INTRODUCTION TO
'LANGUAGE THROUGH LITERATURE' APPROACHES
TO TEACHING LITERATURE IN ENGLISH IN L2 CONTEXTS
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Over the last thirty years, major changes have taken place in the way literary texts are studied and taught, especially in second- and foreign-language contexts. This article[1] explores the historical background to such changes, and looks at continuing arguments over the use of literary texts as an appropriate resource in developing language skills and awareness.

By way of introduction, I review the main forms of teaching strategy currently employed in teaching literature, and draw relevant comparisons and contrasts between the teaching of literature in L1 and L2 contexts. Following this, I examine the changing roles literary texts have played in different kinds of language and literature courses, and discuss a range of continuing and unresolved issues surrounding their use. Then, as illustration of the possibilities of 'interactive' or 'student-centred' approaches to teaching literature in English, I review ten basic procedures common in ELT which can be used in designing groupwork tasks for literary study. Such tasks, I suggest, can usefully supplement more traditional lecture presentations to create a new and more effective literature pedagogy; they of course do not - and should not - replace other modes of teaching, but instead add to (and enrich) a teacher's repertoire of methods.

Methods in teaching literature: the main possibilities

In order to get a sense of the need for, and possible scope of, methodological innovation within the teaching of literature, it is necessary to review at the outset the major forms of contact which currently take place. Such a review is especially necessary because relatively little attention is paid in literature teaching to educational processes, as compared with the content of what is taught. Each of the different modes described in this section serves a visibly different educational function (e.g. transmitting information, developing discussion skills, etc.); and each has its own distinctive interactional dynamic and implicit set of power relations. My suggestions later in this article about pedagogic innovation in the field develop from interpretations of these differing qualities, strengths and limitations; they seek to combine features of each into recommendations for a more genuinely 'interactive' approach to the study of literary works. Literature teaching has a long history of 'interactive' approaches, of course - including small-group discussion and personal feedback; and it has placed considerable importance on them. For this reason it is important to set contemporary ideas and proposals as regards the future in the larger methodological and historical perspective.

1. **Lectures**. Lectures are perhaps the most-used method in teaching literature, especially for exposition of individual texts or groups of texts to large numbers of students. Typically they are monologues (sometimes monologues with time set aside for questions or discussion at the end); and they appear appropriate to transferring information from the lecturer to a group of students, or for providing an uninterrupted opportunity for a lecturer to develop a complex critical argument as a model of individual interpretation or critical thought. As is widely acknowledged, nevertheless, we should not over-estimate how much information or critical argument gets across. If the usefulness of lectures is assessed on the basis of how many of the notes taken by those present accurately represent what has been said, or how many new ideas are assimilated (rather than on the basis of what materials have been "covered" in the text of the lecture itself), a far less optimistic view is likely to be reached regarding how effective talking to people in a lecture actually is. Little regard can realistically be given to the differing needs of individual students in the audience; and problems of memory and attention span, coupled with difficulties of audibility, distraction and intermittent boredom, often intervene in the 'transmission' process, producing - even with groups of diligent students - major asymmetries and distortions in terms of the content transmitted and the content received.

2. **Informal dialogue**. At the other end of a spectrum of pedagogic interaction, there are tutorials or research supervisions (often associated in Britain with Oxbridge, where the method of regular one-to-one exchange is a luxury still widely offered even at undergraduate level). Very often, the image of this technique is of an egalitarian process, open and eminently 'democratic'; its lack of apparent structure allows it to appear an ideally non-authoritarian, liberal mode of education. But interaction in dialogue is never completely 'unstructured'. It is possible to identify regularities in such dialogue here by drawing attention - using two slightly comic descriptions - to roles in these 'dialogue' sessions. One type of session might be called 'Socratic dialogue'; the other 'Freudian monologue'. In the 'Socratic dialogue', the philosopher asks repeated questions of a young person, who gives answers which are typically defective in some respect. The philosopher extends and adapts each answer, not only to show the young person its limitations, but also to offer new impetus to the philosophical dialectic. This analogy by no means exhausts what goes on in the Socratic dialogues in philosophy, of course; but the term does crystallise an interactional structure characteristic of supervision or tutorial teaching. By contrast, consider a type of dialogue that paradoxically might be termed 'Freudian monologue', because of its resemblance to what happens between the two people at a session of Freudian psychoanalysis. In this scenario, the student is asked by the supervisor to report on what she or he has been doing; the supervisor then sits back for an extended answer, while the student talks in detail about what she or he has read and thought. The supervisor defers feedback until much later, when 'therapeutic intervention' makes fresh development in the work possible. This scenario resembles the Freudian monologue insofar as in the student's monologue - addressed to a silent room - are revealed symptomatic absences or blind spots: areas that have not been explored, problems which get hurried over or which are returned to obsessionally. While this

simple dichotomy between methods fails to capture all the features of interaction in one-to-one supervision, it does establish that even in supposedly egalitarian, one-to-one educational dialogue (which is perhaps most aspired to in circumstances where resources do not permit it, and so where offers a kind of fantasy-ideal) there are underlying pedagogic structures which form a generally unexamined ballast of existing 'interactive' literature teaching methodologies.

