

# The role of literature in the EFL/ESL classroom revisited: Using literature in communicative language teaching

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## 要旨

外国語教育において文学は1980年代に communicative language teaching (CLT) の観点から再評価が進み議論されてきた。しかし文学が果たす役割はいまだに明確になってはないのが実情である。本研究では、これまでに外国語教育において文学がどのように扱われてきたかという歴史的背景を踏まえ、文学の扱いを CLT の前後に分けて考察する。また、外国語教育において CLT の観点から文学を使う理論的根拠を再考察し、なぜ文学を使うのかという点を指摘する。さらに、文学の再評価が始まった1981年から2010年までの過去30年にわたる文学を扱った文献を検討し、その結果4つのアプローチに分類した暫定理論モデルを示す。さらに、4つアプローチの相互関係を検討し、修正モデルを提案する。加えて今後の外国語教育における文学の役割に関する統合理論モデルを示す。

## 1. Introduction

It has often been pointed out that literature, which was once central but then dropped from English as a foreign language (EFL) / English as a second language (ESL) curricula, was brought back again into the foreign language field in line with the principles of Communicative language teaching (CLT) in the 1980s (e.g., Hall, 2005). There has been a relative increase in the number of publications regarding the use of literature in the EFL classroom over the past several years and the study of a potential use of literature in second language (L2) has become an important

aspect (e.g., Brumfit & Carter, 1986; Collie & Slater, 1987; Carter & Long, 1991). Nevertheless, the role of literature in EFL classroom still remains rather unclear. This hinders the use of literature in L2 settings (e.g., Edmondson, 1997; Littlewood, 1984; Paran, 2000; Sumara, 2002).

The purpose of this paper is: (1) to reconsider the role of literature in EFL/ESL classroom through the analysis of studies from the 1980s, the time of which literature opened up a new vista through CLT, with regard to the communicative use of literature in EFL/ESL classroom; and (2) to build a conceptual model regarding what role literature can play in the EFL/ESL classroom based on the analysis above.

First, we will review a brief history of literature in language teaching with regard to the transition between the historical dominance and decline of literature along with the revival of the use of literature in relation to the rise of CLT in EFL. Furthermore, we will re-evaluate the rationale of the use of literature in terms of CLT.

Secondly, we will examine how literature has been used in the EFL/ESL classrooms through reviewing articles of the last three decades from the 1980s through the 2010s as this is when the use of literature returned to the EFL/ESL classrooms. These articles give a clear account of the relationship of the use of literature in CLT as well. In this paper, *English Language Teaching Journal (ELT Journal)* was chosen. It is one of the most influential academic journals with regard to the field of teaching English as a second or foreign language, providing a wide range of topics of discussion in relation to the way in which English is taught and learned. It offers an historical account of a state of English education along with up-to-date discussion of English language teaching around the world. Based on a review of the articles in the *ELT Journal*, four common approaches were identified and discussed in detail and then we hypothesized a framework of the four approaches to literature in CLT.

Thirdly, we will modify the hypothesis by re-examining the *ELT* articles from a new perspective which consists of cross-examination of arguments against one another to capture connections among the four approaches.

Considering the modified version of the hypothetical framework above, we

will propose an integrated approach to literature in the EFL/ESL classroom and then summarize the findings of this paper and will offer some suggestions for further research.

## **2. A brief historical background of literature in language teaching: the 1800s to the 1900s**

The teaching of the classics in Greek and Latin in the grammar school was predominant in European education up to the nineteenth century. However, the origins of English literature as a subject in foreign language curriculum date back to the early nineteenth century in India and other British colonies. Initially, English literature appeared as a part of the colonial project. It was offered to provide modern knowledge, and as moral and religious training for Indians as well encouraging other imperial colonies to acculturate in terms of the nationalistic context (Hall, 2005).

Meanwhile, with a growing number of learners of national language, English literature played a significant role to meet the demands for the higher education on the working classes along with the middle class women in the U.K. Church ministers and missionaries took language and literature studies to the working classes at the Mechanics Institute, and to the newly formed London Colleges, and also to women's college, such as Queen's college, London (Hall, 2005).

Literature developed as a subject of English studies because of the tradition of rhetoric in this era. Later the philological study of Old English took over the study of rhetoric. Accordingly, literature gradually took place in language education as useful reading of cannon texts and moral agenda, particularly for the middle classes. In this way, from the later nineteenth century, literature was central to the study of English in Britain and other foreign countries (Hall, 2005).

