

The Role of Literary Competences in Teaching the English Language

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Abstract: Nowadays there is a debate between scholars on the topic of the importance of using the literature in teaching the foreign languages in ESL classes. In that way it is acceptable to raise the questions why? who? what? Some language educators prefer to use literary materials not only for improving the students fundamental language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) but also language areas (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation). The teaching and learning process can be smoothen if the teacher can apply the literary competences properly in his classes as they are very important for students to be able to delve deeply into the literary meaning. However, although different genres of literature like poetry, short fiction, drama and novel are beneficial in teaching learning process, sometimes teachers have to deal with some problematic situations to lead the literature lesson in the ESL classes (absence of preceding literature awareness, scantiness of student's recognition of the significance of studying literature, contrasting tastes of topics of learning). Below we will discuss the role of competences to promote the student's understanding in literary works as they allow the readers to acquire a knowledge of dissimilar opinions and appreciate the differences in the real society.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since the middle of 1980s and 1990s applying to literary works such as drama, novel, poetry and prose has appeared in English as a second language context, and it has been mainly utilized as a resource of authentic material of the target language. In that way literature can also be helpful for the EFL context students as they seldom make the use of language in context in their ordinary conversations. Moreover, it is important to count other advantages like giving opportunity for the learners to learn more about a wide variety of perspectives, broadening their horizons and indirectly teach them how to show respect to certain values in real society. Not only literature has been a medium or method of language instruction – (Sharp, 2013) but also gave students a chance to explore new cultures with the help of texts. However, as literature is difficult to be applied to the daily conversations, the effort to teach of literature seems to be irrelevant in the process of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). As there is difference between literary work and other types of discourse such as magazine articles, textbooks or an academic journal, literature requires the learner to contemplate deeply. According to (Culler, 2002) in order to understand the original context of the text,

the reader must have implied conception of acts of literary exposition which helps one to focus on. He names this skill as “literary competence” which forces the reader to change the implication further on than what is put on in the text”. Jane Spero's early representation for literary competences was consisted of six measurements:

- Recognizing the ordinary perception of text (general gist and specific information)
- Acknowledging the content (author's experience, social origin, ancestry, cultural and geographical background)
- Learning to identify (emotions, personality, incidents, scenes, backgrounds)
- Learning to value the literary materials (i.e., prospects, pattern, formation, imagination, language, topic, temper, conspiracy, classification, position, personality)
- Learning to be imaginative (indicating tenderness, frame of mind, expressing personality, settings, backdrop, episode: employing sounds, imagination, harmony, tempo)
- Schooling the condemnatory structure (new criticism, Marxist criticism, deconstructionism, structuralism based on text)” – (Spero, 1991).

According to Burtwitz Melzer, (2007) reading competences model is based on approaches which is including 5 dimensions,

- Motivational competence
- Cognitive and affective competences
- Intercultural competences
- Competence of communication about the text
- Reflexive competence

In each dimension learning objectives and skills are suggested to the learners to be good at literary texts. Besides, motivational, and reflexive competences are emphasized as a part of intercultural competences.

However, in the opinion of Diehr et al., (2015) literary competences “distinguishes six competences assumed in three dimensions:

- Motivational and attitudinal competences: e.g., reading, listening, and viewing motivation, suspension of disbelief emphatic perception of protagonists’ and other points of view, reflecting one’s own experiences in view of the text, aesthetic features of the text.
- Linguistic and discursive competences: e.g.: activating linguistic skills,
- Aesthetic and Cognitive competences: e.g.: reading comprehension, filling gaps, forming hypotheses, recognizing and interpreting aesthetic forms of presentation in different genres, contextualizing literary texts.
- Linguistic and discursive competences, using reading strategies and techniques, communicating about the text. – (Dierh et al. 2015)

As authors mentioned, to be engaged with the text requires psychological, emotional, and behavioural competences as well as traditional language skills.

