

## THE PROBLEMS OF TEACHING LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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**ABSTRACT**

Language and Literature are not just a part of human expression but also of life, culture and history. No wonder then the teaching methods proposed by academic scientists are only catalysts that can supplement teaching-learning process, which is independent to a teacher and is subjected to change based on place and time. Orthodox religion and liberal language are always paradoxical to each other however the ubiquity of English language is changing the perspective of even conservative countries. There are the linguistic, cultural, educational, political and personal challenges that Uzbek students face while learning English language. This paper is my sincere attempt to incubate my teaching-learning experience and to provide a preparatory glance for those who wish to see their career prosperity in the Uzbek world.

**Key words:** Language Skills, Language areas, Genres of literature, Language teachers, Class room, language, challenge, experience, innovation,

Language and literature are two different subjects in the field of language teaching. Yet, if compared and analyzed, they undergo similarities and hide nuances. While the former is distinct from the point of view of a teacher, for a learner they are the same and twin brothers - literature is language. This paper, presenting some literary examples, contends that it is a source for English language teaching, especially if it is used from the early years of education. It can be used in English teaching classes with respect to the language level, the cultural background, the age, and the tastes of the learners. A food without salt and spice may seem tasteless and so is language teaching without the use of literature.

**Introduction**

Until about the middle of the 20th century, teaching English in colleges and universities almost everywhere meant teaching of English Literature. After the Second World War, nearly all countries colonized by Britain gained political freedom one after another and while formulating their educational policy, all these countries had to make up their mind about the place of English in their curriculums (Brumfit, 1985; Brumfit, 1983). This more or less coincided with the emergence of linguistics as a subject of great importance all over the world and under the umbrella of Linguistics, psychology and certain other related disciplines, a great deal of thinking and rethinking was done about how best the third world countries could teach English in view of their limited

resources (Brumfit & Carte, 1986; Curran, 1976). After the initial hostility, nearly all countries decided to teach English for the purpose of augmenting their economy through science and technology (Carter & Michael, 1991; Daiches, 1970). They all felt, however, in the area of English for Special Purpose (ESP) provided a new direction to English Language teaching and the general feeling was that during the first few years the learners of English as a second or foreign language should master the basic language skills and then they should specialize in the ESP related to their profession or ambition in life (Eliot, 1951; Pound, 1954). The teaching of literature was considered an academic luxury. Universities which lacked a progressive outlook, continued, however, with the teaching of literature in their traditional way, thinking that it was too much of a bother changing over to the new philosophy of teaching English (Richards, 1929). Because of their mistaken sense of validity, many other policy makers thought that teaching literature the way it had been done for decades was the only sensible thing to do by way of teaching English. It would be in order here, therefore, to examine why if at all, English literature should be taught in countries where the need of the hour is only to teach functional English (Frye, 1964).

### **How to use literature meaningfully in the language classroom**

Here's a concrete, step-by-step process to get you started on enjoying literature with your students. You can tweak this process to fit your individual class's needs.

#### **1. Choose a book that suits your students' levels and interests.**

Finding the right book is everything! Take into account your students' age, hobbies and socioeconomic background. For example, chances are that your older teens won't find much to relate to in a picture book for young children. And if you have a class of students who are into sports, they may not be interested in a Victorian romance. But a book about a famous athlete might just do the trick.

But ultimately, how exactly do you choose a good book for your class?

In the same way that you choose a good book for yourself. By asking for recommendations!

Talk to colleagues and find out what books they've found successful in their classrooms. You could also reach out to parents and teachers in the target-language country and solicit their ideas about books that kids or adult learners enjoy.

Another convenient way to find book recommendations is through Goodreads or Amazon. Both of these popular book recommendation platforms have the option of searching for books in the target language. Results can be filtered to search specifically for children's or young adult books if applicable.

Here are a few that we like.

**English.** For primary-aged children, "The Name Jar" by Yangsook Choi offers some wonderful perspectives on cultural differences, as a Korean student searches for a new name to fit in at her American school. For older students, a classic like J.M.

Barrie's "Peter Pan" or E.B. White's "Charlotte's Web" is always a hit, providing life lessons in an engaging manner that transcends cultural differences.

**Spanish:** Carlos Ruiz Zafón's "*La Sombra del Viento*" (The Shadow of the Wind) offers a compelling mystery, with the added bonus of a window on life in 1945 Barcelona. Another great choice is Isabel Allende's "*La Casa de los Espiritus*" (The House of the Spirits).

**Mandarin Chinese:** Younger students will find much to relate to in the portrayal of a group of friends coming of age in Shanghai in Guo Jingming's "Tiny Times 1.0." You might also consider Weijia Huang and Ao Qun's "Readings in Chinese Culture" or Jiang Rong's "Wolf Totem."

**French:** Although originally published in 1959, you still just can't beat the relatable childhood humor in René Goscinny's classic "*Le Petit Nicolas*" (Little Nicolas). Other great French books for language learners: Albert Camus' "*L'Étranger*" (The Stranger) and Bernard Werber's trilogy "*Les Fourmis*" (The Ants).

## **2. Pre-teach vocabulary for discussing literature.**

Give students a repertoire of words for discussing things like genre, symbolism, theme and setting. Once they feel confident about the use of these terms, they can discuss stories in a more meaningful way.

## **3. Activate their prior knowledge.**

Ask students to write down all the things they know or have heard about the book, the author and/or the historical period. This exercise will provide a relevant context for the book.

## **4. Model your process of thinking about literature.**

While reading the first chapter, do some thinking out loud about the story. ("I wonder why the story began that way. I wonder what this character is going to do next.") By modeling this process in simple language with vocabulary from the book, you can instill confidence in the students to have a deeper discussion.

## **5. Have students listen to an audio recording of the text while they read.**

You can often find famous books or poetry recorded in the voice of the author, or that of a famous actor. Hearing the text read aloud makes the task less arduous and helps with pronunciation.

You could also couple the text with video clips of the book or poem being performed by actual native speakers of the language.

## **6. Provide discussion questions to be completed or discussed at the end of each chapter/section.**

Formulate questions that help students get to a deeper understanding about the plot, the characters, the theme and the language. The questions should require them to dig deep with examples from the text.

## 7. Allow them to express their ideas about the story or poem by drawing a picture or acting out a scene.

Don't just stick to routine question-and-answer activities to get your students to show understanding of the text. Mix it up with activities that spark their creativity. Literature plays an important role in the English programs of many non-English speaking countries. However, there are some problems encountered by language teachers within the area of teaching English through literature. First, there are very few pedagogically-designed appropriate materials that can be used by language teachers in a language classroom. Second, there is a lack of preparation in the area of literature teaching in TESL / TEFL programs. Third, there is the absence of clear-cut objectives defining the role of literature in ESL /EFL. The teacher has an important role in teaching English through literature. First, he should determine the aim of language teaching in relation to the needs and expectations of the students which means Student-centered. Moreover, since the students spend most of his time in the school/college, it is the teacher's duty to insist them to talk in English and he/she can be a little multilingual so as to express some terms in the student's language so that he/she can sustain the student to converse in English. In sum, literature provides students with an incomparably rich source of authentic material over a wide range of registers. If students can gain access to this material by developing literary competence, then they can effectively internalize the language at a high level (Elliot 1990:198). Literature is not only a tool for developing the written and oral skills of the students in the target language but also is a window opening into the culture of the target language, building up a cultural competence in students.

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