In the early twentieth century, the Grammar Translation Method and the Direct Method were dominant methodologies for teaching literature in foreign language education. Grammar Translation Method was the offspring of German scholarship and in fact first known as Prussian Method. In this period, literature was mostly for the elite

students, and the study of the language meant the study of literature.

Literary texts were the center of discussion or analysis, with a focus on humanism rather than discourse in this period. The idea of the teaching method of literature reflected the traditional approaches derived from nineteenth-century England (Hall, 2005).

### **2.1 Study of literature before CLT: the 1950s to the 1970s**

In the middle of the twentieth century, there was a shift in attitude toward a discussion of the approach of literature from traditional to content-oriented instruction for advanced students. Literary texts were seen as material for the development of comprehension of prestigious texts and often involved passages or extracts from classic texts using grammatical exercises, vocabulary questions and drills.

This type of instruction was likely to employ a lecture-based teaching style in which teachers provide many supplementary materials as guidance. These may include notes on the author's life and times, themes, plot, characters, questions and so on. It has been pointed out that these methodologies tend to focus only on elite students in higher-level classes and ignore language proficiency in general. Following the rise of psychology, literature at this time was also offered as a source of training materials for critical thinking for advanced learners who had already mastered linguistic structure and was perceived rather as entertaining supplement for advanced learners at this time (Hall, 2005).

### **2.2 Use of literature after CLT: the 1980s to the 2000s**

However, there was a significant reduction in the number of articles and publications mentioning literature during the 1950s (Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000). This was the beginning of the decline of the status of literature in foreign language study (Davis, 1989). Moving on from the 1950s to the 1970s, literature was considered to be irrelevant and dismissed from foreign language education (Hall, 2005).

While the use of literature fell in disfavor of the foreign teaching through

the 1950s to the 1970s, there was a revival of literature as a part of the rise of communicative language teaching (CLT). After the proficiency movement came into fashion, literature was treated as authentic text, which would provide a source for L2 development, such as vocabulary acquisition, reading strategies, and critical thinking. Literature was also often regarded as a topic of schemata for psycholinguistic and discourse analysis (Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000).

The new perspective of literature under the influence of CLT was initially introduced as an alternative approach to a traditional one and “this movement led to an important revival of the fortunes for literature in progressive classrooms from the 1980s” (Hall, 2005, p.51).

Throughout the 1980s, discussion of the role of literature moved from a traditional to a communicative approach. An increasing number of articles on communicative use of literature appeared at this time and literature was seen as an ideal material for the use of authentic and real language to facilitate communication skills in L2 (e.g., Collie & Slater, 1987). From then, literature was seen again as a potential material in terms of CLT, playing a significant role in L2 development through the 1980s to the 2000s.

### **2.3 Rationale behind the use of literature in CLT**

Having stated that the use of literature is in line with CLT that it provides a source of linguistic activities where students can negotiate meaning in authentic context (Hall, 2005), we will discuss the theoretical bases for the use of literature in this section. Let us consider the following simple but fundamental question: what does reading literature mean? First, we will begin to review the characteristics of the reading process of literary discourse as opposed to the other types of discourse.

Generally speaking, it is an interaction between learner and text; however, we have to know what separates reading literature from the other texts to answer the question. Widdowson (1983) argues the differences between literary discourse and other types of discourse as follows:

(1) ...the difference between conventional discourse and literature is that in conventional discourse you can anticipate, you can take short cuts; when reading a passage, let's say, you often know something about the topic the passage deals with, and you can use that knowledge while reading naturally in order to find out what's going on in the passage. This is a natural reading procedure: we all do it (p. 31).

In the citation of Widdowson (1983) above, he argues that when reading, we can usually guess and make sense of conventional discourse, using the “background knowledge on which the interpretation of a text depends” (Hudson, 2007, p. 302) that is our schematic knowledge related to topics. He goes on to say that this type of reading process is different when we deal with literary discourse and points out the differences as follows:

(2) Now, you can't do that with literature...because you've got to find the evidence, as it were, which is representative of some new reality. So with literary discourse the actual *procedure for making sense* are much more in evidence. You've got to employ interpretative procedures in a way which isn't required of you in the normal reading process. If you want to develop these procedural abilities to make sense of discourse, then literature has a place (p. 31).

