SCIENCE CONNECTS PEOPLE

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL OF

2026 / No. 1(2)

Contemporary Pedagogical and Philological Research

THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN DEVELOPING STUDENTS' LANGUAGE SKILLS

Jumayeva Nozima Anvar qizi

Senior student, Faculty of Narpay foreign languages

Suyunov Bobur

Scientific supervisor, Head of department Narpay "General subjects",

Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, Samarkand

Abstract. This article examines the pedagogical role of literature in developing university students' English language skills. It focuses on how literary texts can support reading comprehension, vocabulary growth, writing, speaking and listening when they are integrated into purposeful classroom activities. The study is based on a qualitative review and comparative analysis of established works on literature-based language teaching, reader response and communicative language education. The discussion shows that literary texts offer contextualised language input, expose learners to stylistic and cultural variation, and create opportunities for interpretation and interaction. The article also considers practical selection criteria and classroom procedures, including guided reading, discussion, role-play, creative writing and audio-supported tasks. It argues that literature is most effective when texts are matched to learners' proficiency, interests and educational objectives rather than treated as isolated objects of literary analysis. The article concludes with recommendations for integrating literary materials into English language instruction.

Keywords: literature, English language teaching, language skills, reading comprehension, vocabulary development, communicative competence, literary texts.

1. INTRODUCTION

English has become an important means of international communication in education, science, business and digital interaction. For university students, learning English therefore involves more than memorising vocabulary and grammatical rules.

SCIENCE CONNECTS PEOPLE

They need to understand and produce language in different contexts, interpret meanings, respond to other speakers and communicate ideas with confidence. This requires the integrated development of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Literature can make a valuable contribution to this process. Poems, short stories, novels and plays present language in meaningful contexts and portray human experiences, social relationships and cultural perspectives. Unlike many texts written exclusively for instructional purposes, literary works are created primarily to communicate artistic, emotional or intellectual meaning. They can consequently expose learners to a broad range of vocabulary, syntax, discourse patterns and stylistic choices.

The use of literature in language education has been discussed by a number of scholars. Collie and Slater identify authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement as important benefits of literary study [1]. Lazar similarly argues that literature can provide rich language input and encourage learners to respond personally to texts [2]. These perspectives suggest that literature should not be restricted to the study of authors, periods and literary devices; it can also function as a resource for language development.

The purpose of this article is to analyse how literary texts can contribute to the development of students' English language skills and to identify classroom practices that connect literary interpretation with communicative language use. The article addresses three objectives: to describe the linguistic and cultural value of literature; to examine its contribution to the four language skills and vocabulary development; and to propose practical principles for selecting and teaching literary materials.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article adopts a qualitative, literature-based approach. It does not report an experiment or claim to measure learning gains among a particular group of students. Instead, it reviews and compares influential theoretical and pedagogical publications on literature in language teaching, reader response, cultural learning and communicative

SCIENCE CONNECTS PEOPLE

competence. The principal sources include works by Collie and Slater, Lazar, Carter and Long, Hall, Paran, Kramsch and Rosenblatt [1–7].

The analysis is organised thematically. First, recurring arguments about the educational value of literary texts are identified. Second, these arguments are considered in relation to reading, writing, speaking, listening and vocabulary development. Third, practical classroom procedures are examined in terms of their potential to connect language input with active learner output. This approach makes it possible to formulate pedagogical recommendations while distinguishing theoretical discussion from empirical findings.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Literature and language are closely related because literary meaning is created through linguistic choices. A literary text may contain narrative description, dialogue, metaphor, repetition, irony, idiomatic expressions and distinctive patterns of cohesion. These features allow learners to observe how language works beyond isolated sentences. Carter and Long describe different models for teaching literature, including approaches that emphasise cultural knowledge, language development and personal growth [3]. For language learners, an integrated approach can be particularly useful because it combines attention to form with interpretation and response.

Lazar views literary texts as a resource that can enrich language learning while encouraging students to engage with ideas and feelings [2]. The value of a text, however, is not automatic. Its usefulness depends on the learners' level, the teacher's aims and the tasks designed around it. A linguistically demanding text may be appropriate for advanced students but discouraging for beginners if it is introduced without support.

Reader-response theory provides another relevant perspective. Rosenblatt explains reading as a transaction between reader and text, in which meaning emerges through the reader's engagement with the written work [7]. In a language classroom,

SCIENCE CONNECTS PEOPLE

this perspective supports activities in which students explain their reactions, compare interpretations and relate themes to their experiences. Such activities give learners a genuine reason to use English rather than simply repeat information supplied by the teacher.

Paran's review of research on literature in instructed foreign-language learning highlights the need to consider how literary texts are used in actual teaching contexts [5]. Literature can support language learning, but teachers should avoid assuming that reading a text alone will automatically improve every skill. Learning opportunities become clearer when reading is followed by purposeful tasks such as discussion, retelling, listening, vocabulary analysis or writing.

4. LITERATURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING SKILLS

Reading is both a receptive language skill and an active process of constructing meaning. Readers identify explicit information, infer unstated meanings, follow relationships between events and evaluate the organisation of a text. Literary works can develop these abilities because they often require readers to interpret character motivation, narrative perspective, symbolism and changes in mood.

