

EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION OF ELT METHODOLOGIES FOR LITERATURE CLASSES IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

The study of literature does not only make one a mere reader, rather it nurtures one's hidden potential to be an interpreter, a critic and an analyst. It also fulfills one's aesthetic, humanistic and educational zeal. In the literature classes, the learners are supposed to be benefitted not only to gain literary competence but also for linguistic and foreign language skills development. However, the literature classes here in Bangladesh need to be investigated whether the methodologies applying at present are sufficient to have the optimum output or not. If I consider my own experience as a university student of English literature and later as a faculty of English I know how English literature classes operate in Bangladesh. I have also realized with time and experience that teaching of literature in different contexts requires different methodologies. So, there are times when the literature teacher becomes a language teacher using the methodologies of ELT. This paper, thus, aims at showing the pure literature classes where the teachers use the ELT methodologies with a view to making the class understandable, learner-centered, more functional and more effective.

Keywords: *Literature, Classes, Language, Text, Activities.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of Literature is the study of life, the study of human psychology or even the study of life hereafter. It is read for intellectual enlightenment, cultural and historical experience, and for personal enjoyment.

First of all, it is needed to know about the most common scenario of the literature classes in Bangladesh. If we look at some private or public university classes, we can see the teacher-centered large classrooms where the teacher is the only knowledge provider among the learners who keeping mum all the while continue their formal classes of literature. As there is no interaction between teacher and students, it is often wrongly assumed by the teacher that the students are well equipped with the target language and are competent enough to deal with the literary discourse. For this reason, emphasis is not given on linguistic development. Contrarily, language classes aim at focusing on the understanding of the literariness of the texts through interactions, discussions, debate etc. between student-text, student-student or student- teacher. However, an integration of the two methodologies required for a more effective class is the chief concern of this article.

2. OBJECTIVE

The principal objective for the research study is to find out a ground-breaking method through the integration of the existing imperative methodologies and use of literature for the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) learners of Bangladesh.

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3. METHODOLOGY

It is an undeniable fact that most of the students especially in private universities of Bangladesh are very weak in English. Most of these students come from Bengali medium schools and colleges, and hence, are unable to cope up with the skills and strategies required for critical, analytical or cognitive thinking. With this view in mind, the present paper shows how a literary text is normally taught in a purely literature class in the universities of our context. Then different methodologies of ELT are suggested on how the same text can be used to foster English language skills. Finally, the article concludes by recommending that the literature teacher can change the traditional style of teaching and adopt the newest and innovative methodologies from the Language classrooms with a view to making his/her classes more effective and to fulfilling the multidimensional purposes of the study of literature. Observation method was proved to be useful for the research work. Another supportive method for the research study was conceptual analysis method. In this paper, the researcher has selected a renaissance text *Doctor Faustus* of Christopher Marlowe. Suggestions and recommendations are also depicted regarding the topic after finding out the real picture of literature classes in Bangladesh.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

To have a clear view of this issue, *Doctor Faustus* of Christopher Marlowe is considered from the syllabus of English Honors. The reason for choosing this drama is because it is taught in almost all the universities (both private & public) in Bangladesh. At first, the general overview of the drama taught in the typical English literature classes in Bangladesh will be discussed and later a variety of teaching activities will be referred. It is, therefore, the expectation that the teachers using the similar kind of text in the class would use some of the communicative activities recommended in this article and find them very pleasing and teachable. The critical books of D. Larsen-Freeman's "The communicative approach. Techniques and principles in language teaching", A. Maley's "Down from the Pedestal: Literature as resource", R. Talif's "Teaching Literature in ESL: The Malaysian context", S. L. Stern's "An integrated approach to Literature in EFL" were enough supportive to make study for the research. Besides, some other critical books and online journals were also collected for the progression of the research paper in a proper way.