This is to say, literature consists of special discourse that is independent of schematic knowledge in which we employ with everyday situations. Consequently, we cannot understand what is being presented in literature unless we find some clues or evidence from the literary text that enable us to interpret it.

In other words, when we read and interpret literature, that is to reconstruct the text, we need to mobilize all the language knowledge we have in order to search for linguistic forms that jointly build up a meaning of the literary text and then “infer what lies behind the obvious literal meanings of the text” (Hall, 2005).

What Widdowson (1983) calls the procedures for making sense of literary text can be seen as a kind of inferencing ability that readers are expected to use with literary texts because “literary texts are expected to be ‘complex’ in themselves, and/or in the demands they will make on readers” (Hall, 2005, p. 97). Thus, this characteristic is inherent in the process of reading literature, which justify the use of literature in foreign language education.

Although there is an argument against Widdowson (1983) that there is no experimental evidence to say that literature requires such cognitive process (Edmondson, 1997), Brumfit and Carter (1986) also consider this process as rationale behind the use of literature as follows:

(3) Literary texts provide examples of language resources being used to the full, and the reader is placed in an active interactional role in working with and making sense of this language. Thus, literature lessons make for genuine opportunities in group work and/or open-ended exploration by the individual student (p.15).

Similar to Widdowson (1983), they state that the procedures for making sense of literature can contribute to foreign language learning. Furthermore, they go on to state that because of this characteristic, literature can offer a whole range of language activities. The fact that literature offers many tasks and activities in the ESL/EFL context has often been pointed out by researchers, such as Collie and Slater (1987), Carter and Long (1991) and Hall (2005).

Having discussed the characteristics of procedures for making sense of literature above, this notion provided by Widdowson (1983) seems to be integral in a rationalization of the role of literature in relation with foreign language education.

### **3. Four approaches to using literature in CLT**

In this section, we will explore ways in which literature is approached in CLT to see practical aspects of the theoretical basis provided in the previous section in actual

use in CLT. In order to do this, we have searched for articles through 1981 to 2010 in the *ELT Journal* as empirical evidence and found out that there were fifteen articles altogether that discuss how literature should be approached in CLT. Having examined these fifteen articles, we found out that the communicative use of literature has been explored in four major ways: (1) stylistics (2) language-based (3) reader-response (4) young-adult literature.

We will review and discuss articles in terms of these four approaches to literature in CLT showing connections and relevance between these four main approaches and the ideas of fifteen *ELT Journal*-articles to justify our categorization. Table 1 summarizes a list of the fifteen articles in *ELT Journal* in accordance to the four major approaches: stylistics, language-based, reader-response, and young-adult literature.

**Table 1 Summary of *ELT Journal* in accordance to four major approaches**

Stylistics	Language-based	Reader-response	Young-adult literature
Sopher (1981)	Barry (1983)	Elliot (1990)	Hirvela & Boyle (1988)
Deyes (1982)	Gower (1986)	Gerber (1990)	Akyel & Yalcin (1990)
	Carter & Long (1990)	Ross (1991)	Ronnqvist & Sell (1994)
	Lazar (1990, 1994)	Hirvela (1996)	Ghosn (2002)

### 3.1 Stylistics

Sopher (1981) and Deyes (1982) seem to be concerned with the analysis of forms of the literary texts in terms of grammatical features and lexis. Sopher (1981) proposed a method named macrostructure analysis, which “consists in breaking down a text into its major and minor topics...in the same way as an immediate constituent analysis of a sentence breaks down the sentence into its major and minor grammatical constituents” (p.328). Sopher (1981) dealt with a piece of poetry “The Chaser” by John Collier, and argued that the macrostructure analysis is a useful technique that enables students to interpret symbolic meaning of the literary texts. In building on the word of Sopher (1981), Deyes (1982) however, offered another method named surface structure analysis. Deyes (1982), using the same text “The Chaser”, stated



that this method focuses more on surface structure of the text, such as “anaphoric and exophoric use of pronouns, transitivity structure, exchange of structure in question-and-answer patterning” (p.119). Deyes (1982) claimed that this method is more objective than macrostructure analysis because it would promote students’ awareness of communicative use of language of the literary text grammatically and syntactically. Deyes (1982) goes on to state that this method would have much positive pedagogical effect on reading and writing in the EFL/ESL classrooms.

