

USE OF LITERATURE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING COURSE BOOKS

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ABSTRACT

In recent years the number of proponents of literature use in language classes has been considerably increasing due to increased awareness of benefits of including literature into language programs. A number of books have been published to help guide language teachers on how to use literature in their lessons, and publishers have begun to investigate ways of including literature into their language teaching course books. The aim of this paper is to examine to what extent and how literature has been integrated into course books specially prepared for language teaching. To this end, three sets of course books used at the preparatory schools of four state and four private universities in İzmir have been scanned. According to the results of the study, there is a noticeable effort to increase learners' awareness of literature. Even though literary texts are rarely used, there are frequent references to the names of authors and the titles of literary works and fictional characters. When the advantages of integrating literature in language teaching are considered, it can be strongly recommended that many more attempts are needed for more use of literature in more effective ways in language course books.

Keywords: Literature, Language Teaching, Course Books, University Preparatory Classes

INTRODUCTION

The importance of integrating literature into second language learning programs has been discussed for years, and literature has begun to return into language classes in recent years at an increasing rate. In fact, literature was included into language teaching from the very beginning when modern languages began to appear in the curriculum of schools in Europe in the 18th century. Grammar Translation Method was the first method of teaching foreign languages; and this method was used for the longest period of time in the history of language teaching from the beginning until early 20th century. The aim of this method was “to learn a language in order to read its literature in order to benefit from the mental discipline and intellectual development that result from foreign language study” (Richard and Rodgers, 2001:5). Kramsch and Kramsch explained “The study of language in those days meant the study of literature” (2000:554).

The beginning of the 20th century witnessed efforts to “emancipate modern languages from grammar/translation pedagogy” (Kramsch and Kramsch, 2000:556). Literature began to be excluded from the syllabuses of language teaching programs with the use of the Direct Method. With the replacement of the Direct Method by the Situational Language Teaching and Audiolingualism after WW1, literature was completely taken out of the realm of language teaching. This continued till the rise of Communicative Language Teaching in 1970s and 1980s. The use of authentic texts as teaching materials in communicative teaching opened the way for literature to be considered in language teaching again. In spite of the doubts about literature because of its notorious connection with grammar translation method, literary works began to make “a welcome comeback within a communication-oriented methodology” (Kramsch, 1985: 356).

Since then literature has commonly been considered to be a way of having access to authentic materials although the ways and frequency of using literature have shown a great range of variety. Some people view literature as supplementary material for entertainment and motivation, some as central material because “literature is language” (Moody 1986:2). Some people use it for close linguistic analysis, and some “as a starting point for creative activities (Widdowson, 1992). This paper aims to examine to what extent and how the establishment of literature in second language learning is reflected in the course books for English language teaching.

Reasons for Using Literature in Language Teaching

There are several reasons for using literature in Language Teaching. Collie and Slater (1987) group those under four headings in their book *Literature in the Language Classroom*:

- a- Valuable authentic material,
- b- Cultural enrichment,
- c- Language enrichment,
- d- Personal involvement.

While explaining authentic material value of literary texts, Collie and Slater emphasize not only the richness of literary texts in quantity but also their content having a great variety of linguistic use and being related to issues that are crucial for human beings (1987:3, 4):

... literature offers a bountiful and extremely varied body of written material which is important in the sense that it says something about fundamental human issues, and which is enduring rather than ephemeral...In reading literary texts, students have also to cope with language intended for native speakers and thus they gain additional familiarity with many different linguistic uses, forms and conventions of the written mode, with irony, exposition, argument, narration, and so on.

