologies. As the authors of the Tasmanian model claim, the language learning process of English students involves learning experiences such as: examining the integrated ideology of texts, considering the way they are constructed, positioned and manipulated, and analyzing the power of languages and writing texts that promote equality and change.

Summary of the approaches reviewed

Table 1 summarizes the approaches and models identified in the reviewed sources.

Table 1. Approaches to teaching literature in EFL classrooms

Scholar(s)	Approach / model	Main focus
Carter & Long [4]	Language, cultural and personal growth models	Language skills; historical and cultural background; imagination, creativity and critical thinking
Maley [5]	Critical literary and stylistic approaches	Literature as a cultural artifact vs. literature as a language learning resource
Van [6]	Six approaches (stylistic, reader-response, language-based, critical literacy, new criticism, structuralism)	From language analysis and reader–text interaction to social critique and intertextual structures

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Scholar(s)	Approach / model	Main focus
Wellek & Warren [9]	Intrinsic and extrinsic approaches	Text-internal features (structure, language, form) vs. author, history and society
Durant [10]	Lectures, informal dialogues, workshops, self-learning	Classroom activities from silent reading to creative writing
Lucas [11]	Artistic and functional texts	Typology of texts for classroom use
Timucin [12]	Integration of stylistic and language-based approaches	Learner participation, preference for literary texts, motivation
Savvidou [13]	Six-stage model	Gradual movement from eliciting prior knowledge to individual analysis
Divsar & Tahriri [14]	Integrated three-phase model	Linguistic, cultural and communicative considerations
Tasmanian model [15]	Five perspectives	Cultural heritage, language skills, personal growth, functional, critical literacy

Conclusions

Thus, we came to the conclusion that there are different types of approaches that the teachers can use in their classrooms in order to conduct lessons with integrating literature and language teaching. Working with literary texts not only helps students acquire basic language skills, but also explores the historical, cultural and social contexts in which texts are created and interpreted. This contributes positively to their personal and psychological evolution.

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