literature and language teaching
a course book

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INTRODUCTION

The use of literature for language teaching purposes has always been a controversial issue in different contexts all around the world. People still discuss whether it is a good idea to include literary works in the course material list of language classrooms because even though literary works enable learners to see authentic samples of the target language, give them a chance to understand the culture of the target community better and to practice the target language in different aspects, the complexity of the language presented to readers and the length of books make it difficult for teachers to use them with learners of different levels.

With the new curriculum suggested by Turkish Higher Education Council (YÖK), 2 new courses were added to the course lists of English Language Teaching Departments in Faculties of Education in Turkey. These courses are “Literature and Language Teaching I-II”. These courses aim to train prospective teachers of English with a good command of not only theoretical information about different literary forms such as short stories and novels, but also ideas related to their practice in the language classroom. After so many discussions with colleagues from different universities in Turkey, we agreed that we needed a course material that would facilitate the jobs of teachers teaching this course and that would give students a chance to go further than a simple analysis of literary works. For this reason, the aim of this edited volume is to provide students with theoretical information about different literary forms and some practical ideas for using them in the language classroom. This volume is composed of the following parts:

In Chapter 1, Doğan YUKSEL tries to explain the concept of “literature” in general and its contribution to the field of language teaching. He also lists some different approaches to the study of literature in the language classroom based on multiple activities.

In Chapter 2, Banu İNAN deals with “short story” as a literary form, starting with its definition, its historical development and main elements. In the second part of her chapter, she discusses the advantages and possible problems of using short stories for language teaching purposes and suggests different activities based on a short story by a well-known author.

In Chapter 3, Aşkin H. YILDIRIM uses novels, which is a very popular course material in language classrooms, as his main focus in his chapter. He suggests a variety of tasks which are applicable in the classroom while using novels.
In Chapter 4, Patricia TEHAN focuses on plays as course materials which might serve many different purposes in the language classroom. After giving brief information about what it refers to and its historical development, she suggests some classroom activities that might be used to improve students’ language skills.

In Chapter 5, Nazife AYDINOĞLU explains what poetry is, types and characteristics of poems. She also deals with different types of literary devices and how to use poems in the language classroom.

In Chapter 6, Esin KUMLU focuses on fairy tales and how to benefit from them while teaching English to young learners. She not only supplies theoretical information but also exemplifies the methodological value of fairy tales.

In Chapter 7, İhsan ÜNALDI explains the place of graded readers and extensive reading practice in the language classroom. He compares and contrasts extensive and intensive reading, their benefits for vocabulary learning and finally suggests sample activities based on the theoretical background he presented before.

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CONTENTS

Chapters and Contributors ................................................................................................................. iii

Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... v

Chapter 1
Use of Literature in Language Teaching ......................................................................................... 1

Chapter 2
Use of Short Stories for Language Teaching Purposes ................................................................. 15

Chapter 3
Teaching English through Novels ................................................................................................. 37

Chapter 4
Use of Plays in Language Teaching ............................................................................................. 63

Chapter 5
Poetry and Language Teaching .................................................................................................... 85

Chapter 6
Teaching Fairy Tales through Comparative Literature ................................................................. 119

Chapter 7
Graded Readers and Extensive Reading Practice in the Language Classroom .......................... 135
Study Questions
Before you start reading this chapter, try to answer the following questions:

1. What is literature?
2. Is there anything called “literary language”? If yes, what are the similarities and differences between literary language and daily language?
3. Are literary works good resources for language teaching? If yes, why? If no, why not?
4. What are the approaches of the study of literature in the language classroom?
5. What are the criteria for selecting literary materials to teach in the classroom?
INTRODUCTION

When the term “literature” is taken into consideration, there are different definitions that have been proposed up to now such as the followings:

- Literature includes any text worthy to be taught to students by teachers of literature, when these texts are not being taught to students in other departments of a school or university (Hirsch, 1978, p.34).
- Literature is a canon, which consists of those works in language by which a community defines itself through the course of its history. It includes works primarily artistic and also those whose aesthetic qualities are only secondary. The self-defining activity of the community is conducted in the light of the works, as its members have come to read them (or concretize them) (Mcfadden, 1978, p.56).