In cultural enrichment part, it is explained that for learners of a second language who do not have the opportunity to go to the country where that language is spoken, literature is an invaluable source to get a quick “feel for the codes and preoccupations that structure a real society” (Collie & Slater, 1987:4)

Although Collie and Slater argue that “...literature does not always give learners the kind of vocabulary, they need” and “the language of literary works ...is not typical of the language of daily life...” (1987:4). They agree that it certainly helps learners to enrich their receptive vocabulary, and “...also provides a rich context in which individual lexical or syntactical items are made more memorable.” (1987:5). One of the benefits of reading literary texts is that it improves reader’s reading and writing skills as it involves making inferences from linguistic clues and deducing meaning from context and familiarizing them with many functions of written language. In addition, studying with literary works improves learner’s listening and speaking skills as it is “an excellent prompt for oral work” (Collie & Slater: 5).

The last benefit Collie and Slater mention is personal involvement. Literary texts involve the readers not only because of their linguistic value, but “... the fiction summons the whole person into their own world” as well (1987:6); it arouses their interest in following the plot development and readers identify with the characters and learn to have empathy with them and tolerate them.

Gillian Lazar, in her book *Literature and Language Teaching* (1993), mentions similar benefits of using literature in language classes with some slight modifications and additions. She classifies those under six headings:

- a- Motivating material,
- b- Access to cultural background,
- c- Encouraging language acquisition,
- d- Expanding students’ language awareness,
- e- Developing students’ interpretive abilities,
- f- Educating the whole person.

Lazar says literature is motivating for several reasons. First of all, as “... literature is highly valued..., students of English may experience a real sense of achievement at tackling literary materials in the classroom” (1993:15). The second factor is the fact that “literature exposes students to complex

themes and fresh, unexpected uses of language”. It is gripping because “...it involves students in the suspense of unraveling the plot”. It also elicits “... a powerful emotional response from students” (1993:15).

Under the subtitle “Access to Cultural Background”, she explains that “...reading literature in English does encourage students to become broadly aware of the social, political and historical events which form the background to a particular play or novel” (1993:17). By means of reading literature, students learn “...how a member of a particular society might behave or react in a specific situation” (1993:17).

Lazar points out that literary texts supplement the “...restricted input of the classroom” in addition to providing “...meaningful and memorable contexts for processing and interpreting new language” (1993:17).

Under the subtitle “Expanding Students’ Language Awareness”, Lazar accepts that literary language sometimes differs from common usage. However, this is not a handicap; readers may find out what the differences are and how they affect the meaning, thus they become “more sensitive to some of the overall features of English” (1993:19). Lazar here supports her argument by making a reference to Widdowson (1975), who argues that by exposing learners to stylistic differences, we encourage them to think about the norms of English.

Lazar also focuses on the role of literature in developing interpretive abilities, “forming hypotheses and drawing of inferences” (1993:19). By referring to Rossner’s interview with Widdowson in *ELT Journal* 37/1, she writes that literature develops learners’ interpretative abilities because “...they are rich in multiple levels of meaning, and demand that the reader/learner is actively involved in ‘teasing out’ the unstated implications and assumptions of the text” (1993:19). Lazar also agrees that literature educates the whole person as “...it can help to stimulate the imagination of our students, to develop their critical abilities and to increase their emotional awareness” (1993:19).

In their book titled *Literature*, Alan Duff and Alan Maley (2007) focus on three main benefits of literature in language learning; these are:

- a- Linguistic value,
- b- Cultural value,
- c- Affective value.

Firstly, Duff and Maley mention the authenticity and richness of variety of literary texts at various levels of difficulty and claim that literature provides “an unrivalled richness of input” (2007:5) to enhance “vocabulary acquisition, extending the range of syntactic patterns, developing a feel for textual cohesion and coherence and a sense of linguistic appropriacy” (2007:5). Secondly, they state “that we can’t learn the culture of a language through its literature”; however, “literary texts are in a very real sense the vehicle for culture” (2007:5). As a third point they discuss the affective value of literature and claim literary texts leave more traces than ordinary texts in the memory because reading and interpreting them “involves a deeper level of mental processing, a greater personal involvement and response” (2007:6). Literary texts require critical, emphatic and creative reading.