Their pedagogical perspectives of the use of literature would seem to be perfectly in line with the typical stylistics approach since stylistics is generally said to be the analysis of linguistic feature of literary texts. Widdowson (1975) asserts as follows:

By ‘stylistics’ I mean the study of literary discourse from a linguistics orientation and I shall take the view that what distinguishes stylistics from literary criticism on one hand and linguistics on the other is that it is essentially a means of linking the two and has (as yet at least) no autonomous domain of its own (p. 3).

In other words, stylistics is a bridge over literature and language. Since the implementation of school curriculum in the 1980s U.K, the notion of the stylistics in the citation of Widdowson (1975) has become an important aspect of the first language (L1) language teaching and later has been implemented for ESL/EFL teaching in the 1990s as ‘practical stylistics’ (Saito, 2000). However, Sopher (1981) and Deyes (1982) are yet to explore the practicality of their stylistics approaches.

### **3.2 Language-based approach**

Barry (1983) and Gower (1986), who are against the use of a stylistics approach to literature, argued that literature should be approached rather more interactively with tasks and activities. Barry (1983), who is in favor of language-based approaches, stated that the method suggested by Sopher (1981) and Deyes (1982) may seem to be too mechanical and impede students’ interest in literature. Barry (1983) claimed

that literature is a piece of art and interpretation of the literary texts should be gained through classroom-group activities, such as group cloze, group sequencing and group prediction. In support of Barry (1983), Gower (1986) stated that stylistic analysis might be used only as scaffolding of students' reading, but not as main approach in the EFL/ESL classrooms.

While the stylistics approaches concern the study of the text by itself as a work of literature, Carter and Long (1990) suggested what they termed a 'language-based approach', which consists of three parts: general comprehension, text focus and personal response, emphasizing the interaction between L2 learner and literary text through a wide range of tasks and activities. Carter and Long (1991) give a clear picture of that approach as follows:

Language-based approaches are normally less concerned with literary text as a product and are more concerned with processes of reading. A process-centered, language-based pedagogy means that the teacher has to come 'down from the pedestal'. It means that the teacher become an enabler, working with students and creatively intervening to ensure a relevant and meaningful experience through a direct contact with the text (p.7).

In the citation of Carter and Long (1991) above, on top of definitions of the approaches, they also pointed out the importance of student-centered classroom situations where a teacher's role seems to be more of a facilitator rather than a lecturer.

Lazar (1990) provided insight into more practical dimensions using a novel "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Lazar (1990) offered a wide range of classroom activities in relation to the language of the novel, such as direct and reported speech, summarizing, sentence completion and chronological ordering, using descriptive adjectives and lexical cluster. These are good examples that illustrate the potential use of literature as a source of linguistic activities in CLT. Moreover, Lazar (1994) offered some alternative ways, such as cloze, multiple-choice questions, guessing word

meaning from context and matching, to teach students with lower-proficiency levels who seem to struggle with the literary texts. Lazar (1994) claimed that these activities are geared to facilitate lower-level students' interpretation in which they are engaged in both thematic and linguistic aspects of the literary texts that are in accordance to their proficiency levels.

In a nutshell, the language-based approach seems to involve aspects of tasks and activities in using literature that focuses more on a process of reading the literary texts along with 'personal response' (Carter & Long, 1990). This approach may seem to make full use of literary text as a source for linguistic activities rather than the analysis of texts' linguistic features.

### **3.3 Reader-response approach**

Hirvela (1996) claimed that though personal response, which contributed to the learners' language production of the target language through task-based instruction, has played a significant role in using literature in terms of CLT, this approach has limitations as to learners' genuine responses to the literary texts. Hirvela (1996) argued that a reader-response approach is more concerned with the learners' story of reading whereas personal response only considers the learners' response to the language and content of the literary texts.

"The key idea of reader-response theory as an approach is that the reader is central to meaning construction, and that different readers read ('respond') differently" (Hall, 2005,p.84). Reader-response approach recognizes the reader as an active agent who generates his or her own interpretation and also deals with the diverse variety of readers' interpretations. Nowadays, this approach is widely used in ESL/EFL classroom mostly using role-play and discussion, and has become one of the dominant approaches in the foreign language as well as in a L1 context.

