

CHAPTER TWO: APPROACHES FOR TEACHING LITERATURE AND LITERARY TEXT

1. Introduction
2. Pedagogical implications for teaching literature
3. Teaching literary text approach
 - 3.1 Traditional approach
 - 3.2 Language-based approach
 - 3.3 Reader-response approach
4. Literary competence
5. Literary text
 - 5.1 Characteristics of literary text
 - 5.2 Literary text and metalanguage
 - 5.3 Key literary terms
6. Extensive literary reading
 - 6.1 Introduction
 - 6.2 Reasons for literary extensive reading
 - 6.3 Principles for literary extensive reading
7. Conclusion

CHAPTER TWO:

1. Introduction:

In the context of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), teaching literature at university has always been controversial and questionable. For most reasons, the problem seems to persist partly in whether literature should be taught for teaching linguistic and communicative competence or as an end per se, and partly in the wide gap between the substantial contents of literature syllabi, because of the nature of the subject, and the methods and techniques to be used to carry these programmes out. Brandes (1986:12) claims that:

“Learning what is meaningful and relevant depends partly on what is taught and partly on how it is taught.”

With the emphasis on what Brandes considers, we believe that if teaching literature fails to achieve its goals, it is not merely the fault either of literature as a subject or the weaknesses of the learners, but rather of approaches, methods and strategies used by teachers and educators to handle the huge bulk of literature. Thus, developing methodologies for teaching literature comes to be a very urgent recommendation on the part of both researchers and teachers to make the process more effective and consistent.

Since literature is a reading-centered task, teaching literature cannot work without considering highly the skill of reading. Efficient literary reading however remains a hindrance in the way of teachers and learners because of the absence of consistent techniques and strategies that could facilitate the task. Miliani (2003:46) argues that:

« One should not forget that if we are to establish relationships with literature, it is through reading. Unfortunately, this skill has been and is still given rough handling by the educational system, society at large and the learner himself. »

Thus, developing methods and pedagogies to integrate efficient reading skills and strategies in literature course seems to be a very urgent requirement. Therefore, Reading remains the only means and the most efficient skill to enhance the students' capacities in coping with the bulk of literature.

2. Pedagogical implications for teaching literature:

The inclusion of literature in any course depends partly on the nature of the syllabus and partly on the objectives set for the course.

In the context of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), teachers and educators have always been inquiring about the utility of

literature in language learning. The inclusion of literature course in teaching foreign languages dates back to the days when the grammar translation method was dominant and literary texts were a main source for foreign language teaching.

With the structural approach, literature was highly considered for the great body of vocabulary, structures and texts of all types and genres it provides.

In the 1970's and 1980's, the communicative language teaching approach ignored the role of literature and questioned its contributions to the classroom. Yet, in the last fifteen years, literature has been reconsidered within the language teaching classes.

Widdowson, Slater, Mackay, Carter, Long, Brooks, Lazer, Harmer and Hedge are among the most dedicated supporters to the return of literature in the language classroom. Widdowson (1984:162) asserts that:

“Literature, and poetry in particular, has a way of exploiting resources in a language which has not been codified as correct usage...It has no place in an approach to teaching that insists on the gradual accumulation of correct linguistic forms.”

Widdowson has questioned the role of literature in the structuralist approach which emphasized correctness in grammatical forms and restricted lexis, the thing which did not allow the various uses of language.

Widdowson also argues that grammar translation method and the structuralist approach, by definition were incompatible with the teaching of literature, though they exploited and used its bulk.

With respect to these views, applied linguists, especially those who belong to the Communicative Language Teaching Approach called for a return of literature in the language classroom, yet, with a different pedagogical approach for non-native students of English. Long (1986:42) points out that:

“The teaching of literature is an arid business unless there is a response, and even negative responses can create an interesting classroom situation”

Clearly, Long is pointing at a reader response approach which stresses the value of individual and unique response to text and frees the reader from stereotyped and conventional responses often provided by teachers. Rosenblatt (1985: 40) pinpoints the idea as follow:

« The reading of any work of literature is, of necessity, an individual and unique occurrence

involving the mind and emotions of some particular reader and a particular text at a particular time under particular circumstances. »

Within reader-response approach, reader and text mutually affect one another as labelled by Rosenblatt (1985:40) « a transaction with the literary text. » She also maintains that transaction is an aesthetic reading through which the reader engages with ideas in the reading text relying on his/her prior experiences. From this transaction the reader creates a new unique and personal experience. The students therefore should be encouraged to express themselves freely about a literary text and slightly assisted to appreciate a literary text since literature encompasses artistic, social and cultural elements that are detected and approached in several different ways by different readers.