In their book *Teaching Literature in Second Language* (2000), Parkinson and Thomas try to list the benefits of using literature by making references to F. R. Leavis (1943), Maley and Moulding (1985), Collie and Slater (1987), and Duff and Maley (1990). Their list includes the following items:

- a- Cultural enrichment (Collie and Slater 1987);
- b- Rhetoric, a model for good writing (Collie and Slater 1987);
- c- Mental training (F. R. Leavis 1943);
- d- Authenticity (Duff and Maley 1990);

- e- Being memorable (Maley and Moulding 1985);
- f- Assimilating the rhythms of a language (Maley and Moulding 1985);
- g- Involving affect and thus motivating (Duff and Maley 1990);
- h- Open to multiple interpretations and thus leading to genuine interaction (Duff and Maley 1990).

Parkinson and Thomas add two new benefits to their lists although they express doubt at their being as strong as the aforementioned ones:

- a- Literature is difficult. After “learners come to the end of language”, they experience a sense of achievement by reading “difficult” literary texts (2000:10),
- b- It is convenient. Literary texts are “easily available” (2000:11).

Geoff Hall’s book, *Literature in Language Education* (2005) aims at giving “an account of existing research and practice” and “to stimulate further research and informed pedagogic innovation in the field of literature and language teaching (2005:1). They give a detailed list of the benefits of literature in language teaching mainly by summarizing the previous studies in the field. Here is their list given under the title of “Claims for value of literature in second language teaching.” (2005:48):

- Affective arguments (pleasurable, motivating and personalizing);
- Cultural arguments (cultural knowledge, intercultural experience);
- Psycholinguistic arguments (‘focus on form’, discourse processing skills – inferencing, processing of non-literal language, tolerance of ambiguity and others);

More miscellaneously:

- Expands vocabulary;
- Aids language acquisition in specified but general ways;
- ‘gives a feel for’ the language;
- Develops more fluent reading skills;
- Promotes interpretative and inferential skills;
- Contributes to cultural and intercultural understanding;
- Literary texts are supposedly particularly linguistically memorable;
- above all, literature is claimed to be pleasurable.

Research Questions:

This research aims to find answers to the following questions:

1- To what extent is literature integrated into language course books used in university preparatory classes?

1a. What is the rate of the units with literature in them to the total number of units in language course books?

1b. What is the rate of pages with literature in them to the total number of pages in language course books?

2- What is the distribution of types of literature (short story, novel, play, poem, auto/biography) in language course books used in university preparatory classes?

3- What is the distribution of components of language (grammar, lexis and skills- reading writing, listening and speaking) related to literature in language course books used in university preparatory classes?

4- What is the distribution of male and female writers of literary texts in language course books used in university preparatory classes?

5- What is the distribution of the nationalities of the writers of literary texts in language course books used in university preparatory classes?

6- What are the ways of integrating literature into language course books used in university preparatory classes?

Scope of the Research

The universe of the study is the preparatory classes of universities in Turkey. Four state universities and four private universities in İzmir and the course books they used in the academic year 2011-2012 were taken as the sample.

METHODOLOGY

In this descriptive research, all the books in these three sets were scanned for the use of literature in them. The findings were classified according to the distribution of types of literature (short story, novel, play, poem, auto/biography), the distribution of components of language (grammar, lexis and skills- reading writing, listening and speaking), the distribution of male and female writers of literary texts, the distribution of the nationalities of the writers of literary texts and the various ways literary texts are integrated into course books. The results were shown in tables with percentages.

Data

Three different sets of the course books and workbooks (total 32 books) were taken as the data of the research. These sets are *Success* Series by Pearson and Longman, *Language Reader* Series by Pearson and Longman, and *face2face* Series by Cambridge.

ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

Table 1: The rate of the units with literature in them to the total number of units

Course Books	Total Number of Units	Number of Units with Literature	Rate
Set A	156	50	33.3 %
Set B	120	36	30.0 %
Set C	116	35	30.2 %
Total	392	121	30.1 %

When the rate of units with literary texts in them to the total number of units is considered, it is found out that there is almost no difference in the rates among the three sets. In one third of the units literature is used in one way or another.

