UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN MACEDONIA
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

University of St. Kliment Ohridski Bitola
University Fan. S. Noli of Korce
University of Western Macedonia
Education Across Borders

1st International Conference

EDUCATION ACROSS BORDERS

Florina 5-7 October 2012

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTORY NOTE

I am pleased and honored to present the e-book edition of the 1st International Conference entitled: **"Education Across Borders"**, held in Florina on October 5- 7, 2012, as part of the educational/scientific cooperation of the three neighbouring Faculties of Education:

a. Florina Faculty of Education of the University of Western Macedonia (Greece)
b. Korca Faculty of Education of Fan S. Noli University (Albania)
c. Bitola Faculty of Education of St. Kliment Ohridski University (FYROM)

The conference was planned in 2011, after an exchange of visits by delegations of academic staff of the three institutions, with the purpose to establish harmonious neighboring relations and scientific cooperation, as well as to strengthen the bonds with neighboring universities aiming at the cross border scientific and cultural development.

During the conference, the syllabi of the Faculties of Education of the three Universities were presented, some scientific ideas and views were exchanged and suggestions were made about prospective collaboration at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

In the opening-day plenary, some selected papers related to cross-border educational cooperation were presented, while in the second day of the conference presentations and lectures as well as round tables were held, which covered the following thematic strands:

1. History and Culture
2. Information and Communications Technology
3. Language and Literature
4. Mathematics and Science
5. Pedagogy and Psychology

In total, 149 abstracts were submitted to the conference, having been prepared by 247 authors (155 authors from Greece, 43 from Albania and the 49 from FYROM). The total number of presented papers was 119, with 72 papers from Greece, 18 papers from Albania and 29 papers from FYROM.

Drawing attention to the successful outcomes of the conference that were achieved, we highlight the valuable opportunities provided with, for making future exchanges and collaborations between academics of the three Faculties of Education. In this context, the Korca Faculty of Education of Fan. S. Noli University will host the 2nd Conference, which will be held on October 2014.

It is my hope that this institution will be established and the targets, which were set, will be achieved.

Prof. Charalampos. Lemonidis
Dean of the Faculty Of Education

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DEDICATED TO THE USE OF LITERATURE FORMS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SCHOOLBOOKS

Sashka Dimitrovska
University of St. Kliment Ohridski
Faculty of Education
Bitola, FYROM
saska_dimitrovska@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper reports on the using literature forms in English language schoolbooks. It aims to show that "Using Literature forms in the English Language schoolbooks" is a concept that has its focal point in language development. Also, any syllabus based on this concept should also maintain language as the central concern. For this, it is imperative that curriculum developers depart from the traditional view attached to literature. It is also equally important that the syllabus has suggestions for teaching strategies and forms of assessment. The objectives may outline the importance of literature towards language development, but they become redundant if the teaching and assessment techniques do not apply those objectives practically. The first part of the paper expounds on the perceived goals of the process of using the literature materials. The second section focuses on the effects of teacher's development.

Keywords: *literature, literature forms, schoolbooks, language*

1. Introduction

The use of literary forms in the English language teaching school textbooks is enjoying a revival for a number of reasons. Having formed part of traditional language teaching approaches, literature became less popular when language teaching and learning started to focus on the functional use of language. However, the role of literary forms in the English language teaching school textbooks has been re-assessed and many now view literary texts as providing rich linguistic input, effective stimuli for students to express themselves in other languages and a potential source of learner motivation.

My aim in this paper is to present the general view of using literary forms in English language school textbooks. Although the studies on the use of literary forms in teaching English have been increasing abroad, in my country, particularly in public schools, only English grammar is being taught. The students who are expected to memorize these rules cannot use English. My aim is to exhibit why and how literary forms can be used in order to teach English effectively and efficiently.

For a long time, literature has not been included in the curriculum of teaching English

since teaching a foreign language has been regarded as a matter of linguistics. "In sixties and seventies, in fact, there was a distinct reaction against the use of any literary English at all in the classroom, but now the pendulum has swung the other way ..." Jeniffer Hill (1994). As is mentioned by Jennifer Hill, there is a growing interest for the use of literature in EFL (English as a first language) / ESL (English as a second language) classes in recent years, and there are studies on how to use literature in EFL/ESL classes in the world.