3. **Workshops**. Workshops generally take the form of simulations, tasks and role-play. They involve, essentially, a concern to impose structure on learning-events, by specifying a task which offers students a clear idea of what they are supposed to do, and achievable goals or outcomes to motivate and direct the learning process. Workshops derive from a recognition that to be requested to do or discuss something without it being clear what you are supposed to do can be a frustrating experience; not achieving much results in an assumption that you are not participating well, rather than that the class is ineffectively managed. Workshop methodology seeks to structure the process of a session in a way evident to everyone involved; it offers types of involvement and satisfaction to students unlikely to be available in classes structured either around passive, collective listening or around open conversational discussion. Discussion classes end, for example, when time runs out, often without even a provisional conclusion. The process of discussion itself displaces any other shared objective. Although capable students are likely to be able to assess the usefulness of what they have learnt or experienced, less capable or motivated students may find difficulty in identifying benefits that can be fitted into the rest of their learning.

4. **Self-access learning**. Alongside these modes of interactive learning (which presuppose co-presence of students and teacher), it is necessary also to consider the increasing role played by self-access, distance learning materials, including hypertext software. These approaches, where available, have the effect of freeing students from the constraint of having to work together at the same pace, or in the same sequence; they can also provide a high degree of individualised learner-feedback. On the other hand, they displace (or even eradicate) the acquisition of social and interactional skills that are likely to come from the collaborative work which can take place in other methods traditionally valued in literature teaching.

These four methodological types make up a familiar menu of alternative processes available to teachers and course designers, to be combined selectively in any given educational course or programme. The existence of successful auto-didacts acts as a cautionary reminder that teachers facilitate and direct the realisation of learning potential, rather than filling empty pots. Variation between methods provides diversity within an educational experience; and selection between them can also offer compromise solutions to practical problems of inadequate or diminishing resources, given that the methods presuppose different staff-student ratios and equipment overheads.

Within all the approaches (including distance-learning), nevertheless, there is an important recurrent question as regards the teaching of literature, quite apart from technical matters of student numbers, cost, and relative efficiency. Who sets the agenda for learning? This is made an important question by virtue of its connections with the claims most often made on

behalf of literature courses: that they develop independent taste, critical judgement and personal moral values. In most teaching situations, the educational agenda is set largely by external bodies, including examination boards, and by conventions of the historical content and procedures of the field (in the case of literature courses, this generally means a mix of analytic skills with familiarity with a canon of texts). Partly, too, the syllabus agenda is circumscribed by the interests, customs and approach of individual teachers, who reflect their own educational experience (often, for example, teachers prescribe or recommend poems that they themselves like, not necessarily ones that students will like; and teachers commonly work in ways they feel comfortable with, rather than ways students are most likely to benefit from). This orientation of the syllabus towards the needs of the teacher, where it exists, conflicts with humanistic claims routinely made on behalf of the subject. It is especially likely to have important consequences where the educational experience of many of the staff (as in the case of expatriate staff, or staff uniformly of an older generation) differs significantly from the experience and aspirations of the students themselves.

It is also possible, however, to think of pedagogic approaches (such as some communicative language-teaching approaches, or, more radically, Freirean approaches to education) which seek to involve participants more actively in determining the content, method and purpose of their learning. Such approaches vary from local, small-scale initiatives, along the lines of exploring songs and other texts chosen by students on account of their relevance to the students' own perceived social identities or problems, through to more detailed and sustained philosophies and politics of education. What these approaches have essentially in common is that concrete needs and aspirations of the learners are placed above historical orthodoxies of a given subject or interests and existing expertise of the teacher (which are made responsive to changing demands from students, whose own intellectual and social identities are engaged in the process of formulating what study means and what it should involve). The particular relevance of these questions is that, although studying literature has often been justified as a process of self-discovery through the formation of reading skills and tastes coupled with a consequent development of moral values, its methods have not always been consistent with these aims. For the view of literature as a mode of self-discovery to be tenable, appropriate teaching processes would have to be followed. Yet many of the methods which have evolved in the teaching of literature were developed in and for L1 situations, and are not clearly effective in L2 contexts. The exemplary method of independent reading linked to free discussion, for example, is unlikely to be practicable when the process of reading the text in the first place puts special pressures and difficulties on the reader. In L2 contexts, the teaching of literature in English needs as a result to acknowledge difficulties presented both by language and by cultural reference; and it is to these issues that we should turn in the next section.

Differences between L1 and L2 contexts for teaching English.

When deciding how to teach a subject, it is self-evidently important to consider that subject as specifically as possible. Yet in the case of English literature courses, it has been suggested above, it is often monolingual native-speaker contexts which provide the model for teaching. This is inappropriate, since it disguises two sources of difficulty likely to be faced by students in their encounters with texts on the syllabus: difficulties presented by the language and style

of the prescribed passages or works; and difficulties presented by the texts' cultural dimensions, including allusions, conventional symbolic meanings, established generic references, etc. To develop a sense of the basis on which fresh pedagogic initiatives might proceed, it is necessary first to consider each of these two sources of difficulty.