Elliott (1990) investigated university students' attitudes toward the use of role-play and improvisation in the ESL classrooms in Brunei. The selections of texts were William Golding's "Lord of the Flies" and George Orwell's "Animal Farm", which are

known as “two of commonest texts in the ESL cannon” (p. 191). Students were divided into groups and told to act out situations or scenes given in these texts from characters’ perspectives. After the role-play and improvisation, they gave feedback on other group’s performances and discussed the process of interpreting the themes of the texts through their acting. Elliott (1990) claimed that students were all positive about role-play and improvisation.

Similar to Elliott (1990), Gerber (1990) pointed out the effective use of role-play in the classroom using a novel “Luck Jim” by Kingsley Amis with seventeen Swiss university students. Gerber (1990) stated, “there is no direct teacher intervention...there is genuine interaction among the pupils...participation is extremely high...the English is more natural and more real than can normally be heard in a classroom...the students speak fluently and actively use words learnt from the text” (p. 202). The results of this study show that role-play had positive effects on students’ fluency practice and they also had very positive attitudes toward this activity.

An example to illustrate the effectiveness of discussion with the use of literature is Ross (1991), who incorporated film versions of the literary texts, such as E.M. Foster’s “A Passage to India”, George Orwell’s “1984” and William Styron’s “Sophie’s choice”, into classroom activities. Students were to compare and contrast novels and films and then discussed “how the novels had been transferred to the screen (cuts and additions); whether any changes had been made (for the better or for the worse; if the interpretation of the director coincided with that of the students” (p.151). Ross (1991) claimed that these activities would be beneficial to students’ fluency practice as well as development of their language awareness. The studies cited above suggest that reader-response approach would be much effective with regard to promote learners’ production of the target language through a wide range of tasks and activities of which learners fully use their language abilities to gain interpretation, which involves personal experience of reading literature in the classroom rather than a certain interpretation of the literary text.

However, reader-response approach has some drawbacks at the same time.

Bagherkazemi and Alemi (2010) argue, “considering the learners’ language proficiency and culture, selecting appropriate materials may be problematic” (p. 5). This point is noteworthy because the problem of using literature with EFL/ESL learners is often attributed to the complexity of the language of literary text. Cater and Long (1991) argue, “literary competence is complex to define, but it is connected with different levels of linguistic competence” (p.10).

### **3.4 Young-adult literature**

Lastly, we included young-adult literature as one of the four approaches here to compensate for the problems related to lack of proficiency for ESL/EFL learners. Although it may seem odd to categorize this as an approach in itself, compare to the other three. We have done so as we believe it is necessary to consider accessibility of the literary text, otherwise literature cannot be approached in the first place except with L2 learners with advanced-level proficiency. Thus, we may believe that the use of YAL can be considered as a practical approach applicable to a wide range of learners “because of their inherent simplicity, both linguistic and literary” (Bagherkazemi & Alemi, 2010, p. 8).

A young-adult literature approach seems to be much concerned with accessibility of the literary texts. People who are in favor of this approach may seem to argue that the use of classic or canonical texts in the EFL/ESL classroom may undermine students’ motivation because of their proficiency level and literary competence.

Hirvela and Boyle (1988) investigated adult-learners’ attitudes towards the use of literature in a Hong Kong literature circle and found out that learners preferred more contemporary and accessible literature to the classical canons. The canonical texts they included in their selections are: “Son and Lovers” (Lawrence), “A Passage to India” (Foster), “Brides head Revisited” (Waugh), “The Horse’s Mouth” (Cary), “Anglo-Saxon Attitudes (Wilson), For Whom the Bell Tolls (Hemingway), The Grapes of Wrath (Steinbeck), “Lie down in Darkness” (Styron), “The Sound and the Fury (Faulkner), “The Conformist” (Moravial), “Bonjour Tristesse (Sagan), “Un Certain Sourire”

(Sagan), and two poetry texts “English Poetry 1918-60” (Allott), Selected Poetry of Yeats. These texts only served to overwhelm learners to handle in the classrooms. Hirvela and Boyle (1988) stated, “our selection of novels was too solemn and heavy, ...we should include something in a lighter, more humorous vein, or something with adventure in it, while still being worthwhile as literature” (p.183). Their study shed light on the importance of the selections of texts being in line with proficiency level of student. This should be considered in the EFL/ESL classrooms.