4.1. An Introduction to Doctor Faustus

Doctor Faustus, a well-respected German scholar, grows dissatisfied with the limits of traditional forms of knowledge — logic, medicine, law, and religion — and decides that he wants to learn to practice magic. His friends Valdes and Cornelius instruct him in the black arts, and he begins his new career as a magician by summoning up Mephistopheles, a devil. Despite Mephistopheles' warnings about the horrors of hell, Faustus tells the devil to return to his master, Lucifer, with an offer of Faustus's soul in exchange for twenty-four years of service from Mephistopheles. Mephistopheles returns to Faustus with word that Lucifer has accepted Faustus's offer with the condition that Dr. Faustus has to sign a bond with his blood. This heinous bond let him to lead his life with voluptuousness and pleasures only for twenty four years. After twenty four years, Faustus's soul will be taken to hell for perpetual damnation. Doctor Faustus, though experienced an inner conflict before signing the deed, finally signed the bond. After a few years Faustus's fame spreads throughout the world. He enjoyed every moment but his inner conflict made him restless. Good Angel and Evil Angel are the representing figures of his two conflicting spirits

As the twenty-four years of his deal with Lucifer come to a close, Faustus begins to dread his impending death. He has Mephistopheles call up Helen of Troy, the famous beauty from the ancient world, and uses her presence to impress a group of scholars. An old man urges Faustus to repent, but Faustus drives him away. Faustus summons Helen again and exclaims rapturously about her beauty. But time is growing short. Faustus tells the scholars about his pact, and they are horror-stricken and resolve to pray for him. On the final night before the expiration of the twenty-four years, Faustus is overcome by fear and remorse. He begs for mercy, but it is too late. At midnight, a host of devils appears and carries his soul off to hell. In the morning, the scholars find Faustus's limbs and decide to hold a funeral for him. The paper next depicts how this play is commonly taught in the literature classes in our universities.

5. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

5.1. Overview of the English Literature Classes in Bangladesh

Traditionally, it has become a common practice in Bangladesh that in literature classes the teacher is the only knowledge provider and the students passively accept what is being transmitted to them. Teachers use a lot of specific terminologies in class and the students are estimated as well equipped with the target language. In the traditional language classes, the teacher focuses on the genre first, and then, speaks about the contemporary Age and characteristics. He then goes on to the author's life and the source of the text. Next, the teacher mentions the major and minor characters of the texts. Finally, a detailed discussion on the theme and plot development of the text takes place. While teaching the play *Doctor Faustus* the following points are normally covered with criticism, analysis and discussion:

- i) **Source & background:** Since the play is written during the Elizabethan period, it deals with a dramatized story of the life and death of a medieval scholar who sells his soul to the devils, in return for a life of power and pleasure. It was published in 1588 with the title "The Tragic History of Doctor Faustus".
- ii) **Author, his contribution to English drama & the Autobiographical Elements:** In this part of the class, the teacher usually talks about Christopher Marlowe, his early childhood, his patronization of English drama, why he is called the greatest of Shakespeare's predecessors?, his first tragedy "Tamburlaine the Great" (1587 & 1588) and other dramas. A clear view of his life and death of this great 'university wit' has been the topic of discussion of the teacher.
- iii) **About the Age, characteristics & comparison:** The teacher next deals with the characteristics of Renaissance, morality plays & a comparison between the rules of classical dramas and the rules of the Elizabethan dramas. In all of his discussion, the students are the dumb listeners.
- iv) **Character:** In describing characters, the teacher usually uses his own methods of dividing the major and minor characters, and then gives a short introduction to all of them.
- v) **Plot & theme:** Discussion on the plot development and the theme becomes the chief concern of the teacher as well as the students. The teacher usually speaks about the tragic story of Dr. Faustus, his over-ambitious tendency, his choosing necromancy, his deed with the devils, his 24 years of worldly voluptuousness and pleasures, his final misery and ultimate damnation in hell etc. in a very pleasing way ignoring all kinds of interactions, debate, discussions or any other linguistic development. The students enjoy the story keeping mum all the while.
- vi) **Inner crisis/conflict, moral lesson and ending:** Though the teacher ends focusing on the inner or mental conflict, its causes, realism, ultimate misery and the moral lessons that follow, he hardly gets any time or scope to make the learners competent in the language required for the clear understanding of the literariness of the texts.