Skills: acquisition, learning and intuitions.

Practical questions of using literary texts in teaching English in L2 contexts connect with deep issues in research into language development and cognition. Many of these issues have been examined in detail in Krashen's Input Hypothesis[2], in terms of a distinction between processes of language acquisition and language learning. Language acquisition appears spontaneously, non-deliberately and quickly; it draws on the brain's predisposition to learn languages, calling on latent skills we do not even know we have, and proceeds on the basis of exposure to comprehensible input. This contrasts with language learning, where we deliberately, consciously and reflectively come to understand aspects of language, by carefully imposing systems on linguistic data available for scrutiny - perhaps a grammatical rule, or a convention of pronunciation or intonation. These are different types of understanding, which result from different kinds of experience of language.

What makes these differences important, as regards using texts in the classroom, is that some types of activity are likely to be especially conducive to language acquisition (e.g. conversation within the classroom, or extensive listening activities); such activities stimulate spontaneous, non-reflective, automatic facility with the language. Other sorts of activity, such as close stylistic work, seem more likely to result in more deliberate, reflective and self-conscious understanding of local features of the text.

At the moment within second language acquisition research, serious disagreements remain about the degree to which cross-over or overlap between these two processes takes place. Nevertheless, when tasks around texts are being devised for classroom use, it is imperative - even without specific commitment to any particular theory or line of research - to identify as clearly as possible the anticipated outcomes of the task. Is the text being used primarily to stimulate conversation about a topic? Are we hoping to focus on a particular aspect of style for analysis? Whilst it is important to remember that tasks call on a wide range of competences - and sometimes develop very different skills than are planned for - nevertheless each time a task is devised the process of planning needs at some level to relate back to an agenda and a targeted type or stage of language development.

Many teaching situations exist in which the act of specifying precisely what aspect of language development is aimed at points to a need for quite different approaches in L1 and L2 teaching. One typical situation is when, as in a considerable amount of work on texts (including literary texts) intuitions are appealed to. Does a phrase seem archaic? Is it technical? Does it, in context, seem ironic? Such questions (in general, questions about contextual appropriacy) appeal to ideas not only of grammaticality, but also of register, probable intended effect and stylistic consistency. Native speakers generally have such intuitions; what they often lack is an ability to make those intuitions explicit, or to formulate them in a metalanguage suitable for discussing features of the text which trigger the intuition (since such a metalanguage is rarely taught in native-speaker contexts). The combination of

strong intuitions with under-developed metalingual knowledge is currently a source of concern in L1 teaching of English; it is a frequently-cited justification for stylistic work, for instance, and is also a pervasive theme in recent Government reports proposing changes to the content and methods adopted in the teaching of English in schools[3]. Non-native speakers, by contrast, as a result of the formal modes through which they have usually learnt the language, tend to have far more sophisticated terminologies for describing language and far more explicit and self-aware understandings of language structure. But typically they either have less intuitions about certain types of language contrast (especially dialectal variety, intonation and register); or else they have less self-confidence in declaring the intuitions they do have.

Where teaching methods in L2 situations in effect simply replicate teaching techniques originally devised for native-speakers, this disparity as regards the competences students are likely to bring to the classroom will be problematic. L1 and L2 teaching approaches need to be divergent; this is not in any way an unfavourable reflection on L2 approaches. In fact, it is a precondition of the sort of work which remains to be done in developing strategies for building self-confidence and the risk-taking element that enables intermediate and advanced second-language users to venture intuitions about all aspects of usage. Classroom environments need to be created in which perceptions (which may be quite sophisticated and developed, or may be quite idiosyncratic) find opportunities to express themselves. Combining an existing teaching emphasis on correctness with a range of participatory tasks based on hypothesis-formation, a supportive groupwork dynamic and peer-group evaluation is likely to be helpful here.

Cultural knowledge, interest and comparison.

Reading literary texts is not only a matter of interpreting their language, however. Such texts inevitably present a range of additional difficulties, to do with the fields of society, history and culture to which they refer; and problems of intelligibility may result from the opacity of cultural references - especially if the connotations or symbolic resonances for the originating culture of the particular object are pertinent to interpreting the passage. Readers regularly face cultural gaps in reading any text, however, since texts are almost by definition (insofar as they are written from another experience) about a lived or imagined experience the reader has not personally had. Generally in reading, such gaps do not present insuperable difficulties; we read science fiction and other forms, about worlds we cannot possibly have experience of, but, through appropriate reading skills - especially by identifying meanings in context - we infer what terms mean within the imaginary worlds in which we encounter them. Referential problems do of course arise in some cases, not only with specific cultural and historical allusions, but also at points when interpretation relies on implicatures presumable within one cultural context (because of background knowledge common to members of that a culture or sub-culture), but not in another (e.g. assumptions relating to family and social values; conventional attitudes towards customs and places, etc.).