Short stories are particularly suitable for classroom use because they usually provide a complete narrative within a manageable length. Before reading, teachers can introduce the setting, activate relevant background knowledge and ask students to predict the story's direction from its title. During reading, learners can identify key events, mark unfamiliar expressions and make predictions. After reading, they can summarise the plot, discuss the characters' choices or explain the theme.

Extensive reading can complement close analysis. In extensive reading, students read substantial amounts of material for general understanding and enjoyment. A graded reader or an accessible short novel may encourage regular reading without requiring students to analyse every sentence. Hall notes the importance of considering

SCIENCE CONNECTS PEOPLE

the relationship between literary study and language education [4]. In practice, teachers can combine detailed work on selected passages with wider independent reading.

Literary reading also supports inferencing. Students may need to infer a character's feelings from dialogue, understand the significance of a repeated image or recognise that a narrator is unreliable. These activities develop interpretive skills that are useful when reading academic and professional texts as well.

5. LITERATURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING SKILLS

Writing requires learners to organise ideas, select appropriate vocabulary, construct grammatical sentences and create a coherent text for a particular purpose. Literary works provide models of different ways to organise and express meaning. Narratives illustrate sequencing and description; drama offers examples of dialogue; poetry draws attention to sound, imagery and concise word choice.

One practical activity is the alternative-ending task. After reading a story, students write a different ending while maintaining consistency with the characters and events. This requires them to understand the original text and use language creatively. Another activity is writing a diary entry from the perspective of a character. Students must consider the character's feelings, motivations and likely vocabulary.

Literature can also provide a starting point for analytical and argumentative writing. Students may write a short response to a question such as whether a character made a reasonable decision, or how a particular social issue is represented. They should support their interpretation with evidence from the text. This practice develops the ability to formulate a claim, provide examples and organise supporting points.

Teachers should give feedback not only on grammatical accuracy but also on clarity, organisation, cohesion and relevance. A staged process—planning, drafting, peer response, revision and editing—can help students transform an initial reaction into a structured piece of writing.

SCIENCE CONNECTS PEOPLE

6. LITERATURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEAKING SKILLS

Speaking development requires opportunities to formulate ideas, take turns, ask questions and respond to others. Literary texts can provide a shared topic for communication. Since students may interpret a character or event differently, the text naturally creates opportunities for exchanging opinions and supporting arguments.

Small-group discussion is a practical starting point. Students can discuss a character's motivation, identify the central conflict or decide which event changes the direction of the story. To ensure that discussion involves more than a few confident speakers, teachers can assign rotating roles such as discussion leader, evidence finder, summariser and reporter.

Role-play and dramatisation are also useful. Students can perform a scene, improvise a conversation between two characters or imagine an interview with the protagonist. These activities provide practice in pronunciation, intonation, fluency and interactional expressions. They also encourage learners to adapt language to a particular social situation.

Literary discussion should remain accessible. Teachers can provide prompts and useful expressions, such as 'I interpret this scene as…', 'The text suggests that…' and 'I agree with this view because…'. Such scaffolding helps students participate while gradually developing independence.

7. LITERATURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LISTENING SKILLS

Although literature is commonly encountered in written form, it can also be used to develop listening. Audiobooks, recorded readings, poetry performances and dramatic adaptations expose learners to spoken English in meaningful contexts. Students can listen for the main idea, identify details, recognise speakers' attitudes and follow changes in a conversation.

An effective activity combines listening and reading. Students first listen to a short passage without seeing the text and identify its general meaning. They then listen

again while following the written version, noting pronunciation, stress and intonation. Finally, they discuss how the speaker's delivery influences the interpretation of a character or event.

Poetry can be useful for noticing rhythm, sound patterns, stress and expressive intonation. Drama provides opportunities to recognise turn-taking, interruptions, hesitation and emotional emphasis. Teachers should select recordings with clear audio and an appropriate level of difficulty. Repeated listening, short segments and focused questions can reduce the cognitive load for learners.

8. VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LITERARY TEXTS

Vocabulary knowledge involves more than knowing a translation. Learners need to understand meaning, pronunciation, grammatical behaviour, collocation, register and appropriate use. Literary texts present vocabulary within contexts that can help students infer meaning and notice how words relate to one another.

Students may encounter idioms, phrasal verbs, collocations, synonyms, antonyms and figurative expressions while reading. Rather than asking learners to translate every unfamiliar item, teachers can encourage them to use surrounding sentences, the situation and character relationships to make an informed guess. Learners can then check their interpretation in a dictionary and record useful examples.

A vocabulary notebook can include the target word, a short definition in English, the sentence in which it appeared, a collocation and a new sentence written by the student. This procedure encourages deeper processing than copying a list of isolated translations. Teachers should prioritise vocabulary that is useful, repeated or central to understanding the text. Excessively rare words may be discussed briefly without becoming the focus of the lesson.

