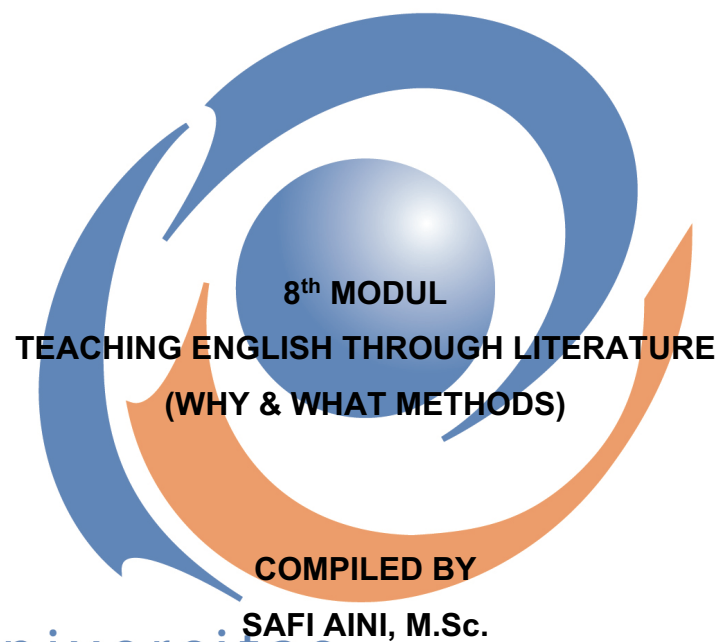


**MODUL INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE
(PBI 321)**



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TEACHING ENGLISH THROUGH LITERATURE (WHY & WHAT METHODS)

A. Learning Objectives

After completing this course, students are expected to be able to identify, classify, and elaborate the theory of teaching English using literature; why an English teacher should apply literature as a resource in the class.

B. Explanation

Teachers in general and English teachers specifically are always concerned with the kind of material they are going to present to their students. One of the most challenging kinds of material for English classes is literature. The use of literature in the EFL classes was supported by McKay (1982), who argued that "... literature offers several benefits to ESL classes. It can be useful in developing linguistic knowledge both on a usage and use level. Secondly, to the extent that students enjoy reading literature, it may increase their motivation to interact with a text and thus, ultimately increase their reading proficiency. It may also enhance students' understanding of a foreign culture and perhaps "spur their own creation of imaginative works." Brumfit (1986) shared the same idea that literature was a skill subject, not a content subject and stressed the potential of literature in enhancing the reading skills.

The use of literature in a language classroom offers sufficient space for the learners to express their opinions, justify their arguments and mirror themselves. It helps to develop the critical thinking abilities of the learners and at the same time creates an atmosphere in which different levels and background of learners can participate. In this way, literature provides an opportunity to the learners to use language in different contexts. Moreover, it makes the class lively, interactive and motivating, and an interactive class obviously improves communicative competence of the learners and keeps a lasting impact on their mind. The use of literature also enables the learners to contextualize the use of languages literature for specified purposes.

In other words, literature is the main component of an English language class, so teachers need to illustrate the objectives and methodology of teaching literature that can assist the learners. Teaching language through literature benefits the learners to learn from the different genre of literature: poetry, fiction, essays, short-stories, and drama. Literature provides learners a wide range of individual, lexical, or syntactical items. Students get familiar with various aspects of language in contextualized body of text which helps them to learn about the syntax and discourse functions.

Some of the main reasons for composing materials for teaching language through literature are:

- a. Authentic context for the teaching of grammar and vocabulary
- b. Its motivating appeal to the learner's imagination and emotions
- c. It involves students in meaningful debates, discussions and other language tasks
- d. It enables learners in developing their overall language skills
- e. It helps in developing the learner's interpretive and analytical skills
- f. It offers insights into the norms and cultural values embodied in the language.

According to Collie and Slater (1990:3), there are four main reasons which lead a language teacher to use literature in the classroom. These are valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement.

1. Valuable authentic material

Literature is authentic material. Many authentic samples of language in real-life contexts (i.e., pamphlets, cartoons, advertisements, newspaper or magazine articles) are included within recently developed course materials. Thus, in a classroom context, learners are exposed to actual language samples of real life.