These questions of the connection between texts and students' social identities are made all the more important by contradictions and conflicts which result in some situations from given history. Texts carry with them cultural baggage, often of cultural colonialism. Such cultural baggage becomes evident in the ways texts explore ethical and social concerns, represent characters and customs and negotiate and imply value-systems. Many of the texts likely to be

on a reading list of canonical English literature may as a result be of limited attractiveness and interest when transplanted into cultures where their meaning is less a celebration of national historical tradition than a testament to colonial imposition or a model of distinctively Anglicized or Americanized social behaviour.

As regards teaching, a number of lines of possible development radiate from this observation. It is possible, of course, to try to avoid texts which present such difficulties, focusing instead on whichever texts appear to relate most closely to the students' own experience and present interests. This concern to choose only thematically 'relevant' texts has the evident benefit of stimulating immediate engagement with those texts by students; but it has the limitation of reinforcing existing - contemporary - experience and attitudes at the expense of failing in the attempt many teachers of literature feel it essential to make radically to enlarge the regional, social and historical range of the students' cultural experience.

But how can such an attempt be made? One tradition of work, common in structuralism and critical discourse analysis, is that of 'demystification'. Work along these lines suggests, in effect, continuing to study the same hegemonic, canonical texts (perhaps alongside others), but for new purposes: revealing, through analysis, their latent ideological (and implicitly oppressive) messages, so empowering forms of cultural resistance. Students exposed to this kind of teaching can develop a confidence which comes from being freed from an assumed need to defer to established critical authority. The approach has the value of incisively deconstructing ideological loadings and orthodoxies of evaluation; but, by itself, it seems less clearly capable of enabling readers to project forwards from their critical readings to select new material for unforeseen circumstances or develop new frameworks for critical analysis or creative writing[4], and in EFL situations can be a largely irrelevant argument.

A different response to the problems presented by Anglocentric texts, widely adopted in TEFL materials, is that of trying to select 'general human themes' to explore as syllabus topics (love, war, etc.). This approach involves what might be called a pedagogic 'universalism' or 'cultural neutralism', rather than focusing on specific concerns in the history and social issues of a particular place or culture[5]. Such courses or materials treat human experience as something shared across differences of history or culture, and attempt to emphasise common values, pleasures and fears - at the possible risk of reducing social experience to undifferentiated commentary and humane platitude.

A third alternative valorises contrastive critical study. It looks at texts across different cultures, comparing and assessing their representations of social issues in relation to specific intellectual or political moments (rather than as representative expressions of general human feelings or emotions). This last approach invests special value in working with texts written in English but referring to cultures besides Britain, Australia or the USA. In some cases, such texts may connect with students' own experiences. In other cases, equally importantly, they simply make possible cultural comparison between different values and ways of life within a given, if distant, social matrix. As part of this kind of contrastive analysis of texts written in English, there is the additional possibility of engaging in broader comparative work, drawing attention to cultural differences implied in texts in English and in texts in other more familiar languages by the different kinds of cultural references they make.

ELT: Changing Roles for Literature

Even the descriptions offered so far of uses for literary texts (for language development work; for contrastive cultural analysis; etc.) may seem far removed from established traditions of English literature teaching, which typically emphasise personal response contextualised in relation to historical circumstances of composition and reception, and the assessment of established critical views. This divergence largely follows from the fact that, while the established paradigm of literary study may appear timeless (despite an array of competing critical approaches)[6], currents in contemporary use of literary texts in second-language situations (with which the ideas outlined so far are generally consistent) have in recent years been turbulent. It is appropriate in this section, therefore, to relate current methodological thinking to the history of uses of literary texts in second-language learning. This history which can be divided into three conceptual phases (though the concrete history does not exist equivalently in all teaching situations; much contemporary use of literature world-wide remains in what I will be calling the first phase).

1.   **Traditional approaches**. It has been a longstanding tradition of English teaching that basic language instruction in the structures of the language somehow leads on to the study of literature. Studying literature is taken, in this view, as somehow higher and more sophisticated than studying language. Once a student has acquired language structures and can successfully perform drills, she or he is ready to go on to short stories and selected lyrical poems, followed later by a much broader range of literary texts. This idea, which fits comfortably with structural syllabuses in language teaching, is implanted in the professional hierarchies of many institutions, where literature teachers are frequently the most senior, and language teachers the most junior (a situation reflected virtually all around the world, including, in a slightly different form, in the USA).

2.   **Functional approaches**. In the 196Os and 197Os, the hierarchical view of language and literature was challenged by ideas developing in functional syllabus planning; notions of communicative language-teaching gradually emerged as a more fully worked-out and institutionally confident set of procedures. On the question of using literary texts, very often these syllabuses adopted a principled exclusion, justified by the belief that while literary texts may have value of various sorts, they have relatively little functional application. This view had considerable polemical force, and enabled it, in many circumstances, to dislodge entrenched and still widespread ideas of the value of literary texts as not only sources of moral value, but (less convincingly) as models of best English usage.