The teachers of English in the above-mentioned schools concentrate on teaching grammar. After the explanation of the rules of grammar, teachers give their students mechanical drills, and the students are obliged to make the drills consisting of unrelated sentences. The students, therefore, memorize the rules. As for reading, special course hours are not devoted to develop the reading skills of the students. In classes, the passages in the course textbooks, which are usually far from motivating the students, are studied. First, the vocabulary is given, and the students have to memorize it. Then, the teacher asks factual questions about the passage. The answers to the questions are easily seen in the passage. So, the students do not have to infer anything from the passage.

"Language is not only langue, but also parole". (Roger Sell, 1995, p.12), Teaching a foreign language, therefore, is an act of teaching and developing the reading, speaking, writing and listening skills of students as well as introducing the culture of the society within which the target language is spoken so that our students can understand what language actually means, instead of what it tells. Roger Sell (1995) points out that "From the point of view of language education, the most important implication is that knowledge of linguistic form – of words and grammar- is not enough. For the purposes of both comprehension and production, a learner also needs to develop a fully internalized grasp of the social and cultural environments within which the language in question is actually used". He adds as well that "We know what the language means because, in certain types of context and language use within the culture, certain signifieds are associated with certain signifiers, and because language is used in certain ways in certain situational contexts" (Sell, 1995, p.9). In order to develop students' comprehension and production skills, literary works seem to be the most suitable materials. Jennifer Hill (1994) mentions the reasons for using literature as extensive readings follows: the possibility of internalizing the language and reinforcing points previously learned, a genuine language context and a focal point for the students in their own efforts to communicate and the most important – the Motivation.

2. Traditional Approaches

The teaching of literature has recently been resurrected as a vital component of English language teaching. Over the past few decades, there has been much discussion on the value of attempting to teach any kind of literature, whether it is the classics or any imaginative work written in English, as part of an English language syllabus. For instance, in the sixties and seventies, there was a distinct reaction against the use of any literary English before the pendulum swung again in support of literature teaching. The opposition towards literature may well have been due to the impact of the approaches that were practiced in the decades prior to the sixties and seventies and prevailing ideas in language teaching and methodology.

The study of literature acquired eminence during the Romantic period when the Romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge asserted that the "imaginative truths" expressed by literature were superior to those discovered by scientists, historians and other scholars:

> *the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all Knowledge; Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge - it is as immortal as the heart of man.*
>
> *(Wordsworth: 1805)*

Literature was seen as a body of knowledge which ought to be learnt for its own sake. The process of creativity and the entire body of literature were given an honored and elevated status that sustained the elitist nature which the study of literature had already acquired.

In examining traditional approaches to literature, what is apparent is the prevailing views amongst the elite were continually emulated by educationists, possibly preventing a

clearly-defined role for literature teaching in education. Most of these views remained as propaganda and failed to motivate a reasoned set of proposals as to how a literature course could be designed. The ultimate purpose of literary criticism can be defined as interpretation and evaluation of literary writings as works of art and the major concern of the critic is to explicate the individual message of the writer in terms which make it clear to others. However, this is a difficult process to implement without a sufficiently explicit and pedagogically-oriented definition of the nature of literature study as a subject. A consistent assertion that literature illuminates the mind with no specific aims in terms of objectives only served to make literature an unpopular subject. Moreover, changes began to happen in the sixties and seventies.

The approaches in language teaching in the sixties and seventies stressed the structural methods to language learning, with emphasis on discrete-point teaching, "correctness" in grammatical form, repetition of graded structures and restricted lexis. These approaches represented a methodology unsuited to literature teaching, and were unable to accommodate literary texts. Thus, in many situations, while English language teaching adopted a structural approach, literature was taught as a separate subject, sometimes comprising purposeless poetry recitation.

Nevertheless, current approaches have endeavored to reexamine the value of literature and have begun to uphold its worth again. These approaches assert the value of literature teaching from several aspects, primarily, literature as an agent for language development and improvement, cultural enhancement and also for the eminence that many poets have previously ascribed to it.

Literature is beginning to be viewed as an appropriate vehicle for language learning and development since the focus is now on authentic language and authentic situations.

3. The Relationship between Language and Literature

It is difficult to supply a watertight definition of the term "literature" but what can be asserted is that literature is not the name of a simple, straight-forward phenomenon, but an umbrella term which covers a wide range of activities. However, when it becomes a subject of study, it may be seen as an activity involving and using language. The claim "the study of literature is fundamentally a study of language in operation" (Widdowson: 1971) is based on the realization that literature is an example of language in use, and is a context for language use. Otherwise, studying the language of literary texts as language in operation is seen as enhancing the learner's appreciation of aspects of the different systems of language organization.