**TASK 1** Take the definitions above into consideration and write your own definition of “literature”.

Literary Language

Rosenblatt (1978) defines literary texts primarily in terms of how readers interact with them. She states that the common way of distinguishing literary works of art from other types of texts has been to examine the text itself. For Rosenblatt, a text is merely an object of paper and ink until a reader interacts with it.

**TASK 2** Compare and contrast the following texts in terms of their language. Are there any similarities or differences between them?

**TEXT A**

When You Make a Call

First check the code (if any) and number.
Lift the receiver and listen for dialing tone (a continuous purring).
Dial carefully and allow the dial to return freely.
Then wait for another tone:
Ringing tone (burr-burr) the number is being called,
Engaged tone (a repeated single note) try again a few minutes later.
Number unobtainable tone (steady note) replace receiver, re-check the code and the number, and then re-dial.
After dialing a trunk call there will be a pause before you hear a tone; during this time the trunk equipment will be connecting your call.
At the end of the call, replace the receiver securely because timing of calls stops when the caller hangs up.

When You Answer the Telephone

Always give your name or telephone number.
If you hear a series of rapid pips, the call is coming from a coinbox telephone. Wait until the pips stop and then give your name or telephone number.

General Post Office: Dialling Instructions and Call Charges (GPO, 1970).

**TEXT B**

... In homes, a haunted apparatus sleeps that snores when you pick it up.
If the ghost cries, they carry it to their lips and soothe it to sleep with sounds. And yet, they wake it up, deliberately, by tickling with a finger.

(From Craig Raine: “A Martian Sends a Postcard Home”)
Apparently, the language used in these texts has some distinctive features as they belong to different contexts. Both texts are, in fact, about telephones and how they are used. As Text A is an instructional text, the expected language form is “imperatives” and the language used is unambiguous. After reading this text, it is possible to expect to be able to perform an action (making a phone call) in a more accomplished manner. On the other hand, in Text B, the word “telephone” is not mentioned. As can be seen in Text B, things are left unclear on purpose and it is the reader’s job to clarify these unclear points, which is generally very demanding. This is one of the most distinctive features of literary language. As Brumfit & Carter (2000) suggest, students, most of the time, have to go backwards and forwards and search in, across an outside the text so as to find clues that will help them understand the texts.

**The Study of Literature v.s. The Use of Literature as a Resource**

The study of literature involves an approach to texts as cultural artifacts; using literature as a linguistic resource involves starting from the fact that literature is language in use and can therefore be exploited for language learning purposes. The study of literature also involves a considerable amount of metalanguage, critical concepts knowledge of conventions and so on, which for second-language learners presupposes a prior engagement with the study of literature in a first language.

**Literature as a Resource for Language Teaching**

Literary texts may be used in the language classroom as a resource for language development. McKay (2001) argues that using literature in the language classroom provides three major benefits for learners:

- it demonstrates the importance of authors’ choice of form to achieve specific communicative goals,
- it is an ideal resource for integrating the four skills,
- it raises cross-cultural awareness.

In addition to the advantages mentioned above, Lazar (1993, p.14) explains the following benefits of using literature in the language classroom:

Literature should be used with students because:

- it is very motivating
- it is authentic material
- it has general educational value
- it is found in many syllabi
• it helps students to understand another culture
• it is a stimulus for language acquisition
• it develops students’ interpretative abilities
• students enjoy it and it is fun
• it is highly valued and has a high status
• it expands students’ language awareness
• it encourages students to talk about their opinions and feelings

The advantages stated above are the general benefits of using works of literature in the language classroom. Taking these general advantages into consideration, some course objectives might be formed and the lessons might be planned according to these objectives. The followings are some sample objectives for reading literature suggested by Campbell (2007, p.6):

• Students will develop a variety of reading strategies in support of comprehension.
• Students will identify literary terms and examine how these terms contribute to the craft of writing.
• Students will develop skills in support of analyzing literature.
• Students will develop discussion skills that enable them to converse with peers about the literature they read.
• Students will discover connections with the literature they read: text to self, text to text, and text to world.
• Students will recognize the role literature plays in telling the story of cultures.
• Students will read literature as a model for the kinds of writing they are doing.

APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

Different approaches to the study of literature have been put forward up to now. A general understanding of these approaches is of great importance for teachers and learners so as to understand the best way to benefit from literature in their classroom with their own language learning and teaching purposes.

One of the categorizations of literature teaching approaches was suggested by Carter & Long (1991) and their main emphasis was its suitability for ESL/EFL settings. There are three main categories in their suggestion:
a) **The Cultural Model:** Within this model, the focus is on language as a cultural artifact, requiring learners to investigate a literary text from social, political, literary and historical perspectives.

b) **The Language Model:** It is based on the idea that literature provides a rich repertoire of contextualized linguistic features which can be systematically practiced through a wide range of activities with no regard for the literary quality of the text or reader-text interaction.

c) **The Personal Growth Model:** This model has the potential to meet the aims of the first two models, i.e. furthering language learning and cultural awareness, and to bring about personal development through placing a premium on the learner’s own response to and interaction with the text, feelings, ideas and opinions.

Another categorization in terms of approaches was made by Lazar (1993, p.23-24). She suggests using the following approaches while teaching literature:

1) **Language-Based Approach:** Studying the language of the literary text will help to integrate the language and literature syllabi more closely. Detailed analysis of the literary text will help students to make meaningful interpretations or informed evaluations of it. At the same time, students will increase their general awareness and understanding of English. Students are encouraged to draw on their knowledge of familiar grammatical, lexical or discoursal categories to make aesthetic judgments of the text.

Materials are chosen for the way they illustrate certain stylistic features of the language but also for their literary merit.

This approach is favored because it is believed that thanks to this approach, students are helped to develop a response to literature through examining the linguistic evidence in the text. Students are provided with analytic tools with which to reach their own interpretations. They are encouraged to draw on their knowledge of English, so this approach may provide useful exposure to, or revision of, grammar and vocabulary in interesting new contexts. It is a way of justifying the inclusion of literature in the language syllabus since it fulfills students’ main aim –to improve their knowledge of the language. According to some proponents of this approach, literary texts are seen as a resource which provides stimulating language activities. They are great sources for such kind of activities because they offer a wide range of styles and registers; they are open to multiple interpretations and hence provide excellent opportunities for classroom discussion; and they focus on genuinely interesting and motivating topics to explore in the classroom.
In contrast to the advantages mentioned above, some negative aspects are also stated. If applied too rigidly so that analysis of the text is undertaken in purely linguistic terms with little chance for personal interpretation, this approach could become very mechanical and de-motivating. Also, it may not pay sufficient attention to the text’s historical, social or political background which often provides students with the valuable cultural knowledge to interpret what they read.

2) Literature as Content: This is the most traditional approach, frequently used in tertiary education. Literature itself is the content of the course, which concentrates on areas such as history and characteristics of literary movements; the social, political and historical background to a text; literary genres and rhetorical devices, etc. Students acquire English by focusing on course content, particularly through reading set texts and literary criticism relating to them. The mother tongue of the students may be used to discuss the texts, or students may be asked to translate texts from one language into the other.

Texts are selected for their importance as part of a literary canon or tradition. The most important advantage of adopting this approach in your class is that genuinely educational approach in that understanding of texts is enhanced by situating them within their literary and historical context. Students are exposed to a wide range of authentic materials.

However, some teachers may be reluctant to use this approach in their classrooms because it may be most appropriate to a fairly select group of ‘literary-minded’ students. Material may be very difficult linguistically, and therefore de-motivating for the average student. The approach may rely too heavily on the teacher to paraphrase, clarify and explain, resulting in very little student participation. A large part of the lesson may be carried out in the students’ mother tongue, with students dependent on ready-made interpretations from the teacher.

In this approach, the background information to be supplied is very important but how to present it to the students will mainly depend upon the text which will be used, the time available, and the students’ interests. The following background information might be provided:

- biographical information about the author
- historical or mythological events or characters to which a text refers
- philosophical, religious or political ideas debated or discussed in a text
- places, objects or other texts referred to in a text – either directly or indirectly
- genre of the text
- relationship of the text to the literary movements of its time
• historical, political or social background against which the text was written
• distinct features of the author’s style

3) Literature for Personal Enrichment: Literature is a useful tool for encouraging students to draw on their own personal experiences, feelings and opinions. It helps students to become more actively involved both intellectually and emotionally in learning English, and hence aids acquisition.