3.   **Discourse stylistics approaches**. In the late 1970s and 1980s, a marked reaction against strong versions of the functional view as regards use of literature occurred, drawing its ideas especially from work in discourse stylistics. These approaches often suggest that, even given a dominant need for communicative language teaching, it remains important to study a wide range of texts, including not only examples of journalism, media texts and other non-literary discourse, but also, within that range of

texts, selected literary works. The only condition imposed on the usefulness of these works is that they should be used in innovative and appropriate ways, especially ways which involve comparing and contrasting different stylistic properties and conceptions of value.

Current arguments in favour of using literature

Within this current phase of literary linguistic work, it is possible to identify three major arguments that have been appealed to in order to support the incorporation of literary texts in syllabuses primarily aimed at L2 learners.

One argument is that any excerpt of conversation (and most pieces of written, non-literary discourse) is deeply embedded in its context. A conversational extract such as, 'I told them it wasn't ready, but that it would be the day after we went there' contains a range of markers of dependence on context. To interpret the utterance involves identifying referents for each of these deictic markers (who 'we' is; where 'there' is; etc). Only by construing these terms in relation to a specific, given context does the text appear complete or coherent. But Widdowson and others have argued that, since literary texts are written to be read in different contexts (even in different periods) than those in which they are written, they have a high degree of autonomy from specific contexts, and that this recommends them for use in the classroom[7]. In fact, by contrast with most texts, the deictic terms literary texts do contain generally refer to virtual or imaginary contexts, and so function as challenging interpretative puzzles rather than as merely frustrating gaps.

A second argument concerns what might be called - borrowing a term from the Russian Formalists - a 'deautomatisation' of the processes of interpretation which is believed to form part of reading many literary texts (especially modernist or linguistically "deviant" texts). While reading a notice or newspaper, it is uncommon to give particular attention to individual words - unless attention is drawn to them in jokes, quotations, etc; a listener simply attends to matters of relevance or interest. But Widdowson and others, picking up an idea central to the work of I.A. Richards, have suggested that literary texts, particularly lyrical poetry, involve more complex and layered organisation than conversation or most non-literary discourse. If we are interested in trying to analyze how interpretation comes about, therefore, then literary texts are especially valuable, since they draw on resources of the language more fully. Reading poetry especially foregrounds the process of interpretation, rather than simply yielding its result; and in using literary texts educationally, it is easy to force the process of interpretation into our attention precisely because literary texts often resist easy interpretation.

A third argument is that literary texts are inherently motivating and interesting, because they are written in genres specifically directed towards giving pleasure (in this respect, they are unlike reports, manuals, recipes and most other discourse-types, which have different and generally quite specific functional purposes). Since pleasure and interest are likely to prompt concentration, such texts are taken to be pedagogically valuable in achieving fuller engagement by students with the text being studied. Anyone who has reflected on their teaching of literature is unlikely to overstate this particular argument, however, as use of literary texts can (if carried out badly) be demonstrably tedious and uninspiring.

Together, these three arguments present a case that has been fairly persuasive in language-teaching circles in recent years in re-admitting literary texts into the second-language classroom, at least at advanced levels. What is worth emphasising, nevertheless, is that this revaluation of literary works is based on very different grounds than those which were generally assumed twenty years ago, and presupposes commitment to a different, more participatory way of teaching.

Interactive methodologies.

The arguments outlined above suggest a current usefulness for literary texts in the sort of L2 situations, subject to those texts being taught in innovative and appropriate ways. Note, however, that the contemporary sense of 'interactive', as regards literature teaching, is in this context less the traditional virtue of lengthy personal discussions about reading than structured groupwork activity on interpretation. This type of work links together communicative language-teaching approaches with exploration of the specific questions literary texts raise: of intended audiences and foreseen effects; of the particular values works investigate or propose; of their relationship to other texts, and their ways of representing (or neglecting to represent) social groups, forces and issues.

Interactive methodologies, in this sense, impose structure on class interaction, between lecturer and students and between student and students; they also insist on participation and active involvement in working through questions and problems. Before considering how activities along these lines can be devised for studying literary texts in particular, however, we should briefly review kinds of interactive classroom use typically made of any kind of text. To do this, I present a familiar checklist of standard uses most language teachers make of texts. The aim of presenting this list is to be able to refer back to these tasks when identifying points of complementarity and overlap between traditional uses of texts (e.g. for comprehension) and ways of exploiting literary texts in particular.

CHECKLIST OF LANGUAGE-CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES WHEN USING TEXTS

Warm-up activity.
Listening tasks.
Comprehension tasks.
Study skills and dictionary work.
Silent reading.
Discussion in the target language.
Expression of personal response.
Stylistic analysis.
Written response and creative writing.

These various uses of texts are familiar in language teaching of all kinds; and they have been developed to a high level of sophistication by EFL teachers world-wide. They are used individually, and in combination, to promote language skills by making close reference not only to the linguistic resources of the text presented, but also to its themes and capability to stimulate discussion and written response. Such work ranges from detailed analysis of single

sentences through to composition projects only indirectly related to what the text actually says. Where literary texts are used in L2 situations, on the other hand, these kinds of work are only rarely encountered. Often, on an assumption made in the classroom about students' language competence which teachers equally regularly refute outside it, little or no specific attention is given to work on reading, interpreting and responding. What takes place instead is a lecture or series of lectures on the feelings, biography, and history of the writer, on connections between the text and other texts, and on local points of stylistic analysis.