Linguistic difficulty has been one of the main arguments against literature. There has been a general pre-supposition that to study literature, one required knowledge of the intricacies of language and an inherent interpretative ability to derive the writer's message.

Traditionally, literature has been used to teach language use but rarely has been used to develop language use.

The advantage of using literature for the latter purpose is that literature presents language as discourse, in which the parameters of setting and role-relationships are defined. Carter (1986) insists that a natural resolution would be to take an approach in which language and literature teaching are more closely integrated and harmonized than is commonly the case at the present time so that literature would not be isolated, possibly rejected, on account of the "literariness" of its language: It is my contention that some of the language activities and work with models on the literariness of texts can aid such development, and that responses can best develop with increased response to and confidence in working with a language using a variety of integrated activities, with language-based hypotheses and in classes where exploratory, student-centered learning is the norm.

Another argument against literature also relates to literariness. With the shift to communicative approaches to ELT in the eighties, literary language is seen as not providing the conventional and appropriate kinds of language required to convey, practical, everyday messages. Poems, plays and novels make use of the same basic language system but have differing functions from non-literary discourses in the communicative function. The result is that poets, novelists and playwrights produce linguistic messages, which by their very nature, stand out

prominently against the reader's background awareness of what is both communicatively conventional and linguistically appropriate to the social purpose that the message is to fulfill, though grammatically intelligible in terms of syntax and vocabulary.

Yet, what emerges from such work is the recognition that the precise contextual values of every word, phrase, clause and sentence can be inferred from its interaction with all the others in the text.

4. The advantages of using the literary forms in English language

School textbooks

John McRae (1994) distinguishes between literature with a capital L - the classical texts e.g. Shakespeare, Dickens - and literature with a small l, which refers to popular fiction, fables and song lyrics. The literary forms used in the English Language school textbooks today are no longer restricted to canonical texts from certain countries e.g. UK, USA, but include the work of writers from a diverse range of countries and cultures using different forms of English.

Literary texts can be studied in their original forms or in simplified or abridged versions. An increasing number of stories in English are written specifically for learners of other languages. The types of literary texts that can be studied inside and outside the English language teaching classroom include:

- Short stories
- Poems
- Novels
- Plays
- Song Lyrics

Literary texts provide opportunities for multi-sensorial classroom experiences and can appeal to learners with different learning styles. Texts can be supplemented by audio-texts, music CDs, film clips, podcasts, all of which enhance even further the richness of the sensory input that students receive.

Literary texts offer a rich source of linguistic input and can help learners to practice the four skills - speaking, listening, reading and writing - in addition to exemplifying grammatical structures and presenting new vocabulary.

Literature can help learners to develop their understanding of other cultures, awareness of 'difference' and to develop tolerance and understanding. At the same time, literary texts can deal with universal themes such as love, war and loss that are not always covered in the sanitized world of course books.

Literary texts are representational rather than referential (McRae, 1994). Referential language communicates at only one level and tends to be informational. The representational language of literary texts involves the learners and engages their emotions, as well as their cognitive faculties. Literary works help learners to use their imagination, enhance their empathy for others and lead them to develop their own creativity. They also give students the chance to learn about literary devices that occur in other genres e.g. advertising.

Literature lessons can lead to public displays of student output through posters of student creations e.g. poems, stories or through performances of plays. So for a variety of linguistic, cultural and personal growth reasons, literary texts can be more motivating than the referential ones often used in classrooms.

Literary texts can present teachers and learners with a number of difficulties including:

- text selection - texts need to be chosen that have relevance and interest to learners.
- linguistic difficulty - texts need to be appropriate to the level of the students' comprehension.
- length - shorter texts may be easier to use within the class time available, but longer texts provide more contextual details, and development of character and plot.
- cultural difficulty - texts should not be so culturally dense that outsiders feel excluded from understanding essential meaning.
- cultural appropriacy - learners should not be offended by textual content.

Duff and Maley (2007) stress that teachers can cope with many of the challenges that literary texts present, if they ask a series of questions to assess the suitability of texts for any particular group of learners:

- Is the subject matter likely to interest this group?
- Is the language level appropriate?
- Is it the right length for the time

available?
- Does it require much cultural or literary background knowledge?
- Is it culturally offensive in any way?
- Can it be easily exploited for language learning purposes?