Akyel and Yalcin (1990) conducted survey research to evaluate the attitudes of both students and teachers toward the use of literature in the English departments of five-selected private high school in Istanbul, Turkey. The results of the questionnaires demonstrated that there is “a link between students’ language proficiency and their attitude toward literature” (p.176). Akyel and Yalcin (1990) claimed that students with a high-proficiency level appreciated the classics while students with low-proficiency level tend to find them too difficult to read and did not enjoy or benefit from literature in the EFL classrooms. This oft-cited article also indicated that the level of the language of the literary texts would influence a great deal of students’ motivation and achievement.

Ronnqvist and Sell (1994) argued the benefit of using teenage novels with middle-school students in Finland. They are against the use of simplified novels, claiming that students would not be exposed to authentic language or complete plot that would be likely to spoil the pleasure of reading. In contrast, Ronnqvist and Sell (1994) asserted that English teenage novels, such as the works by Judy Blume, Sue Townsend, and S.E. Hinton, would provide optimal authentic language use along with characters and plots that are relevant to all of the teenage students.

Ghosn (2002) offered four reasons to justify the use of children’s literature in primary school: (1) motivation, (2) language learning (3) academic literacy (4) literature as a change agent. Regarding the first point, children’s literature would provide a rich context where children get easily absorbed in stories that include ‘universal themes’, ‘clear, uncomplicated story-line with a satisfying, unmelodramatic

conclusion', 'a certain amount of amusing and predictable repetition, especially for beginning learners', and aesthetically pleasing illustrations that help to clarify the text' (p.174). Concerning the second point, children's literature would present natural language and facilitate vocabulary acquisition in a meaningful context. With regard to the third point, the use of children's literature would prepare learners for critical thinking and English medium instruction. Finally, children's literature would teach them moral issues that involve different perspectives or values along with cultural differences.

### **3.5 A hypothetical framework of the four approaches to literature in EFL/ESL**

Although all these studies have been devoted to the discussion of approaches in the *ELT Journal*, there seem to be a separation from one another. Despite the fact that the many researchers have discussed the use of literature through various approaches (Akyel & Yalcin, 1990; Barry, 1983; Carter & Long, 1990; Deyes, 1982; Elliott, 1990; Gerber, 1990; Ghosn, 2002; Gower, 1986; Hirvela & Boyle, 1988; Hirvela, 1996; Lazar, 1990, 1994; Ronnqvist & Sell, 1994; Ross, 1991; sopher, 1981), the studies about approaches to literature do not yet seem to be fully explored as on an integrated basis.

It is of course, hard to determine whether one approach is better than others; however, it is legitimate to examine how they are interrelated to one another so as to understand what literature can do, because the relationships among these different approaches to literature are still scattered and rather unclear. It would seem therefore that a guiding principle is needed to encapsulate these approaches by looking over each approach from above.

Thus, in this paper, we will attempt to propose a hypothetical framework that consists of the four separate approaches: stylistics, language-based, reader-response and young-adult literature, as a crossing-unit to explain the interrelationship between characteristics of each approach as follows: linguistic analysis, task and activities, personal experiences, and accessibility.

The term itself used for each category, stylistics, language-based, reader-response approach and young-adult literature, are widely accepted. In an attempt to unite them in relation to the characteristics of each approach, we deployed these four main categories around what Widdowson (1983) stated as *procedures for making sense* as a theoretical basis like a generator.

Figure 1 illustrates a hypothetical framework of the four approaches to literature in the EFL/ESL classroom.

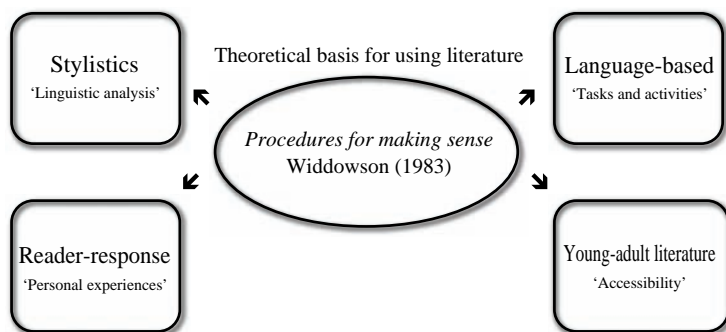


Figure 1. A hypothetical framework of four approaches to literature in EFL / ESL

#### 4. Re-examining the review of studies from a different perspective

Having determined that there are four independent approaches to literature. We will now try to reconsider and explore the studies in the *ELT Journal* from different angles on a basis of our hypothetical framework. This will allow us to determine whether there are any connections between these four categories.