Table 2: The rate of pages with literature in them to the total number of pages

Course Books	Total Number of Pages	Total Number of Pages with Literature	Rate
Set A	1452	103	7.1 %
Set B	1424	74	5.1 %
Set C	1244	64	5.1 %
Total	4120	241	5.8 %

As it is seen, the rates are low and they vary between 5.8 and 7.1. The rate of pages with literary texts in them to the total number of pages (5.1) is considerably lower than the rate of units with literary texts in them to the total number of units (30.1).

Table 3: The distribution of types of literature

Course books	Short Story	Novel	Drama	Poetry	Biography	Others
Set A	8 (7.2 %)	77(60.1 %)	15 (11.7%)	16 (12.5%)	4 (3.1%)	8 (7.2%)
Set B	1 (0.8 %)	82 (65 %)	14 (11.1%)	1 (0.8%)	6 (4.7%)	22 (17.4%)
Set C	4 (4.7 %)	45 (52.9 %)	11 (12.9%)	1 (1.1%)	4 (4.7%)	20(23.5%)
Total	13 (3.8 %)	204 (60.1%)	40 (11.7%)	18 (5.3%)	14 (4.1%)	50 (14.7%)

According to the findings, the novel is by far the type which is used or referred to most frequently; this may be because the writers who write both novels and short stories are classified in novel group. Short story, poetry and biography have similar lower rates. Drama's relatively higher rate of frequency must be due to the frequent references to Shakespeare in all three sets.

Table 4: The distribution of language components related to literature

Course books	Grammar	Vocabulary	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening
Set A	32 (24.8%)	25 (19.3%)	38 (29.4%)	12 (9.3%)	12 (9.3%)	10 (7.7%)
Set B	19 (24.3%)	18 (23%)	14 (17.9%)	4 (5.1%)	14 (17.9%)	9 (11.5%)
Set C	32 (31%)	22 (21.3%)	26 (25.2%)	9 (8.7%)	6 (5.8%)	8 (7.7%)
Total	83 (26.7%)	65 (20.9%)	78 (25.1%)	25 (8%)	32 (10.3%)	27 (8.7%)

Among the components of language for which literature is used or referred, the highest rate belongs to grammar; next comes reading and vocabulary. The lowest ones are writing and listening.

Table 5: The distribution of male and female writers

Course books	Male	Female
Set A	58 (79.4%)	15 (20.6%)
Set B	59 (84.2%)	11 (15.8%)
Set C	31 (75.6%)	10 (24.4%)
Total	148 (80.4%)	36 (19.6%)

The dominance of male writers over female ones is worth noting (80.4 to 19.6); unfortunately gender inequality in almost all fields all over the world is also reflected to the use of literature in language course books.

Table 6: The distribution of the nationalities of the writers

Course book	British	American	Others
Set A	44 (60.2%)	21 (28.7%)	8 (10.9%)
Set B	31 (44.2%)	19 (27.1%)	20 (28.5%)
Set C	23 (56%)	11 (26.8%)	7 (17%)
Total	98 (53.2%)	51 (27.7%)	35 (19%)

The results display that more than half of the writers are British (53.29); 27.7 % of them are American and the rest are from different countries.