Accordingly, reading instruction should not seek to control the reader's experience but to facilitate the reader's own structuring of that experience. Hence, the teacher would assume a role of an enabler for the transmission of knowledge. This implies motivating students by selecting appealing works to which they can respond emotionally and linguistically in order to render reading a literary text an enjoyable and responsive experience. Moreover, the reader-response approach stresses the necessity and the pedagogical value of developing the students' critical abilities and awareness, so that they would

become critical readers and not passive accumulators of what has been delivered to them in class by their teachers.

On the whole, according to the proponents of reader–response approach, Rosenblatt (1985), Long and Carter (1991); and learner-centred approach, Tudor (1996), a good pedagogic approach to teaching literature should aim at eliciting the students response to the text and guiding them to a personal discovery, thus bringing in them the continuous love, enjoyment and appreciation of literary texts. This would eventually develop the students both language and literary competence.

3. Teaching literary text approaches

3.1 The traditional approach

It is conceived that because of the special features of academic content of literature and also because of the traditional methods of teaching literature, the role of the teacher in literature course is basically that of instructor and transmitter. Regarding this view, the teaching of literature in our universities has become mainly lecture-based with teacher-centred approach. As a consequence, the student becomes a parrot-like capable of simply repeating and “vomiting” what has been presented in class. Mililani (2003:2) states that:

“ Thus, the course (of literature) becomes a simple transposition of the teacher’s impressions and feelings to the learner towards a literary work,

and not an intellectual exercise for the latter who should seek and discover meaning by himself with the means and strategies provided by the teacher.”

Actually, in most literature courses, the teacher first assigns a text for students to read generally before class. Then, in the classroom, the teacher’s attention will be centered on the background information and explanations about some thematic and stylistic features of the text. In this teacher-centered approach, the learners have only few opportunities to do the task by themselves and formulate their own feelings and responses about the reading text.

Generally speaking, this approach does not consider too much the learner. Learners, thus read large amount of literary works, but whether their capabilities of assimilating, appreciating and analyzing is actually questionable.

3.2 Language-based approach

With the attention of looking for a more effective approach to teaching literature to EFL students that would help learners interact profoundly with literary texts and reconsider the teacher’s role, a language-based approach seems to be a very appropriate alternative that most of contemporary applied linguists and educators are calling for. Miliani (2003:2) affirms that:

“Literature rarely seems as an opportunity for language use, hence the need for a language-based approach to the teaching of literary texts in order to develop knowledge OF literature not ABOUT literature.”

Arab (1993:135) also affirms that:

“This is why the language-based approach, which not only softens the sudden exposure to marked texts, but also extends the students word repertory, as well as reading and writing skill, seem to be the most appropriate.”

The language-based approach entails the use of detailed analysis of text to guide students towards meaningful as well as personal interpretation. The teacher thus has to encourage the learners to use their schematic and systemic -linguistic – knowledge to form aesthetic judgments about the reading text. Besides, the reading texts should not be selected only for their stylistic features, but also for the fact that they reflect the learners’ interests in order to foster their engagement and allow them practise their personal experiences in their interpretation, typically as native speakers do when reading their preferable works.

3.3 Reader-response approach

With respect to the language-based approach, the teacher should not consider the learners as passive recipients, but active participants in extracting meaning from text and then responding to the underlying messages. Each reader will contribute to the final outcome depending on their expectations and previous experience. The teacher's role thus will be that of a mediator to help learners interact with the text. As McRae (1991:97) supposes:

“The teacher's role is as intermediary between author, literary work, and receiver in order to open up a multi-directional sphere of interaction.”

Therefore, the teacher must shift from teacher-centred to a learner-centred pedagogy that would allow him to assume a role of facilitator and mediator, in order to lead his learners towards an independent ability to read, assimilate and appreciate literary texts.

4. Literary competence:

Most of English language and literature teachers are familiar with Chomsky's term grammatical competence which refers to native speakers' mastery of internalized knowledge of rules and norms which govern their language and make them generating and understanding meaningful

utterances. Yet, few of them are not aware of literary competence. Lazer (2000:12) argues that:

« Effective readers of a literary text possess ‘literary competence’, in that they have an implicit understanding of, and familiarity with, certain conventions which allow them to take the words on page of a play or other literary work and convert them into literary meaning. »

Literary competence thus refers to an analogous mastery and knowledge of the roles and norms of literary discourse. This implies how a literary work, as distinguished from non-literary, is to be read processed and comprehended.

