# THE PRACTICAL STANDARD CONSIDERING ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE CLASSROOM

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper is a review of literature on how literature can be integrated as a language teaching material in EFL/ESL classes. First, it tracks down the place of literature in language classes from the early Grammar Translation Method (GTM) to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) era. The paper then discusses the reasons for the demise and resurrection of literature as an input for language classes. After that the reasons for and against the use of literature in EFL/ESL classes are enumerated and discussed. For so doing, the researchers draw upon recent ideas on language teaching practice and theories. Finally in a practical move, this paper reviews the past and current approaches to teaching literature in language teaching classes. Five methodological models for teaching literature are proposed. Literature was initially the main source of input for teaching in language classes in the era of Grammar Translation Method but since then it has been dropped down the pedestal. In fact with the advent of structuralism and audiolingual method, literature was downplayed and ergo discarded to the periphery (Collie & Slater, 1987, p.2). Also in the era of CLT, literature was neglected and more attention was given to dialogues and conversations which were more practical and visible in the real world situation. Maley (2001) argues that this attitude toward literature is due to a paucity of empirical research confirming the significance of literary input for language classes. Maley states that what exists right now as empirical research on literature and language teaching are confined to action research in small scales. Taking heed of all these disfavors, in the middle of the 1980s some practitioners and language scholars resurrected literature as a language learning material after a long period of being neglected (Duff & Maley, 1991). This can be confirmed by seeing so many publications heralding the coming back of literature (Maley, 1989b) in language classes (e.g. Collie & Slater, 1987; Duff & Maley, 1991; Gower & Pearson, 1986; Hill, 1986; Lazar, 1993; Maley & Duff, 1989; McRae, 1991). Besides, applied linguistics fueled the return of literature for language teaching (Belcher & Hirvela, 2000).*

## INTRODUCTION

Literature exposes students to complex themes and fresh, unexpected uses of language. A good novel or short story can take the students to foreign countries and fantastic worlds. A play or a poem can bring up certain dilemmas and powerful emotional responses. All this can be transposed to their real lives.  Literature can provide students with access to the culture of the people whose language they are studying.   Obviously, at lower levels, students may be unable to cope on their own with an authentic novel or short story in English. Any extensive reading we encourage them to do outside the classroom would probably need to be of graded material, such

as graded readers. But at higher levels, students may be so absorbed in the plot and characters of an authentic novel or short story, that they acquire a great deal of new language almost in passing.  *If recorded literary material is available (audio-books), then students can practice their listening skills.   One of the debates centred around literature teaching in the language classroom is whether literature language is somehow different from other forms of discourse in that it breaks the more usual rules of syntax, collocation and even cohesion.   Using literature with students can help them to become more sensitive to some of the overall features of English. Some examples of different uses of English in literature are: Literary texts are very motivating due to its authenticity and the meaningful context it provides (Ghosn, 2002, Van, 2009). Literature deals with things which are interesting in nature and includes little if any uninteresting things (Maley, 1989a). Motivation is one of the elements which can drive the learners to go ahead. Motivation is especially achieved when students are exposed to what they really enjoy. Experience shows that students are highly motivated when they are exposed to literary texts for language learning purposes. Literature promotes cultural and intercultural awareness (Van, 2009) especially in the era of globalization (Tayebipour, 2009). In the era of globalization, there is a growing concern of universally shared needs and wants rather than individual needs. Since literature deals with universal concepts (Maley, 1989a), there is an urge to grab on literature as an input source for flourishing language learners' competence. Globalization cries for joining hands not only in economy, politics, and sociology but also in language-related fields such as ELT. According to Maley (1989a), literature deals with universal concepts such as love, hatred, death, nature, etc that are common to all languages and cultures. The similarities and even differences between cultures and languages can further our understanding of the whole world.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