Table 7: The ways of integrating literature into language course books

Course books	Set A	Set B	Set C	Total
Full text	12	-	1	13 (3.3 %)
Extract	20	12	1	33 (8.3 %)

Simplified forms	2	-	-	2 (0.5 %)
Brief information	9	16	8	33 (8.3 %)
Short biographies	6	7	4	17 (4.3 %)
Cover page	-	4	5	9 (2.2 %)
Book review	3	2	7	12 (3 %)
Film version	5	3	2	10 (2.4 %)
Quotations	15	17	5	37 (9.1 %)
Photos	1	4	-	5 (1.2 %)
References	69	68	59	195 (48.2 %)
Recommended readers	6	-	1	7 (1.7 %)
General information	1	5	13	19 (4.6 %)

In these three sets of course books, literature is integrated into the units in a rich variety of ways. These can be listed as follows: Full texts, extracts, simplified forms, summaries, brief information about the books, short biographies, cover pages, book reviews, film versions, quotations, photos of the writers, references to the titles of the books, references to the names of writers, references to fictional characters, recommended readers, and general information about literature.

The findings reveal that references make up 48.2 % of the use of literature in the course books; brief information (8.3), quotations (9.1 %) and extracts (8.3 %) are noticeable in the list. All the rest have rather lower rates.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of the research show that literature is used in all the course books; the rates (30%-33.3%) and the ways of using it vary slightly from book to book. The use of full texts and extracts is very rare in the course books (3.3%); instead, there are frequent references to literature in various forms which aim to increase learners' literature awareness (48.2%). By making learners familiar with the names of the writers and the titles of literary works, the course books arouse an interest to learn more about them.

When the types of literature in the course books are considered, it is found out that novel has the priority (60.1%). It is really surprising to see that poetry is neglected to a large extent (5.3%). In fact, poetry is the easiest to integrate into the course books because of its brevity. In addition, a suitable poem can be found related to any topic and at any level of difficulty, and it doesn't take up much room.

In some course books simplified texts are preferred to original ones with the logic that learners have a sense of achievement at their own language levels where original texts might lead to hopelessness because of the complexity of the language. This is a controversial issue because literature covers texts at all levels; it is only a matter of making the right choice for each level. On the other hand, the use of readers at the level of learners motivates them to read more and gives them the habit and joy of reading. Some course books give the level of the readers- even recommend titles of readers- to be read together with the course book. This way of using readers as supplementary materials is an introductory step in initiating learners into language-rich world of literature.

Some course books allocate a whole unit to literature and use literature in all the activities and make references to as many writers and works as possible in this unit whereas some course books prefer to scatter literature into all the units in the book. Both ways are effective in their own ways; however scattering literature seems to be more effective in increasing literature awareness.

The distribution of components of language related to literature use reveals that full texts, extracts, and book reviews are generally used for reading, vocabulary and writing; references to literature are

mainly in grammar parts; and speaking activities take part in pre and post activities for texts. When the strong relation between poetry and the sounds and rhythms of language is considered, it is definitely a pity not to use poetry more often in listening activities of course books.

The results of the distribution of the nationalities show that the writers of the course books were careful enough to be comprehensive in their choices. It is quite logical that the British (53.2%) and American (27.7%) writers hold higher percentages, as one of the purposes of using literature is to familiarize learners with the culture of the language. However, it can't be said the writers of the course books showed the same care in the distribution of male and female writers. The preference of male writers (80.4%) to female writers (19.6%) is quite obvious.

Another important point among the findings of the research is the fact that the names of the writers and the titles of the works are sometimes ignored; that is, there are poems of which neither the title nor the name of the poet is given; there are extracts from novels and short stories of which the titles and the authors are not given. This, in a way, reflects the importance and respect given to literature; therefore; the titles and the writers of literary texts should always be given. However, it should be noted that in the references made to literature this isn't necessary.

This study has some limitations. It covers the course books used in the preparatory classes of the universities in İzmir. Further studies can be done to cover the course books at all levels of education and in different parts of Turkey. In addition, this study covers the academic year 2010-2011. Course books written in different decades can be scanned to trace the historical development of literature use in them.

It can be concluded that in the course books published in the first decade of the second millennium there is a tendency to integrate literature into language teaching mainly in the form of references to increase learners' awareness about literature. This is an important step in making use of the best examples of language use for language learning; however, many more attempts are needed for more use of literature in more refined and effective ways in language teaching course books.

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