5.2. Overview of Language Activities in the English Language Classes in Bangladesh

It is the expected general scenario in EFL classrooms that the learners are participating in different language activities and the teacher is simply instructing and supervising. But in Bangladesh, sometimes, it is seen that there is a tendency to make even the language classes very teacher-centered and lecture based, which should not normally be the practice. As teachers in an EFL context, we must not forget that we are teaching students for whom English is a foreign language and those who possess very limited English Language proficiency. In the ELT methodologies, it is not required to teach the texts in exhaustive details. So, the texts or the fragments of the texts will be presented in a variety of ways. The teacher will have to “tailor” activities to suit the students’ level of language proficiency (Maley 1989:13). In such classes, the students remain mostly preoccupied with different activities like – discussion, debate, personal criticism, pair work, group work, role play etc.

Now, in order to use *Doctor Faustus* for an EFL class, we can begin by using the proposed framework of Maley (1989) based on the following three stages:

A) Framing: Getting Ready B) Focusing: Engaging C) Diverging: Moving on

At the onset of the class, the students are made familiar with the present text by referring to some practical stories of the similar kind. This warming up stage is called “Framing”. In the “Focusing” stage, students are made to engage with the text through different language learning activities that lead them to understand and interpret the text. In the “Diverging” stage, the text is used as a “springboard to catapult the students elsewhere”, that is students are made to follow up activities like, role play, transfer to other text types, do creative writing etc.

This framework is very similar to another effective framework proposed by Talif (1994: 122) which he designed with a Malaysian ESL context in mind:

<p>The Initial Stage: Preparing students for Literary text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To initiate preliminary work (set introduction) to stimulate interest and motivation in preparing the students for the literary text. <p>The Middle stage: Exploring the Literary text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-reading: to introduce students to understand the language and content of the literary text• During reading: to assist students to understand the language and content of the literary text.• Post-reading: to determine the students’ understanding of the text; review and consolidation exercises. <p>The Final Stage: Extension beyond the literary text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To stimulate further understanding of the literary text through the use of supplementary reading materials and exercises and follow-up activities.

Figure: Framework proposed by Talif (1994) for using literature in ESL Instructions

According to Talif (1994), the language classes should be student-centered and the teacher is a facilitator, monitoring and maneuvering ways to activate the process of communication in the class. In this way, the students can have the depths of literary texts and can develop their own responses and sensitivities. The primary goal of an EFL class is to enable students to communicate using the target language, that is, students should have both “knowledge of the target language, forms, meanings, and functions” and also “must be able to apply this knowledge in negotiating meaning” between the speaker and listener or reader and writer (Larsen-Freeman 1986:123). This purpose can be served well if we take an integrated skill based approach along with the teaching of Vocabulary and grammar. ‘Vocabulary and grammar study should occur within the context of the literary work’ (Stern 1991). “*Doctor Faustus* is, in this context, a relevant teaching material

on which the ELT methodologies and other activities can be designed. Based on the framework of Maley (1989) and Talif (1994) the present literature teachers of Bangladesh may adopt the following methodologies and guidelines in teaching the drama *Doctor Faustus*.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Some necessary recommendations are proposed that may be effective for the Language teachers to teach more properly in the literature classes.