2 DEFINITION OF LITERARY COMPETENCE

There has been a wide discussion among the linguistics on how to define literary competences. It is impossible how to learn literary competences automatically. Literary competences are a basic concept in the field of literature and linguistics which motivate learners to understand and make sense of value of literary materials. At first, linguist Noam Chomsky used the term “competence” in order to express speaker’s natural knowledge of language. Later, this term was used to indicate specific knowledge and skills required to collaborate and translate literature productively. According to Maley,

1985 “It is just all how to use and study literature”. However, it was defined by Brumfit et al., (1986) as “an interesting combination of linguistics, socio-cultural, historical and semiotic awareness “while Culler gave nearly the same idea “conventions by which fictions are read”. To some extent literature is related to culture, Raymond Williams gives a social definition of literary competence ‘ as a description of way of life, which expresses certain meaning and values not only in art and values but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour” - Williams (1998). Notwithstanding their benefits, these competence models include concepts like motivational or cognitive competence, which are difficult to pinpoint and accurately assess in pupils. They also comprise competencies that aren't unique to literary works. In contrast, the Companion to the CEFR attempts to test learners' competencies in handling a creative text in a clear and concise manner by providing extremely practical "can do" statements. The Companion introduces three new illustrative scales relevant to literature in order to address the imbalance caused by the absence of descriptors for literature in the 2001 CEFR: "Reading as a leisure activity," "Expressing a personal response to creative texts (including literature)," and "Analysis and criticism of creative texts (including literature)" – (CEFR, 2018). These "can do" statements serve as a springboard for our understanding of literary competence in an ELT context, which consists of four key competencies: empathy, aesthetic and stylistic competence, cultural and discursive competence, and interpretative competence. All these competencies are firmly rooted in a general linguistic competence of English and a reading competence alike. Even though there are some obvious overlaps with the categories that the Companion suggests, the methodical grouping of related skills into the model that is offered here enables a more methodical approach to the instruction and, eventually, evaluation of these skills, ideally by bringing attention to the procedures involved in literary appreciation. However, the discovery and development of distinct competencies must not take precedence over the study and understanding of a literary material. Existing models of literary competency tend to operationalize neglected parts of ELT, which runs counter to the linguistic outcome-orientation of current ELT. There is a chance that English language instruction will be reduced to things that are easily comparable and can be objectively described as a result of the trend toward comparable English capabilities that are defined by competence levels and scales. Therefore, components that rely on

interpretation and/or personal reactions risk being ignored – (Zydatis, 2005). Therefore, if using literature in ELT is to continue to be a key component of any national curriculum, even when examined critically, it must adapt to competence- and outcome-orientation. In an effort to make literary competences measurable, current competence models include distinctions between subcategories that honour the potential of the literary works mentioned above – (Paran, 2010). Most individuals worldwide first come into contact with literature in a significant way in school. Exams are the catalyst for the inculcation of reading and writing in all of us, since they are taught to us from a young age.

It is fundamental and, in the eyes of students, an essential skill to be able to empathize with a group of characters printed on a page. Sensing themes and messages also allows us to view the world from a different angle. A vessel is created by literature. A reader can learn new things by using the 130 million books that have been written worldwide as a guide and a bridge.

3 COMPONENTS OF LITERARY COMPETENCES'

The following competences are regarded as the main components of literary competences:

- Linguistic Competence
- Cultural Competence
- Genre Competence
- Literary Theory Competence
- Stylistic Competence

3.1 Linguistic Competence

It is sited in the centre of literary competence which encloses a reader's awareness of the language, syntax, and lexis used in the literary work. This rudimentary knowledge helps readers to decode literal meaning of a text like characters, events and its plot. The unconsciously acquired grammar that enables a speaker to utilize and comprehend a language is referred to as linguistic competence. Sometimes called I-language or grammatical competency. In contrast, consider language performance.

Linguistic competence is not an evaluative phrase in the sense that Noam Chomsky and other linguists use it. It speaks instead of the natural language ability that enables one to associate sounds with meanings. "We thus make a fundamental distinction between competence (the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his

language) and performance (the actual use of language in concrete situations)," stated Chomsky in *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965). This theory states that language competence can only be "properly" used in idealized circumstances, which would presumably exclude any memory, distraction, emotion, and other potential roadblocks.

3.2 Cultural Competence

To enable the readers to be aware of historical events, social norms and cultural references, literary materials are usually inserted in specific cultural contexts. To illustrate, "Gulliver's travels" can be a vivid example to get the readers acquainted with the political climate and ideology of the period during which the novel was written. When Ali M. Mattu started his doctoral studies in clinical psychology at the Catholic University of America five years ago, he believed he was prepared to take on almost any cultural issue because he was a member of a minority group and a former Asian-American studies minor with an interest in diversity. As it happened, one of his first clients confounded the future diversity chair for APAGS. According to Mattu, who is currently APAGS's chair-elect, "He was going on and on about confession, using a lot of Catholic lingo that I'm not familiar with." "Then he looked at me and asked point blank, 'Have you been to confession here?'"