It is all very well to point out the advantages of teaching literature but the key to success in using literature in the ESL/EFL classroom depends primarily on the works selected. A text which is extremely difficult in linguistic or cultural levels will reap few benefits. Several solutions have been suggested with regard to the problems of linguistic or other difficulties: simplification, extracts or simple texts. Simplification is not generally favored because of its reduction process. The original book is shortened in characters, situations and events, the vocabulary is restricted and the structures are controlled. Extracts are advantageous because they remove the burden of intensive lengthy reading. However, they are artificially isolated for teaching purposes and do not necessarily cultivate interest in reading in the ESL/EFL learner.

5. Assessment

The notion of literature as a difficult and highly academic subject is also reflected in the techniques of assessment. Assessment is still based on critical essays, which impel teachers to focus on understanding the text and inevitably leads to testing for recollection and literal comprehension. However, incorporating literature into the language classroom calls for more emphasis on the development of language skills, enjoyment and creativity. If these elements are the main focus, then it is possible to depart from any literature examination based wholly on memory.

It is possible to assess in a lively, interactive way (where imaginative recreation can take place), in which students are encouraged individually or in group (suitable for continuous assessment) to approach the text in an integrated manner. This could include:

- re-writing a poem/story/scene from a different point of view.
- scripting an episode for radio or television.
- writing or dramatizing what happens after the events in the poem/story/play.
- writing an incident as a newspaper report.
- writing the diary of a character in the text.
- writing a letter from one character to another, or from the student to a character.
- improvising a scene for live performance.
- interviewing one of the characters.

These suggested tasks could offer students the opportunity to respond imaginatively to their reading experience by developing the text in a way that employs communicative and purposeful language.

Admittedly, these types of assessment strategies would require a more complicated and perhaps even a more sympathetic method of scoring where language accuracy should not be the deciding factor. However, if students were encouraged to use language imaginatively, their interest and motivation for English would increase, and eventually would lead to improved use and performance in the language.

If literature begins to be taught and examined at lower secondary levels in these ways, it will foster enjoyment of the text alongside a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the language. Students will then be ready to explore some of the literary features of the poems and stories, having become fully involved with the writers and characters in the process of language consolidation and imaginative recreation. Still, to assess or to examine literature in a communicative or interactive way demands teaching strategies that also integrate language and literature, allowing activities which require language, which involve students in experiencing language, playing with language, analyzing language, responding to language and enjoying language. These elements can only be achieved if the student is allowed to engage in a process of discovery:

However intrinsically interesting the ideas presented by the teacher could be, they will only appear interesting to the students if they are allowed to discover them for themselves. This is especially true when what is taught is reading, which is always a process of discovery, a creation of meaning by the reader in collaboration with the author. "If this creative dimension is

removed, if we are told the meaning of what we read before we read it, then we are left with the hollow formality of scanning the words on the page, with no incentive to piece them together, to treat them as communication". (Jennings: 1989)

Therefore, it is essential that when literature is brought into the language classroom, it needs a clearly-defined aim, which is an axiom in language teaching for ESL/EFL learners. Only then can literature be successfully integrated into the language teaching.

6. Conclusion

"Using Literary forms in the English Language school textbooks" is a concept that has its focal point in language development. Also, any syllabus based on this concept should also maintain language as the central concern. For this, it is imperative that curriculum developers depart from the traditional view attached to literature. It is also equally important that the syllabus has suggestions for teaching strategies and forms of assessment. The objectives may outline the importance of literature towards language development, but they become redundant if the teaching and assessment techniques do not apply those objectives practically.

Literature generates creativity in language and imagination and should feature in any education system that regards discovery and enjoyment as essential components of the learning process.

To conclude what I mentioned in the introduction was that my aim was to present the general view of using Literary forms in English language school textbooks and I suppose that I did it. I have also stated that although the studies on the use of literary forms in teaching English have been increasing abroad, in our country, particularly in public schools, only English grammar is being taught. The students who are expected to memorize these rules cannot use English. The aim of this paper was to exhibit why and how literary forms can be used in order to teach English effectively and efficiently.

Literature study can also provide a range of texts and an introduction to the many different varieties of English. The same reasons are true for intensive reading as well. Similarly, William Littlewood (2000) emphasizes the importance of the use of literature in EFL classes as follows:

> A major problem of language teaching in the classroom is the creation of an authentic situation for language. A language classroom, especially one outside the community of native speakers, is isolated from the context of events and situations which produce natural language. In the case of literature, language creates its own context. The actual situation of the reader becomes immaterial as he or she takes on what D. W. Harding calls 'the role of the onlooker', looking on the events created by language. These events create, in turn, a context of situation for the language of the book and enable it to transcend the artificial classroom situation.

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