Material is chosen on the basis whether it is appropriate to students’ interests and will stimulate a high level of personal involvement. Material is often organized thematically, and may be placed alongside non-literary materials which deal with a similar theme.

A possible advantage of this approach is that it involves learner as whole person, and so is potentially highly motivating. It demystifies literature by placing it alongside non-literary texts.

On the other hand, using this approach may be a problem because it may demand a personal response from students without providing sufficient guidance in coping with the linguistic intricacies of the text. Some texts may be so remote from the students’ own experience that they are unable to respond meaningfully to them. Alternatively, some groups of students may dislike having to discuss personal feelings or reactions.

This model has got important connections with the ‘humanistic approach to language teaching’ by Williams and Burden (1997), which are:
• involving the whole person in the learning process
• engaging feelings and emotions
• developing personal identity
• encouraging self-knowledge and self-evaluation
• establishing a sense of personal value in learners
• encouraging creativity

These subcategories of the models by Lazar (1993) and Carter & Long (1991) correspond to each other. The main ideas of “Language-based Approach” and “The Language Model”, “Literature as Content” and “The Cultural Model” and “Literature for Personal Enrichment” and “The Personal Growth Model” have very important similarities.
TASK 3  
Think about the learning/teaching situations in your country, which model is suitable for which learning/teaching situations? Why?

The following extract is from the short story named “Mabel” by Somerset Maugham. You will find some activities prepared according to the three approaches explained above based on the same extract.

It was at Pagan, in Burma, and I took the steamer to Mandalay, but a couple of days before I got there, when the boat tied up for the night at a riverside village, I made up my mind to go ashore. The skipper told me that there was a pleasant little club in which I had only to make myself at home; they were quite used to having strangers drop off like that from the steamer, and the secretary was a very decent chap; I might even get a game of bridge. I had nothing in the world to do, so I got into one of the bullock-carts that were waiting at the landing stage and was driven to the club. There was an old chubby man sitting on the veranda and as I walked up he nodded to me and asked whether I would have a whisky and soda or a gin and bitters. The possibility that I would have nothing at all did not even occur to him. I chose the longer drink and sat down. He was a tall, thin, bronzed man, with a big moustache, and he wore khaki shorts and a khaki shirt. I never knew his name, but when he had been chatting a little while another man came in who told me he was the secretary, and he addressed my friend as George.

‘Have you heard from your wife yet?’ he asked him.

The other’s eyes brightened.

‘Yes, I had letters by this mail. She’s having no end of a time.’

‘Did she tell you not to fret?’

George gave a little chuckle, but was I mistaken in thinking that there was in it the shadow of a sob?

‘In point of fact she did. But that’s easier said than done. Of course I know she wants a holiday, and I’m glad she should have it, but it’s devilish hard on a chap.’ He turned to me. ‘You see, this is the first time I have ever been separated from my missus, and I’m like a lost dog without her’

‘How long have you been married?’

‘Five minutes.’

The secretary of the club laughed.
Sample Activities according to Language-Based Approach

**ACTIVITY A**
*Read the extract above and identify which words were used to describe a place and which words were used to describe a person.*

**ACTIVITY B**
*Match the following words in Column A with their synonyms in Column B.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Devilish</td>
<td>Worry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chap</td>
<td>evil, wicked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decent</td>
<td>appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighten</td>
<td>Illuminate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fret</td>
<td>a man, a fellow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Activities according to Literature as Content Approach

**ACTIVITY A**
*Read the extract above and try to match the writing style with Somerset Maugham’s style.*

**ACTIVITY B**
*The extract above is the beginning of a short story. Think about the parts of a short story. Is this extract a good example of the beginning of short story?*

Sample Activities according to Literature as Personal Enrichment Approach

Before you read the extract above, do the following activities:

- Suppose that you had to be away from your beloved ones, how would you feel?
- How does the distance between couples affect the relationship? How many different ways of overcoming this problem can you think of?
- Imagine that you are the partner of someone who has to go and live in another country for 2 years. Do you feel
  - sorry because you will be away from someone you love?