Adapting groupwork techniques from ELT for literary work.

Following this brief review of how texts are generally used in the classroom, it is now possible to consider how communicative methods have been and can be adapted to make them appropriate to working with literary texts in particular. Beyond this, it should become possible to assess how specifically literary questions and issues can be explored alongside matters of style, by extending the scope of what originate as 'language development' activities. The result of this is that the problem-solving and participatory character of communicative-based activities can be inflected towards investigating questions of history, culture and value.

The list below presents, for reference purposes, a number of established methods based on language-teaching materials which are also increasingly used as ways of teaching literary texts. Each could be exemplified many times over. It is possible to produce an almost infinite number of activities from the same basic devices; activities can be devised at virtually any level of difficulty, and so as to be appropriate to many different kinds of cultural context. Very straightforward activities can be produced, or activities which are challenging to a group of university professors. The question of tasks being of an inappropriate level is not a problem in principle: materials can be adjusted to make them of a suitable level of challenge to any given group of participants. It needs to be recognised, therefore, that questions of 'inappropriate level' are usually a matter of selection in a given instance rather than of fundamental unsuitability of the method.

Each method listed below is a generalisation from existing groupwork materials. The reason the methods are outlined in general terms in this way, rather than through detailed analysis of a small number of particular examples, is that what is most in question is the underlying mechanism of activities, rather than the detail in any given instance. Also, materials need to be designed for specific groups of participants: implementing published or other peoples' materials - particularly ones produced in another country, or by someone working in a situation which is different for other reasons - is unlikely to yield results as effective as those which come from creating tasks with a particular class of students in mind[8]. Materials need in any case to be adapted after initial use: the pace of development, and directions of interest, of any group of participants cannot easily be predicted, so the syllabus has to remain flexible. Working in detail through one or two activities in this section would illustrate how sample activities can be used in practice. But it would fail to give a sense of the scope or variety of such techniques; and this would be a less useful resource than even a limited (and to some extent arbitrary) repertoire of activity-types, from which can nevertheless be devised materials for working with virtually any text that is likely to be taught.

TYPES OF WORKSHOP TASK

1   'Comparison' activities
        (Compare texts about same subject in different registers, from different periods, etc. Choose texts which are as similar as possible, varying only the aspect you want to investigate. The aspect investigated might be a feature of style, or an attitude taken towards the subject-matter, etc.)

2   'Replacement' activities.
        (Substitute words into a text and monitor the changing effect created as you do so, by listing responses and connotations. Use this method to explore: rhythm, alliteration, word-stress, sentence-construction, connotations of words or phrases, etc.)

3   'Ordering' activities.
        (Put sentences of a paragraph into a jumbled order, then invite students to recreate order by looking for clues in the language; re-arrange words of a jumbled sentence. This method is suitable for exploring grammaticality and phrase-structure; discourse connectives; bridging inferences; paragraph structure; narrative development.)

4   'Completion' activities (cloze).
        (Delete words from a text and explore predictive properties of context; choose words or phrases to delete which illuminate the aspect of the language of the text you are interested in. Useful for work on rhyme, alliteration, metre, word connotations, metaphor, fields of allusion, topic or theme, etc.)

5   'Prediction' activities.
        (Present an opening to a novel or short story, at first the title and then sentence by sentence, testing hypotheses about what follows; compare the hypotheses at each stage with what was actually written. This method assists with work on narrative point-of-view; plot construction; narrative enigmas; etc.).

6   'Classification' activities.
        (Select odd-one-out and justify; label utterances of dramatic dialogue in terms of what they do or achieve, then classify functions listed. Draw grids, breaking down one large question into many smaller, individually more accessible questions or description tasks. Useful way of reorganising material to be presented in lecture form as problems and puzzles.)

7   'General problem-solving' activities.
        (Create puzzles with possible solutions instead of asking direct questions. Which lines? What order? How many? Identify point of transition in novel unfinished by original author and later completed by someone else.)

8 'Continuation' activities.
> (Write further lines of poem or continue any text-excerpt, trying to keep the style consistent. This method depends on close reading of the extract given, and so focuses attention on specific aspects of style.)

9   'Composition' activities.
> (Rewrite text in different genre; as newspaper report, file entry, diagram, map, etc. Useful in making comprehension and close-reading enjoyable, by making such work productive rather than merely reproductive.)

10   'Performance' activities.
> (Storyboarding and dramatising a passage; improvisation. Useful motivating work; connects reading with editorial and compositional work.)

These activity-types are suggestive, as ways of stimulating kinds of follow-up activity which all necessitate close initial engagement with the language and structure of the text or passage in question. Participating in the 'productive' aspect of any of the activities (whether this involves discussion, re-writing or acting-out) depends on initial close-reading and comprehension, in collaboration with others. The apparent 'need' for understanding, to be able to create or compose, is intended to inspire (and very often does inspire) a degree of personal interest in close attention to the language and implied meanings of the text which would be unlikely to exist if the only reason for paying such attention were to give answers in a test, or to participate in general, unstructured discussion or elicitation.