Within literary reading, the reader is very often confronted with a language that uses metaphorical and symbolic meanings which include figures of speech, metaphors, simile, etc. Teachers of literature thus have to familiarize their students with such language use and should encourage them to process any marked deviations from ordinary grammar and language. Moreover, readers should acquire a kind of competence to enable them recognize literary genres since each genre will require some specific knowledge on the part of the readers. Thus, reading a poem would activate the reader’s schemata – knowledge – on rhyme, meter, rhythm, alliteration and

images while reading a novel would imply readers to concentrate more on plot, characters, point of view, tone and so forth.

Each literary genre, actually disposes a particular set of features which makes it read and handled in a particular way with particular skills and activities. Besides, reading a literary text poses a crucial problem at literary terminology level or metalanguage. Readers then have to be acquainted with the necessary key literary terms to enable them exploring a literary text appropriately. For instance, if readers do not know foregrounding, foreshadowing, irony, apostrophe, etc, they will just rely on literal meanings of words, expressions and sentences that make-up the text.

Literary competence is dependent on the reader's awareness of literary text's devices, techniques and terms used by writers. This implies deviations of literary language, the use of metaphorical language, and the specificities of literary genres, since each genre presents a particular type of reading and knowledge, and literary terminology which helps the reader add meanings that are not apparent through the literal reading of language items.

On the whole, the more a reader is aware of the literary style, devices, techniques, genres and terms, the more literary competent he will be. So, teachers of literature have to consider the importance of literary competence through incorporating some tasks and activities in literary course.

5. Literary text:

Before probing into skills and strategies proper to literary text reading and comprehending, it seems convenient to draw a clear definition and the main characteristics of this type of text. Alderson (2000:65) affirms that

“Any discussion of text types is incomplete without at least some consideration of the distinction popularly made between literary and non-literary texts.”

Clearly, before discussing how learners should read and comprehend literary texts, it is necessary to distinguish it from the other types of text. Lucas (1990:27) divided texts into two major types: artistic and functional. Artistic texts include novels, short stories, essays, poems and plays. Functional texts consist of whatever texts other than the artistic as shown in the figure below:

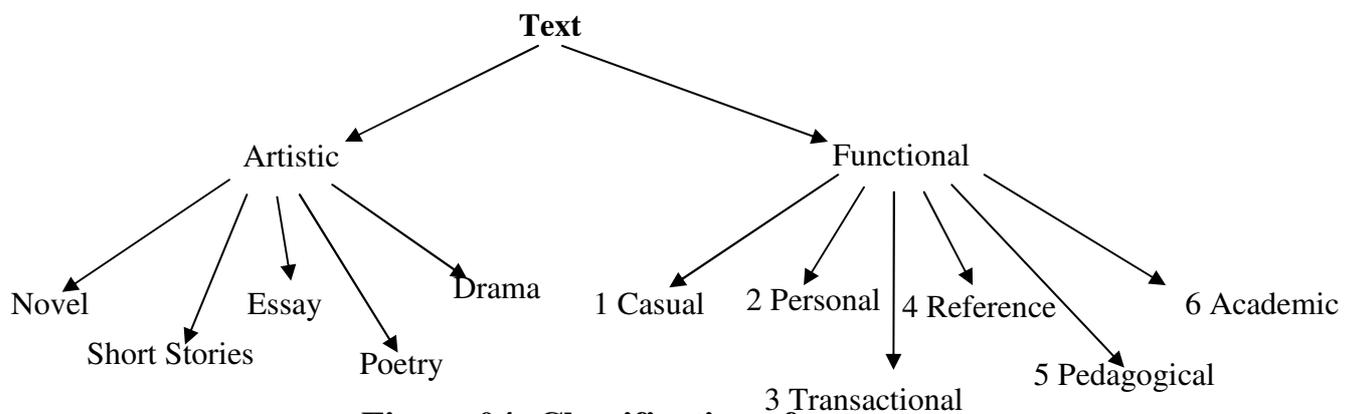


Figure 04: Classification of texts

From the diagram above, we deduce that literary text is artistic, as opposed to functional text, with five major literary categories which are typically the literary genres: novel and short stories- generally referred to as fiction-, essay, poetry and drama.