3.3 Genre Competence

Each literary genres, such as tragedy, poetry, drama, and fiction differ from each other according to their agreements and assumptions. Due to recognize these genre-specific features and comprehend them accordingly literary competences play the vital role. The methodical study of literary analytical techniques and the nature of literature is known as literary theory. Since the 19th century, literary theory and analyses of intellectual history, social philosophy, moral philosophy, and interdisciplinary topics pertaining to meaning interpretation have been a part of literary studies. The latter kind of literary studies in the humanities is a branch of post-structuralism in contemporary academia. As a result, the term "theory" evolved to refer to a broad range of academic methods to text analysis, some of which drew inspiration from semiotics, cultural studies, philosophy of language, and continental philosophy.

3.4 Literary Theory

Literary competence requires to be familiar with several literary theories such as author theories or “pragmatic” theories, mimetic theories, feminism, or post colonialism which can reveals facets of a text. Literary theory originated in ancient Greece (Aristotle's Poetics is a frequently cited early example), ancient India (Bharata Muni's Natya Shastra), and ancient Rome (Longinus's on the Sublime). It was only become a profession in the 20th century. Medieval scholars continued to publish works based on literary studies in the Middle East (Al-Jahiz's al-Bayan wa-'l-tabyin and al-Hayawan, and ibn al- Mu'tazz's Kitab al-Badi) and Europe. The aesthetic theories of philosophers from antiquity to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have had a significant impact on literary scholarship today. The history of literature is connected to literary theory and criticism. Some academics—both theoretical and anti-theoretical—make reference to the arguments over the benefits of academic purpose. Literary theory is the systematic study of the nature of literature and of the methods for literary analysis. Since the 19th century, literary scholarship includes literary theory and considerations of intellectual history, moral philosophy, social philosophy, and interdisciplinary themes relevant to how people interpret meaning. In the humanities in modern academia, the latter style of literary scholarship is an offshoot of post-structuralism. Consequently, the word theory became an umbrella term for scholarly approaches to reading texts, some of which are informed by strands of semiotics, cultural studies, philosophy of language, and continental philosophy.

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3.5 Stylistic Competence

It is important to analyse and recognize the writer's choices in language, style and tone which is vital for the readers to appreciate the elegance of the material

and acknowledge how these choices put up to its overall impact. Characterizing the subject and goal of researching stylistics has been done. Studies have been conducted on stylistics aspects such as stylistics of language, stylistics of speech, and stylistics of fiction. It is possible to distinguish between the ideas of "language style" and "speech style." It has been discussed how to comply with style norms and the characteristics that contribute to the development of stylistic aptitudes and competencies. A defined linguistic-didactic system has been established to help students develop their stylistic competence. This system consists of the following: functional-stylistic learning approaches (which guarantee efficient work on the representation of the features of the functioning of language units, their implementation in each style, the development of speaking fluency), learning patterns (patterns of language learning and patterns of speech learning), general didactic and linguistic didactic teaching principles.

4 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LITERARY COMPETENCES

Since literary competences play an essential role to engage with the literature on a higher level, it is not only an academic pursuit but also a required skill to go deeply into the meaning of the text. Below some reasons are enclosed to prove why literary competence is valuable:

- Effective communication
- Enhanced appreciation
- Cultural insight
- Personal growth

Moreover, in second language educational context literary competence is an important concept for the teachers to teach the literature since it sets up a clear definition of what the learner must have during the reading process. With the help of literary competences, individuals can develop skills through the literature that are not only useful for today's global environment, but also inspires changes and innovations as studying English literature motivates us to acquire knowledge through novels, poems, stories in various types of areas such as economics, politics and cultural aspects.

5 CONCLUSION

In spite of some disagreement and confusions about applying competences in second language

teaching/learning process, it should be taken into the consideration that literary competence is an important concept as it leads the reader to go deeply to the essence of the text than what is written on the paper. Furthermore, it develops some basic qualities in readers by teaching them cultural value, personal outlook and appreciation the differences in the real society. Applying critical thinking to the writing, speaking, listening, and reading abilities becomes essential when thinkers actively share their authority over the texts, themselves, and other sources. The practice of interactional critical literacy in an EFL English literature classroom is described in the current study. The recent shift in the curriculum from emphasizing knowledge to textual analysis ability serves as the driving force behind the exercises. Because so few students were able to demonstrate their literary competency through the response papers, the study's data set was rather limited, making it difficult to conclude if the activities were successful in getting the children interested in literature. Nonetheless, the targeted group interview subjects and the group discussion that were documented in this study.

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