How do you teach students to become better writers, readers, and critical thinkers? How can teachers  meet the Common Core State Standards while still encouraging thoughtful and rigorous classroom discussion  and student work? Facing History and Ourselves works with teachers, administrators, and school districts across the country to meet the Common Core English/Language Arts standards and Literacy in history/Social Studies standards while encouraging meaningful discussions and exploring questions that will prepare students to participate in building a more peaceful, tolerant tomorrow. In his classroom, Stephen Lazar uses technology, history, and literature to help his students better understand the choices they face in their own lives. As a New York City high school social studies teacher, Stephen Lazar routinely turned to Facing History and Ourselves for teaching strategies and classroom resources. This year, while teaching his first English class at the new Harvest Collegiate High School, Lazar is turning to Facing History to find the primary source documents and writing prompts he needs to meet the Common Core State Standards. "I didn't have a name for the course yet," said Lazar, who wrote the course curricula earlier this winter with help from his Facing History program associate, David Levy. "But I knew what I wanted the main themes to be – empathy and looking

at things from multiple perspectives. I just knew there had to be Facing History material out there that I could use." Lazar took his first workshop, a five-day investigation interface, with Facing History six years ago after learning about the organization from his father, a former social studies teacher in Cleveland, Ohio. "[The workshop] gave me a very concrete way to have my students interact with history as themselves, not just as students of history, but as human beings looking at other human beings making decisions," Lazar said. Two years ago, he enrolled in a week-long, in-depth seminar, Holocaust and Human Behavior. Teacher Stephen Lazar uses Facing History resources to meet the common core in his English classroom Lazar and Levy looked into the different teaching strategies, classroom activities, and primary and secondary source readings he could incorporate into a literature course that focused on making meaning of the diversity students face in their communities and worlds each day. The resulting class, which kicked off in January 2013, is called "Perspectives." "It's all about putting yourself in someone else's shoes," Lazar explained by phone recently. "About walking, reading, and writing in others' shoes." "Stephen knew when he started thinking about the course that the big picture themes of Facing History would be applicable," Levy said. "He was building a course that focused on identity, and throughout our texts are stories, or memoirs, or pieces of history that look at identity in different ways." The course started with a six-week unit called "You and I" that examined the notion of identity, exploring questions like Who am I? How am I perceived by others? How do both of these perceptions impact my choices? Next up was a six-week unit called "Us and Them," which looked at issues of difference and incorporated Facing History resources on membership and society. In this unit, the students explored the history of the Weimar Republic as a way to set the stage for reading All Quiet on the Western Front. The course will end this spring with a unit called "The Meaning of Life." It may be a lofty title for a seven-week unit, but it gets right to the heart of what the students consider – that meaning in life often comes from interacting with others, that each of us has causes and people that are of life and death importance to us, and that other perspectives can offer guidance for our own lives. The backbone of the course is a solid syllabus of readings and assignments that have the students writing and reading personal narratives from multiple perspectives, researching, constructing effective arguments, and critically analyzing complex texts across a range of types and disciplines. As a result, the students are meeting the Common Core State Standards through a deep investigation of nonfiction, fiction, and essential questions about human nature."A challenge a lot of English teachers feel when trying to meet the common core is the struggle of integrating informational texts. For a lot of teachers, they think that they can either teach books or teach informational texts. But with Facing History, you see that you can integrate that," Lazar said. "What Facing History has done with their resources is to organize them by theme, so I can go into a resource book likeHolocaust and Human Behavior or Race and Membership in American History and go to a section about identity and find texts and books that meet my needs. I can go in and find or write text-dependent questions from that. It makes my life so much easier."