Functional text comprises 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, reports and instructions.
- 4- Reference texts include dictionaries, catalogues, directories and inventories.
- 5- Pedagogical texts include text books, encyclopedias.
- 6- Academic texts include research papers, theses, specialist books and journals.

Furthermore, it is assumed that literary texts are somewhat harder to comprehend. Alderson (2000) explains this that literature uses formal devices like deviation in order to defamiliarise language and hence raising special effects, the thing which would lead readers to reflect and process literary text differently. He also explains this by the use of figurative language like metaphor which makes readers use more personal associations according to the reader's socio-cultural knowledge of the text.

5.1 Characteristics of literary text

Arab (1993:133) considers four main characteristics for literary texts:

- A literary text is a sample of language use to be read and understood.
- The illustration and expression of artistic sensibility embedded in a specific literary genres (fiction, poetry, drama) having its own history and its own formal laws.
- An artefact to be related to its socio-historical context of which the writer's biography is one element.
- A semiotic construct with a set of devices and codes which definitely marks it off as literary and which therefore amenable to interpretation and evaluation.

On the whole, literary text is an artistic product with its specific genres (fiction, essay, poetry, drama) and with some artistic features and devices which distinguish it from non-artistic text.

These features manifest generally in grammar deviation and the use of figurative language. Also, literary text should be studied within its socio-cultural context in which the writer's society and convictions have to be highly considered. Thus, it seems insufficient to apply approaches and methods devised for non-literary text in order to fully understand and evaluate such highly marked kind of text. Accordingly, readers need to acquire some

literary competence that would enable them comprehend and interpret decently literary texts.

5.2 Literary text and metalanguage:

As distinguished from non-literary texts, literary texts exhibit considerable use of metalanguage or what is commonly known as literary terminology. Lazer (2000:45) affirms that:

« Using terminology means ensuring that students are familiar with it and encouraging them to apply metalinguistic terms to any text that they are reading and studying. »

It seems quite important to equip students with the necessary literary terms – literary metalanguage – to enable them processing any kind of literary texts. In view of the importance of literary terminology in understanding literary texts and genres, Lazer (2000) argues that presenting a list of literary terms with definitions is not sufficient enough to help learners and he proposes matching activities to ensure a good manipulation of these terms as follows: Match the definitions of literary terms with their corresponding examples.

Definition of literary terms	Examples
1. Images: words or phrases that appeal to the senses of seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling.	a) War is peace, freedom is slavery, Ignorance is strength.
2. Personification: when human qualities are given to something non human.	b) There are the black clouds of god's wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dreadful storm and gig with thunder.
3. Apostrophe: the direct addressing of something inanimate, of someone absent or dead.	c) My car has decided to quit on me.
4. Metaphor: a comparison between two unlike qualities without the use of connectors.	d) Abe Lincoln, where are you now that we need you?
5. Paradox: a statement which appears to be contradictory or absurd, but may be true.	e) His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin.
6. Simile: a comparison stated explicitly through a connector such as like, as, seems, etc.	f) My love for you is an all consuming flame.

Table01: literary terms practice

Regarding the utility of metalanguage in literary reading classes, Lazer (2000:45) suggests three major advantages.

- a. Literary terminology provides students with the tools for identifying distinctive features in a literary text and so appreciating it more fully.
- b. Students may expect to know the terminology, and will feel frustrated if they lack the means to acquire and use it, especially if they are expected to be familiar with it in exams.
- c. Students may be familiar with the terms in their own language, so providing the equivalents in English may be a simple and easy way of facilitating the transfer of literary knowledge from one language to another.

In conclusion, the amount of literary terms is not restricted, yet it is dependent on the genre and text to be studied. The teacher thus has to identify carefully the literary terms in the reading text in relation to their genre then presenting them in the form of activities rather than definitions.

6. Literary extensive reading

6.1 Introduction

Since literature is a reading-centred activity extensive reading, or reading extensively, seems to be a very efficient strategy to cope with the great body of literature particularly for pleasurable reasons.

Since the early seventies, so many definitions have been suggested to extensive reading. Susser (1990:3) points out that:

“Extensive reading is (a) reading a large quantities of material or long texts, (b) for global or general understanding, (c) with the intension of obtaining pleasure from the text.“

By definition, large quantities of books are very essential. This could be achieved by exploiting the large quantities of novels, anthologies and readers literature provides. Yet, the overall purpose of literary extensive reading is related to pleasure, and general understanding. Thus literary works could be the best means of including pleasurable reading.