At least one crucial question remains regarding this approach to teaching, however, for many teachers of literature: how can workshop activity explore the historical and cultural dimensions of literary study which are usually covered in lectures and textbooks? Does a task-based approach mean simply abandoning history and the idea of a succession of texts written in a network of cross-references to each other which constitutes a literary tradition? These are important questions; they should not be underestimated as a result simply of enthusiasm for getting things happening in the classroom. The questions of cultural knowledge and analysis raised above have to be faced in practice.

Building into an activity-based syllabus the established historical and cultural concerns of literary study involves two distinct types of work. One kind concerns course organisation itself, in which relevant patterns of comparison and contrast must be foregrounded; the other kind involves creating activities which explore ideas (critical concepts; questions of genre; notions of audience, etc.) alongside the stylistic features of any given passage. Each of these challenges (defining what in my view remains the central problem for educationists currently working in the field of literary studies) should now be considered.

Course organisation.

As regards syllabus organisation, what most evidently follows from recognising the need for task-oriented learning is the possibility of moving away from chronological sequencing of texts within a course. Instead, we may wish to think in terms of topic-based courses which are nevertheless not 'universalist' (in the sense outlined above). Tasks can be used in a syllabus

which is based on a chronological ordering of texts. But many of the parallels, contrasts and connections (as well as the general critical concepts and theories) which a task-based course is likely to be concerned to investigate require illustration across a range of periods and places; so they benefit greatly from a variety of modes of text-sequencing. (Also, since the way texts are classified in groups - on the basis of author, movement, period, etc. - is itself an issue for study, it is valuable to exemplify and problematize a number of different ways of clustering texts together during any single course.)

Examples of 'thematic' topics which need not imply general human qualities or undifferentiated social experience might be 'country and city'; 'work'; 'images of war'; 'crime and virtue', 'happiness'. In each, different representations of the theme or contrast are examined across explicitly specified periods, cultures, and styles. In a topic such as 'representing business', for example, what is important is that a wide range of images of business should be studied in different types of texts (including both literary and non-literary texts); texts representing business people as usurers, yuppies, a neo-colonial elite, or in many other forms might be used. Questions to be considered might well include: in what genre and style are the texts written? What values are inherent in, or worked-out through, the texts? Are there regularities in any of these respects which point to the development of a tradition, a consistency of treatment, a pattern of exclusion, or the formation of mythological or stereotypical character-types? Such work inevitably involves linguistic, interpretative and historical study. It can also be made to connect with simultaneous work going on in other fields or disciplines, as well as with project or data-collection work outside the course itself. A course along these lines can exist side-by-side with canon-based courses, and can act as a point of contact between different kinds of work: historical learning, general reading, close analysis, composition, etc.

'Ideas' activities.

As regards designing activities which explore concepts and theory-formation, as well as features of style, similar general principles operate. It is possible to use questionnaires; grids that have to be filled in, so exploring options and permutations within a problem; or formulation and testing of simple predictive theories. Such activities can provide a focus for investigation of issues such as periodisation, genre or intended audiences, and encourage independent critical analysis and judgement of terminology and concepts.

Collections of activities designed along these lines[9] involve a range of analytic skills and ways of reading. Not only does use of such collections assist in the formation of study skills, including skimming and scanning and other kinds of specialised attention to texts; it also offers an enabling mediation in a controversy about the relative values of close reading and extensive reading within literary criticism itself. At least since the 1940s, critics have questioned how representative one paragraph from a novel (isolated so that it can be read during a single session) can be of the structures of the novel as a whole; it has been recognised for some time that, if we are to study novels, techniques have to be developed for investigating - within the confines of allocated contact-time - the actual structures at play within whole novels, not just parts. Some of these structures can and do exist within a single paragraph (e.g. modes of representing a character or action, or shifting between different view-points); others take place across two hundred pages or more (e.g. structures within the

narrative, or the working out of symbols and themes). Task-based activities provide opportunities for analyzing large patterns within a novel by being based on character descriptions, re-orderings of the time scheme of the narration, summaries and simulated reviews of the novel, etc. At the same time, work of this kind remains fully compatible with efforts to develop a general reading habit, by encouraging students to read widely; activities can in fact contribute to that process, by centring on reading diaries, for example, in which students keep notes, as material for use in discussion and further activity, recording what they have read as well as their reactions to it.

It is important, finally, that work in activities of this type should simultaneously focus both on concept-formation and on writing skills, especially awareness of information structure in discourse and questions of plagiarism (in particular, what distinguishes plagiarism from creative transformation of sources, which is a central and valued academic skill). Often, student under-achievement reflects inadequately-developed writing skills, which, since it is writing skill rather than reading skill which is actually assessed, make it difficult for the student to represent formally an achieved quality of perception and response[10]. New methodologies for literature teaching therefore need to bring together the interconnected skills of advanced reading and writing which are in traditional teaching approaches often separated and unequally considered; these related skills must be fitted together again, if either the accomplishments of traditional literary studies are to be achieved, or if the new forms of intellectual and critical competence to which modern literary theory continually aspires are to be defined.