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Searching for a suitable research methodology for the project, Lemke's statements were found the most helpful, where he embraces a social perspective on language that sees schools not as 'knowledge delivery systems' but as social institutions in which people affect each other's lives. He argues that classroom education is talk. "It is the social use of language to enact regular activity structures and to share systems of meaning among teachers and students".This research project mainly focuses on literature circles, which Daniels describes as a quite sophisticated and highly evolved part of the wider collaborative learning movement. Before making a distinction between cooperative and collaborative learning, we should know that, the act of learning takes place in social interactions through joint, collaborative activity. As Baquedano-López states, learning takes place first at the social level which is 'the inter-personal level' and is later appropriated by the individual one which is 'the intra-personal level'. Daniels introduces a distinction between 'cooperative learning', which is mainly used to describe traditional skills-oriented school tasks assigned by teachers to student groups, and 'collaborative learning', which is preferred for more higher-order, student-centered and open-ended activities. To find the relation between literature circles and communicative and cooperative learning, we depart from Raphael and Gavelek's view that 'literature circles' can be traced to the idea of cooperative learning study groups where students work collaboratively on specific projects or tasks. As it is also mentioned by Ernst-Slavit, Carrison, & Spiesman-Laughlin, literature circles provide opportunities for oral language and literacy growth for all students, including English language learners. Many teachers, however, are hesitant to use this instructional approach with students who are learning English.On the one hand, it is generally difficult to make a distinction between cooperative and collaborative learning methods at the beginning. When we consider the advantages of small group structure and active student participation in collaborative and cooperative tasks over passive, lecture based teaching, the two terms seem quite close in meaning. In both ways learning is supported by a discovery based approach. Both methods require group skills and come with a framework upon which the group's activity resides, but cooperative learning is usually more structurally defined than collaborative learning.On the other hand, experts define the differences between these methodologies as one of knowledge and power, as Rockwood explains. It can be concluded that cooperative learning is based on foundational knowledge while collaborative learning is more on the constructionist's view that knowledge is a social construct. Cooperative learning requires the instructor as the center of authority and is usually more closed-ended and usually has specific answers. In comparison, collaborative learning does not entail the instructor's authority and requires small groups which are often given more open-ended, complex tasks.

## RESULT & CONCLUSION

This study has researched a new method of using literature in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to stimulate the social interaction among language learners. A bottom up approach based on the observation of the classroom interaction and the conducting of a questionnaire survey has been presented, combining qualitative observation results with statistical information from the survey. The methods of using literature circles to practice foreign language show encouraging results for both teenagers and young adults and are efficient compared to other conventional techniques in EFL classrooms.The main rationale for this research was to find out the benefits of using literature circles in English as a foreign language learning environments. The study has set out to determine the effects of these student reading groups on language learning as most of the foreign language learners find extensive reading boring and those classes are the most challenging ones for the teachers as well. One of the significant findings to emerge from this study was, if the literature circles help language learning through stimulation of the classroom atmosphere by having the teachers and students focus on the interaction patterns during the book discussion sessions. The suggested ideas with this research was that, the literature circles as a balanced element of the school curriculum can provide an exciting way to promote student engagement in extensive reading by means of cooperative learning and collaborative work and offer the potential to promote reading for enjoyment. The main focus of the analysis part was the contrast in interactions and classroom discourse taking place in literature circles and regular alternative extensive reading classes. The main concern was concentrated on how these variables affect the language development of English learners. The main variables observed were 'classroom activities' like, activity type, participant organization, content, student modality and materials and 'classroom language' like, the use of target language, information gaps, sustained speech, reaction to code or message, incorporation of preceding utterances, discourse initiation and relative restrictions of linguistic forms. The results of the study presented in the findings chapter clearly show that the development of the classroom interaction assists language learning and literature circles is an effective way of bringing the classroom interaction to life. If we take the reflections of the student and the results of the observations into consideration, it is evident that the implication of literature circles is a rather different procedure compared to ordinary classroom instruction. Literature circles bring excitement and energy into the language classroom. During this study the participants enjoyed the sense of responsibility for their own learning and decided to improve their interaction skills to become better English language learners.As for the benefits in EFL classes, it is also observed that literature circles facilitate learning by giving students an opportunity to share opinions in a specially designed classroom atmosphere, practicing situations very similar to real life experiences. I believe that the effectiveness of this method is greatly dependent on the teacher's motivation. If the teacher manages to produce a collaborative learning environment with the suitable materials, I believe that the students will be readily eager to participate and support the shared experience and knowledge created in the classroom.One of the

more significant findings to emerge from this study is that the students were motivated to reading and by this means improved their foreign language skills during the process of this research. They experienced a different atmosphere of practicing language. They did similar assignments as they did before but this time for a more realistic purpose and in a more authentic environment.

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