6.2 Reasons for literary extensive reading:

Generally speaking, teachers of literature rely on intensive reading strategies which imply close study and interpretation of shorter text or selected extracts from novels. Theorists mainly Krashen, Stotsky, Elly, Nunan

and others, on the other hand emphasize the great role of extensive reading programme in fostering the learners' progress in reading and comprehending.

Krashen (1982) argues that extensive reading will lead to language acquisition provided that some conditions are met. This involves interesting material and relaxed, tension-free reading environment. Thus teachers should give opportunities to readers to choose their novels, poems, or plays to be read after guiding them towards the required books just through increasing their motivation taking into consideration the official programme. Grabe (1991) also has emphasized the importance of extensive reading in that it enhances the learners' general language competence and provides them with practice in automaticity and independent pleasurable reading.

Nagy et al (1987), Stotsky (1983) and Krashen (1984) affirm that extensive reading increases the students' exposure to the target language particularly literary material, this will increase the students' vocabulary growth and grammar manipulation the thing which can lead to improvement in reading and writing skills.

On the whole, theorists and applied linguists affirm that extensive reading mainly literary extensive reading energize and motivate students to read whole books and works thus, if properly used by teachers, it provides the potential for reinforcing language acquisition, ensures sustained interest in reading whole works and helps students to build strong confidence with long extended texts.

6.3 Principles for literary extensive reading

If appropriately taught, extensive reading programmes can provide very effective tools for promoting reading improvement and fostering learning as well as pleasurable reading skills.

Bell (1998) and Prowse (2002) Widdowson (1979) suggest some useful directives for teaching extensive reading.

A- Selecting interesting and pleasurable works considering the learners' motivation and level. The students should be given the opportunity to choose the works to be read .The teacher can arrange regular meetings between the students in which he motivates them to read and to show them lists of novels or short stories, and anthologies of poems and plays related to the syllabus then guide them in their choice of title by giving them brief accounts and summaries about the works as well as the author's lives and achievements.

B- Reading with the three NO's. NO dictionaries, NO comprehension questions and NO tests

Widdowson (1979) asserts that the natural response to reading a work is either emotional or intellectual, yet comprehension questions are neither of these. It is commonly assumed that comprehension questions require the learner to leaf out a text just for information to answer questions and this has no relevance to real, voluntary and pleasurable reading. Moreover, the use of a dictionary actually prevents the extensive reader from developing valuable interpretive and guessing skills. If learners turn to the dictionary every time,

they will focus on the language itself, and not on the message conveyed. This habit would result in inefficient reading and destroy the pleasure that reading novels and other literary genres are expected to provide.

Extensive reading should also go without the pressures of tests and marks. The only true test of reading is when a learner starts another new work. Thus, extensive reading done at home should be under the learner's control and not an obligation imposed by the teacher. Teachers should help their students to create stress-free conditions in order to enhance their love of pleasurable reading.

C- Writing activities as outcome. It is assumed that extensive reading will naturally lead learners to respond in writing. Students thus can be asked to write short paragraphs showing what they most enjoyed in the story or to write questions they wish to ask their teachers or other students in class or outside. They also can write lists of characters and events and write short accounts or summaries about the significant event or plot. Critical compositions could be opted for but only for advanced students or voluntary presentations this includes research papers and *exposés*.

D- Recording and entertainment. Teachers have to exploit all audio-visual means to enhance the reading abilities of their students. Recordings of books read aloud on cassettes and watching plays and films based on books, and even inviting visiting teachers to give talks and speech on recently read

works seem to be very efficient platforms for promoting pleasurable reading and fostering the students listening/ speaking abilities.

7. Conclusion

In fact, teaching literature at university has become too much concerned with vocabulary development and comprehension in which the literary text is used as a sample for grammar exercises and paraphrasing. Moreover, the teacher of literature enjoys a place of a dominant *know-all* master who supplies ready made interpretations and views usually taken from writers and critics about literary works

In order to reconsider the effective role of literature in TEFL classes, it is highly advisable to develop an adequate pedagogy which will assume a place for the teacher to lead the learners towards an independent ability to read and appreciate literary texts as well as to enhance their language skills and cultural awareness about the target language.