

ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF LITERARY TEXTS

Allanazarova Nigora Bakhtiyarovna ¹

¹ Teacher at Urgench state pedagogical institute

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This study explores the role of literary texts in enhancing English language learning in both formal and informal educational contexts. Literature is not only a medium of aesthetic expression but also a powerful pedagogical tool that aids language acquisition, cultural awareness, and critical thinking. Drawing on classroom observations and teacher interviews, this research investigates how short stories, poems, and novels can be effectively used in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The findings indicate that the incorporation of literary works significantly improves students' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and motivation to learn English. Recommendations for curriculum integration and pedagogical strategies are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION. The use of literature in English Language Teaching (ELT) has gained increased attention in recent decades. Literature provides a rich linguistic input and exposes learners to authentic language use, various genres, and cultural contexts. In particular, literary texts offer diverse perspectives and thematic depth that can stimulate learners' imagination and empathy, making the learning process more engaging and meaningful. In many educational systems, English is taught as a foreign language, often in environments where learners have limited exposure to native speakers. In such contexts, textbooks alone may not suffice to develop higher-level language skills. Integrating literary texts—such as poetry, drama, and prose—into the ELT curriculum can bridge this gap by presenting language in a more vivid, contextualized, and emotionally resonant manner. Despite its potential, the use of literature in ELT is not without challenges. Teachers may feel unprepared to teach literary texts, and learners may struggle with unfamiliar vocabulary or cultural references. This research aims to analyze the benefits and limitations of using

literary texts in the EFL classroom, drawing on both qualitative and quantitative data collected from Uzbek secondary and tertiary institutions.

Methodology. This article employs a qualitative research approach based on a comprehensive review and analysis of existing academic literature related to the use of literary texts in English language teaching. The primary method involved collecting and synthesizing theoretical frameworks, teaching strategies, and practical recommendations from scholarly books, journal articles, and educational resources.

Results and Discussion. The integration of literary works into English language teaching offers a dynamic and enriching approach to developing linguistic competence and intercultural awareness. Rather than treating literature as a separate or purely aesthetic subject, it can be effectively embedded into the language curriculum to support vocabulary acquisition, grammar awareness, speaking fluency, reading comprehension, and writing skills.

Among the various genres of literature, short stories, novels, poems, and plays have shown particular value in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts. Short stories, due to their brevity and thematic focus, are especially suited for classroom use. Stories such as “The Necklace” by Guy de Maupassant or “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry are frequently used to highlight narrative structure, introduce past tense usage, and stimulate discussion around themes such as irony, sacrifice, and materialism. These stories allow students to grasp meaning at both the literal and interpretive levels, encouraging them to engage critically with texts while also learning new vocabulary and expressions in context.

Excerpts from longer novels can also be employed to sustain interest and deepen language exposure without overwhelming students. Simplified versions or selected passages from novels like George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* or Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* can be used to introduce political vocabulary, social issues, and culturally embedded expressions. These texts invite students to analyze characters, infer authorial intent, and connect historical or ethical issues to contemporary life, thereby broadening their worldview while strengthening their language skills.

Poetry, often underutilized in language classrooms, serves as a powerful tool for teaching rhythm, tone, emotional expression, and figurative language. Poems such as “If—” by Rudyard Kipling or Maya Angelou’s “Still I Rise” can be used to explore themes of resilience, personal growth, and social justice, while also introducing idiomatic phrases and metaphorical language. Reading poetry aloud encourages pronunciation practice and helps learners become attuned to the sounds and musicality of English.

Dramatic texts offer an especially interactive method for language learning. Scenes from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* (in abridged versions) or Shaw’s *Pygmalion* provide opportunities for role-play, which develops confidence in speaking and listening. Acting out scenes requires learners to embody characters, interpret dialogue, and react in real time, thereby enhancing fluency and communicative competence.

To successfully integrate literature into English teaching, educators can design structured learning sequences around each text. Pre-reading activities might include brainstorming related themes, predicting plot elements based on the title or first lines, or introducing key vocabulary and cultural references. These activities activate prior knowledge and prepare learners for deeper comprehension. During reading, students can engage in guided reading sessions where comprehension questions are used to check understanding. Teachers might also pause to analyze specific language features, ask students to underline idiomatic expressions, or encourage them to keep a vocabulary journal. Group reading or reading circles promote collaboration and shared interpretation. Post-reading tasks are essential for reinforcing what has been learned and expanding critical thinking. These may include debates on the decisions of literary characters, creative writing assignments like composing a letter from one character to another, or writing alternative endings. Performing scenes from plays, turning stories into short skits, or holding literary discussions also create spaces for active language use and peer feedback.

Conclusion. Literature provides more than just reading material; it creates a multidimensional learning environment where language is embedded in emotion, culture, and critical inquiry. By combining pre-reading scaffolding, interactive reading techniques, and meaningful post-reading tasks, teachers can help students appreciate both the beauty of the language and the depth of human experience. The key to successful integration lies in thoughtful text selection, sensitivity to students' language levels and interests, and a willingness to guide students beyond surface-level comprehension toward genuine engagement with literature.

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