9. CULTURAL AWARENESS AND CRITICAL THINKING

Literary works represent particular historical and cultural contexts. They may introduce learners to social conventions, family relationships, beliefs, traditions and

conflicts that differ from their own experiences. Kramsch emphasises the relationship between language and culture in language teaching [6]. Literature can therefore help learners consider how meaning is shaped by context and cultural expectations.

Students studying English language and literature may explore works from British, American and other English-language traditions. The aim should not be to treat any culture as uniform. Instead, learners can examine how a text represents a particular time, community or individual perspective. Comparing the text with familiar cultural experiences can promote curiosity and respectful discussion.

Literature also encourages critical thinking. Students can evaluate a narrator's reliability, consider whose perspective is missing, question a character's decision or discuss the social assumptions behind a conflict. Teachers should invite evidence-based interpretations and allow more than one reasonable reading when the text supports different perspectives. This approach develops analytical habits that are valuable beyond language classes.

10. CLASSROOM APPLICATION AND TEXT-SELECTION PRINCIPLES

The effectiveness of literature-based teaching depends on careful planning. Texts should be selected according to language level, length, thematic relevance, cultural accessibility and students' interests. Teachers may begin with short stories, extracts, contemporary texts or graded adaptations before introducing longer and more linguistically complex works. The purpose is not to remove all challenge, but to ensure that challenge remains manageable and educationally productive.

A practical lesson sequence may include three stages. In the pre-reading stage, the teacher introduces the topic, activates background knowledge and clarifies only essential vocabulary. In the while-reading stage, students read or listen with a clear task, such as identifying a conflict or tracing a character's changing attitude. In the post-

SCIENCE CONNECTS PEOPLE

reading stage, they discuss interpretations and complete a productive task, for example a review, presentation, role-play or written response.

Integrated-skill work is especially valuable. After listening to an audio version of a short story, students can read the text, discuss it in groups and write a brief reflection. One literary text can therefore create a connected sequence of receptive and productive activities. Digital resources, including audiobooks and online libraries, can widen access to materials, provided that teachers check the suitability and reliability of the resources.

Assessment should reflect the learning objectives. If the aim is reading comprehension, assessment may focus on identifying main ideas, making inferences and supporting interpretations with textual evidence. If the aim is speaking, the teacher may assess participation, clarity, fluency and the ability to respond to others. Clear criteria help students understand that literary activities are not simply entertainment; they are purposeful language-learning tasks.

11. CHALLENGES AND PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Several challenges may arise when literature is used in language education. First, older or highly experimental texts may contain unfamiliar vocabulary, complex syntax and historical references. Second, students may lack the cultural knowledge needed to interpret particular situations. Third, some learners may not enjoy long literary works or may feel anxious about discussing abstract themes in a foreign language. Classroom time and syllabus requirements can also limit the amount of reading possible.

These challenges can be addressed through thoughtful text selection and scaffolding. Teachers should consider students' proficiency and interests, provide brief contextual information, divide longer works into manageable sections and introduce key vocabulary selectively. Short stories, extracts and graded readers can be useful starting points. Discussion prompts, vocabulary banks and collaborative tasks can support students without removing the need for independent thinking.

SCIENCE CONNECTS PEOPLE

Literature should not replace systematic language instruction. Rather, it should complement explicit work on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and discourse. Teachers can draw attention to selected language features in the text and then create opportunities for students to use those features in their own speaking and writing. A balanced approach combines literary appreciation with clear language-learning objectives.

12. CONCLUSION

The analysis indicates that literature can make a meaningful contribution to the development of students' English language skills. Literary texts provide contextualised language input and opportunities to practise reading, writing, speaking and listening. They also support vocabulary development by showing how words and expressions operate in context. Through interpretation and discussion, learners can develop cultural awareness, creativity and critical thinking.

However, these benefits depend on the way literary materials are selected and taught. Reading a literary work without purposeful guidance does not guarantee progress in language proficiency. Teachers should match texts to learners' levels and interests, establish clear objectives and design activities that lead from comprehension to communication. Combining reading with discussion, audio materials, role-play and creative writing can make literary study more integrated and interactive.

It is therefore recommended that English language programmes include carefully selected literary texts as a regular supplementary resource. Future classroom-based research may investigate how particular genres and task types influence learners' motivation, vocabulary retention and performance in individual language skills. Such research should use clearly described participants, procedures and assessment instruments so that its findings can be evaluated and replicated.

SCIENCE CONNECTS PEOPLE

References

1. Collie, J., & Slater, S. (1987). Literature in the Language Classroom: A Resource Book of Ideas and Activities. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2. Lazar, G. (1993). Literature and Language Teaching: A Guide for Teachers and Trainers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3. Carter, R., & Long, M. N. (1991). Teaching Literature. Harlow: Longman.

4. Hall, G. (2005). Literature in Language Education. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

5. Paran, A. (2008). The role of literature in instructed foreign language learning and teaching: An evidence-based survey. Language Teaching, 41(4), 465–496. https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144480800520X

6. Kramsch, C. (1993). Context and Culture in Language Teaching. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

7. Rosenblatt, L. M. (1978). The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.