2. Cultural enrichment

For some learners, literary works, such as novels, plays, short stories, etc. facilitate understanding how communication takes place in that country. Though the world of a novel, play, or short story is an imaginary one, it presents a full and colourful setting in which characters from many social /

regional backgrounds can be described. A reader can discover the way the characters in such literary works see the world outside (i.e. their thoughts, feelings, customs, traditions, possessions; what they buy, believe in, fear, enjoy; how they speak and behave in different settings.

3. Language Enrichment

Literature provides learners with a wide range of individual lexical or syntactic items. Students become familiar with many features of the written language, reading a substantial and contextualized body of text. Students also become more productive and adventurous when they begin to perceive the richness and diversity of the language they are trying to learn and begin to make use of some of that potential themselves. Thus, they improve their communicative and cultural competence in the authentic richness, naturalness of the authentic texts.

4. Personal Involvement

Literature can be useful in the language learning process owing to the personal involvement it fosters in the reader. Once the student reads a literary text, he begins to inhabit the text. The student becomes enthusiastic to find out what happens as events unfold via the climax; he feels close to certain characters and shares their emotional responses. This can have beneficial effects upon the whole language learning process.

Maley (1989:12) lists some of the reasons for regarding literature as a potent resource in the language classroom as follows:

1. Universality
2. Non-triviality
3. Personal Relevance
4. Variety
5. Interest
6. Economy and Suggestive Power
7. Ambiguity

1. Universality

Because we are all human beings, the themes literature deals with are common to all cultures despite their different way of treatment - Death, Love, Separation, Belief, Nature ... the list is familiar. These experiences all happen to human beings.

2. Non-triviality

Many of the more familiar forms of language teaching inputs tend to trivialize texts or experience. Literature does not trivialize or talk down. It is about things which mattered to the author when he wrote them. It may offer genuine as well as merely "authentic" inputs.

3. Personal Relevance

Since it deals with ideas, things, sensations and events which either constitute part of the reader's experience or which they can enter into imaginatively, they are able to relate it to their own lives.

4. Variety

Literature includes within it all possible varieties of subject matter. It is, in fact, a battery of topics to use in ELT. Within literature, we can find the language of law and of mountaineering, of medicine and of bull-fighting, of church sermons and nursery talk.

5. Interest

Literature deals with themes and topics which are intrinsically interesting, because part of the human experience, and treats them in ways designed to engaged the readers' attention.

6. Economy and suggestive power

One of the great strengths of literature is its suggestive power. Even in its simplest forms, it invites us to go beyond what is said to what is implied. Since it suggests many ideas with few words, literature is ideal for generating language discussion. Maximum output can often be derived from minimum input.

7. Ambiguity

As it is highly suggestive and associative, literature speaks subtly different meanings to different people. It is rare for two readers to react identically to any given text. In teaching, this has two advantages. The first advantage is that each learner's interpretation has validity within limits. The second advantage is that an almost infinite fund of interactive discussion is guaranteed since each person's perception is different. That no two readers will have a completely convergent interpretation establishes the tension that is necessary for a genuine exchange of ideas.

Apart from the above mentioned reasons for using literature in the foreign language class, one of the main functions of literature is its sociolinguistic richness. The use of language changes from one social group to another. Likewise, it changes from one geographical location to another. A person speaks differently in different social contexts like school, hospital, police station and theatre (i.e. formal, informal, casual, frozen, intimate styles speech). The language used changes from one profession to another (i.e. doctors, engineers, economists use different terminology). To put it differently, since literature provides students with a wide range of language varieties like sociolects, regional dialects, jargon, idiolects, etc., it develops their sociolinguistic competence in the target language. Hence, incorporating literature into a foreign language teaching program as a powerful source for reflecting the sociolinguistic aspects of the target language gains importance.

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C. Exercise

1. What did McKay (1982) argue about the applying of literature in English teaching learning?

D. Answer Key

1. McKay (1982) argued that literature offers several benefits to ESL classes. It can be useful in developing linguistic knowledge both on a usage and use level. Secondly, to the extent that students enjoy reading literature, it may increase their motivation to interact with a text and thus, ultimately increase their reading proficiency. It may also enhance students' understanding of a foreign culture and perhaps "spur their own creation of imaginative works."



E. References

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