6.1. Framing/Warming Up/Starting Point/Initial Stage:

- 5.1.1. Students can be supplied or can be shown through the multimedia projector with visuals of a painting of a scholar perplexed at the sight of worldly pleasures led to hell for eternal damnation and the religious faith and rituals led to heaven for eternal bliss. Then, they can be asked to write down the worlds that come to their mind as they look at it.
- 5.1.2. Finishing the individual list of words from the drawing, the students can compare each other's list and can come across some new words or new expressions.
- 5.1.3. Then, the students can be asked to write a small paragraph or a short description of their own on the basis of this painting. Word limitation may also be given due to have the time constraints of the class.
- 5.1.4. After that the students can be asked to compare and contrast each other's writings. They can be allowed to do thesis activities in groups. Thus, the students can be made familiar with the thematic content of the text and also they can be linguistically developed.

6.2. Exploring the Text/ Middle Part

- 5.2.1. Students can be allowed to read the different segments of the play depending on the duration of the class. Teachers need to ask students to stop reading on any important part and then can interpret the lines or expressions. A list of words or terminologies can also be written on the board in the mean time and later ask students to find the lines and to interpret these in their own words.
- 5.2.2. Various questions may be asked and answered to check the students' literary and linguistic comprehensiveness in the class.
- 5.2.3. Students can also be asked to offer their personal views and opinions on several issues focused in the class. This will develop their competence in literary discourse.

6.3. Activities Matter in the Exploring Part

For a lively classroom interaction, such tasks can be very effective. In the focusing or exploring part, the following activities can also be included:

- 5.0.1. **Summarizing:** To check students' understanding of the text.
- 5.0.2. **Anticipating:** To check students' interpretative skills, teachers can stop at times and ask students the possible outcome of the plot.
- 5.0.3. **Fill in the blanks games:** Two sets of gap filling exercises may be provided and the students can be asked to complete the expressions by themselves. Two sets may be set as one's gap is another's answer. Thus, the students can share their sheets and have the self assessment.
- 5.0.4. **Relevant question analysis and answering:** Questions may be of two types – very comprehensive short answers with specific information and answers in detail where students are required to give personal and analytical responses with justification.
- 5.0.5. **Quiz:** A series of questions can be set for quiz and other communication games in the class. The class may be divided into several groups entitling different names. Then they may be asked comprehensive and analytical questions and can generate a communication games among different teams creating variety and excitement.

5.3. Diverging Stage/Final Stage/Extension Beyond the Text

- 5.3.3. Giving Assignment:** students can be given assignments not on the traditional aspects of thematic writing but on the stylistic features, figurative language and his complete observation, criticism upon the text.
- 5.3.4. Further Reading:** In this final stage, the students can be shown the Articles and research papers already written on this text. The language, format and style of these research works may be on strong focus so that the students may be inspired to write their own.
- 5.3.5. Staging the drama:** The **teacher** may inspire and guide the students to arrange a stage drama on the present text where they themselves will perform. A successful implementation of this method may be very effective for the learners' mastery over the drama. This task may be an outside of the classroom activity, but closely related to the students' language skills developments in all the sections- reading, writing, speaking and listening.

7 CONCLUSION

Thus, it can be clearly concluded that the integrating of ELT methodologies in literature classes would not only create the varieties and excitement in the academic atmosphere but also enrich our students' language skills essential for a text's maximum intelligibility. Teaching methodologies in literature and language may be different, but this does not necessarily mean that these classroom practices need to be separated from each other. My main objective in this article, therefore, is to suggest applying the possible ELT methodologies to make the classes more effective. We should always bear in mind that the students we are teaching are from poor English language orientation. They often cram the question answers and other literary terms without understanding. That is why; they need to be given a lot of language tasks in their literature classes where the text itself can be used as a language tool or resource. The literature teacher should incorporate or integrate the selective language activities making the literature classes more language – oriented as shown in Talif's model and in Maley's framework of my Article for promoting better understanding and learning. So, this has become a crying demand of the time that instead of the traditional methods of literature teaching where there is mainly information mode of teaching system, a literature teacher can be a perfect facilitator in a learner – centered class where the literary text is used as a clue to nurture our students' hidden potential and to develop their independent, analytical, interruptive and critical skills through various language activities.

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