Conclusions

The full potential of task-based approaches becomes clear, I think, if we remind ourselves of the evident need for university programmes to explore the interface between language and literature, and the ways in which these two areas of study can complement each other within an English syllabus.

The method-types described in the previous section can play a major contributory role in the organisation of courses. Interactive approaches to literature teaching, as redefined in this paper along loosely 'progressivist' lines, can promote the development of a wide range of skills which are linked together rather than compartmentalised: close reading skills, writing competence, a reflective critical awareness, independence as learners, and willingness to work and discuss intellectual issues together. Such activities may also have a special role to play in providing continuity between secondary and tertiary education, by building on strengths already established in (often more innovative) secondary-school language teaching. Continuity is both most necessary and most productive in bridging courses, which have the task of enabling students to make as comfortable a transition as possible from their experience of secondary education into the rather different (and possibly more demanding, certainly less supported) programmes of study which currently constitute university English.

If used along the lines indicated in this paper, I am confident that literature-oriented groupwork resources have a major role to play in literary studies in English, both in L1 and L2 situations, during the 1990s. Significant reform of the subject appears inevitable, as the result both of internal pressures within the field, and external demands increasingly being

made upon it.

In L2 situations, the arguments for reform concern (as this article has sought to show) the need to define a new and appropriate role for literature where that role is acknowledged to be linked (or even subordinate) to the development of instrumental communicative skills, or within the increasingly common perspective of English as the medium of instruction across the curriculum - even in EFL contexts.

It is increasingly clear that defining new roles for literature in our syllabuses involves adopting a new and more self-assured sense of what studying literatures in English now means. The subject can increasingly be seen as a field of cross-cultural study, within a social perspective which recognises that, in the late twentieth century in most societies, we live in a period of cultural hybridisation and new and changing mixes between cultural inheritances and traditions (high culture/popular culture; poetry and pop songs; drama and television drama, etc). Acknowledgement of English as increasingly an international language (a common advert for English courses) entails simultaneous recognition of the ever-more-complex connections between this language and changing cultural forms, both in directly post-colonial Anglophone countries and in the much larger number of countries currently influenced by English-medium pop music, by MTV and by CNN. Of course the language develops different patterns of use and attitude in different periods and places; but in all cases it serves as a means for representing, mediating and analyzing specific human and social relationships in socially (and often politically) influential ways.

Whatever the difficulty of the arguments and problems during this period of redefinition, the teaching of literature in English in my view needs to make constant and explicit reference to facts of social life outside itself; it needs to explore current and real connections between the English language and aspects of contemporary, as well as past, culture. Literary studies in L2 situations also need to move away from hegemonic cultural traditions defined in Britain and the USA during the second half of the 19th century, towards more contrastive analysis of historical traditions and changing forms of creative work in English in the world. Only this is likely to produce the sort of advanced literacy in English which can simultaneously investigate forms of language and the forms of culture they represent.

NOTES

(1)   This article brings together for convenience arguments originally developed separately, and for a number of different occasions. The central section on groupwork methods originates in a paper at the 'Linguistics of Writing' conference, Glasgow, 1986 (see Fabb et al, 1987); many of the cultural arguments were first presented to a conference on integrating language and literature approaches to the study of English held at Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1990 (see Brumfit and Benton, 1993).

(2)   See Krashen (1981).

(3)   This concern with metalanguage frequently gets confused with notions of 'standards', by way of a muddle over descriptive and prescriptive ideas of the use that might be made of grammatical terminology. Recently the argument has become entangled with

the ostensibly unrelated issue of the relative merits of 'real books' and 'phonics' as methods of teaching reading. For discussion of the role of standard English in school education, see the Cox report (1989).

(4)   See discussion in Eagleton (1983). Note, however, that feminist work generally cuts across the divisions identified here. See discussion in Thompson and Wilcox (1989).

(5)   An example of this type of work is McRae and Boardman (1984). Especially interesting examples of reading activities can be found in Grellet (1981).

(6)   For histories of the nineteenth-century development of literary studies, see Mulhern (1979), Ohmann (1976), Michael (1987) and Viswanathan (1989). For a detailed history of English language teaching, see Howatt (1984).

(7)   See Widdowson (1975) for discussion.

(8)   Extended discussion of practical issues in designing activities for specific groups can be found in Durant, 'Designing groupwork activities: a case study', in 'Designing groupwork activities: a case study', in Carter and McRae (1996:65-88).

(9)   Over one hundred activities along these lines can be found in Durant and Fabb (1989). A good example of integrated discussion and activity-work, aimed at school-level students, is Hackman and Marshall (1990); and an undergraduate coursebook combining exposition with follow -up activities is Montgomery et al (2000).

(10)   A recent guide to essay writing skills in literary studies is Fabb and Durant (1993); other examples are Pirie (1985) and Barnet (1985).

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