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TEACHING LITERATURE IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

The given article describes some of the issues and ways in which literature can be exploited in the classroom, where English is taught as a foreign language.

Keywords: Literature, English as a foreign language, teaching methods of literature, learning process, literature texts.

INTRODUCTION

We know that, literature has been a subject of study in many countries at a secondary or tertiary level, but until recent times there has not been given much emphasis in the EFL/ESL classroom. But nowadays, it has attracted more interest among EFL teachers. Before turning to the main question, we should take as a starting point the question: What is literature? Many scholars tried to answer to this question and there are various definitions in different sources. According to the Longman English Dictionary gives the following definition: typical of the style of writing used in literature rather than in ordinary writing and talking. So, literature is a term used to describe written and sometimes spoken material. Simply put, literature represents the culture and tradition of a language or a people. The concept is difficult to precisely define, though many have tried; it's clear that the accepted definition of literature is constantly changing and evolving (Esther Lombardi).

Literature stands as art! So, it can be defined as message between an artist and the audience. When an author writes, he takes words to create a piece of writing to communicate to readers. Through this piece, the audience creates a picture of the characters, visits new places, and finds meaning in what could be seen as simple events. An author's writing style is his/her platform for sharing art.

It is significant to understand how literature connects to other types of art that influences each other.

METHODOLOGY

When teaching the subject of English as a foreign language we should pay attention to the new trends and developments of language. The intention of this article has been to examine the use of fictional literature in the EFL classroom.

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Literary texts can be studied in their original forms or adopted forms. An accumulative number of works in English are written definitely for learners of other languages. The types of literary texts that can be studied inside and outside the ELT classroom include:

1 Short stories
2 Poems
3 Novels
4 Plays
5 Song Lyrics

The purpose of using literature in the EFL classroom though, goes beyond the requirements of the national curriculums. To be as a teacher in urging students to read and to inspire them to create good reading habits is important. Works of literature, at their best, provide a kind of proposal of human society. Helping students to discover reading as a pleasurable pastime activity, which can mainly be seen as a beneficial side effect, will aid students in their further education and to navigate in the world outside of school. It has been noted that there are clear influences between reading and other intellectual skills. Students who are used to reading are more likely to develop a further interest in reading, thus they develop both their ability to read further and broaden their vocabulary, which in turn leads to an overall success in school (Lundahl 1998). In teaching literature for EFL classroom we use top-down and bottom-up methods. When concentrating on a top-down approach the teacher will work with supportive structures in order for the student/reader to increase a broader understanding of the typescripts before reading them. A top-down model accepts that the learner attitudes the text by gaining a wider view of it before and while reading with the use of previous knowledge. One difficulty with stimulating reading a text using this approach is that a learner may view reading as simply a tool for enriching vocabulary or just language learning, and will thus fail to benefit from the literary experience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When it comes to different strategies for how to read more efficiently, there are those who speak both in favor of and against teaching such strategies to students in preparation for their reading. Reading strategies are conscious or unconscious techniques of approaching a text in order to understand it better. According to Tornberg, it is important for the students to become aware of the processes on which their understanding of a text rests and to learn how to use these. So, a teacher can

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begin early in the language learning process to systematically teach students ways of using reading strategies.

We may point out some good reasons for using literature in the auditory:

- Considering literature as an authentic material. It is decent to expose learners to this source of unchanged language in the classroom because they acquire in dealing with difficult or unknown language can be used outside the class.
- It encourages interaction. Literary texts are rich is multiple layers of meaning, and can be effectively mined for discussions and sharing feelings or opinions.
- It expands language consciousness. Asking learners to examine refined or nonstandard examples of language makes them more aware of the norms of language use (Widdowson, 1975 quoted by Lazar 1993).
- Literature edifies the whole person. By examining values in literary texts, teachers encourage learners to develop attitudes towards them. These values and attitudes relate to the world outside the classroom.
- Finding literature motivating. It holds high prestige in many cultures and countries. Therefore, students can feel a real sense of achievement at understanding a piece of highly respected literature. Also, literature is often more interesting than the texts found in course books.

Literature classes can bring about public displays of learner production through student creations. So for a diversity of semantic, ethnic and individual growth reasons, literary writings can be inspiring than the referential texts often used in schoolrooms.

There are some challenges to be faced when using literature in the classroom (Duff and Maley 2007):

- text selection – teachers should chose texts according to significance and interest to learners.
- linguistic difficulty – it’s necessary to select texts consistent with appropriateness to the level of the students' comprehension.
- length – it’s obvious that short texts are easier to use within the class time, but longer pieces offer more contextual niceties, and expansion of character and plot.
- cultural difficulty - manuscripts must not be so culturally condensed that foreigners feel excluded from understanding essential meaning.
- cultural appropriacy - readers must not be affronted by textual content.

CONCLUSION

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The usage of literature in the ELT classroom is delight in a restoration for a number of reasons. Despite the fact that it formed part of language teaching approaches, literature became less popular when language teaching and learning started to focus on the functional use of language. Nevertheless, the role of literature in the ELT classroom has been re-assessed and providing rich linguistic contribution, effective stimuli for students to express themselves in other languages and a potential source of learner motivation.

All teachers around the world survey the national programs and local instruction when it comes to the purpose of reading literature in the EFL class. Many teachers hand out written instructions to the students before they start reading, informing them on what to concentrate on and how they will be examined on their reading. If the learners were not aware of how and why they are reading literature the foreign language, there is a risk that they simply see it as language training and distillate on a bottom-up reading of the text. A bottom-up reading will make it much harder for the students to read longer texts such as novels. In the long run this will most likely work against the students developing good reading habits with all its benefits.

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