We will focus on arguments against each approach so as to clarify a web of association with regard to the characteristics of the four approaches. Furthermore, we will try to gain the conceptual principle of optimal approaches to literature, and to specify the role of literature in EFL/ESL.



#### **4.1 Arguments against the stylistics approach**

Regarding stylistics, Sopher (1981) illustrated an analysis of a poem, which enables learners to interpret the symbolism. In response to Sopher (1981), Deyes (1982) claimed another method of understanding messages beyond the grammatical and syntactic structures of a poem, and asserted the potential and usefulness of this method as a means of language education. Both of the stylists approached the literary texts in terms of the form of the texts, focusing on the lexis and grammar. In contrast to these stylistic approaches, Barry (1983) and Gower (1986) criticized their approaches claiming that these methods seem rather mechanical, and defeat the purpose of the use of literature in the classrooms. They proposed some alternative task-based approaches, such as group work, in which learners of languages can benefit more from using literature in the classrooms.

#### **4.2 Arguments against the language-based approach**

Although Barry (1983) and Gower (1986) stated the benefits of language-based approaches, their claims may seem to lack practical implications for the classroom activities. Lazar (1990, 1994) demonstrated the benefit of language-based approaches with concrete examples of practical tasks and activities, which involve the grammatical aspects of the literary texts. These examples seem to shed light on the practical dimension of language-based principles. However, Paran (2000) pointed out the disparity between methodologies and tasks, along with insufficient directions as to these tasks in his book review related to literature and EFL. In support of language-based approaches, Carter and Long (1990) provided insight into what types of questions to be asked in assessing learners' literary competence. They addressed the importance of the assessment, which elicits the personal experience through task and activity, rather than comprehension of the texts. Apparently, though the perception of language-based approaches of both Lazar (1990, 1994) and Carter and Long (1990) would seem to be very close to one another, the former is more concerned with the stylistic-oriented approach, geared more toward the form of the literary texts, whereas

the latter focus more on the notion of a reader-response approach.

Hirvela (1996) stated that the goal of language-based approaches is to facilitate learners' language production of the target language through task-based instruction. This notion of language-based approach discussed above seems to be permeated through the teaching of literature in CLT; however, Hirvela (1996) goes on to argue that language-based approaches may seem to be limited with regard to learner response to the literary text, and claims that reader-response can compensate this aspect as it exploits the genuine responses of learners of literature in which the learners reconstruct the text based on their own experience and explore into their own story of reading.

Drawing on the notion of reader-response above, the following three researchers illustrated how reader-response can be incorporated into practice using classroom discussion of literature in various ways. Gerber (1990) reported the effect of using role-play with seventeen university students in Switzerland claiming that it provided a good opportunity for them to use natural English through the classroom discussion of novels, indicating that it worked out really well as fluency practice. Ross (1991) also claimed that the use of classroom discussion in comparing the differences and similarities of scenes from films to novels was beneficial to facilitate fluency and raise the language awareness of university students in Italy. Elliott (1990) claimed that the use of task called improvisation with university students in Brunei helped them interpret the themes of the literary texts on their own. The students reported that they were able to grasp the themes through improvisation where they were placed in the same situations as the characters of the texts. After feedback from their peers through discussions, they came to their own interpretations of the text. The students in all three studies had positive attitudes toward these approaches. As can be seen in the review of three studies above, the practice based on reader-response approaches would seem to foster the learners' language production of the target discourse based on task-based classroom activities, which can boost their L2 fluency.

### **4.3 Arguments against the reader-response approach**

It is important to state that the targets of reader response approaches were all at tertiary level with sufficient English proficiency to enable them to take part in discussions in English. Thus, we need to consider the types of target as well as proficiency levels with regard to the optimal approach to literature in the L2 classroom.

Let us examine the following examples. Akyel and Yalcin (1990) investigated attitudes toward literature component classes at a secondary school in Turkey using questionnaires and follow-up interviews both with students and teachers. The findings of the survey revealed that students had positive attitudes to the use of drama as a means of enriching their oral English skills and ability to express thoughts in English. In contrast to their responses; however, teachers reported that most of the times they were likely to employ a rather more traditional teacher-centered approaches in the classrooms because of the students' proficiency level and literary competence.

Furthermore, Hirvela and Boyle (1988) conducted another attitude-survey research on adult English learners at a literature circle in Hong Kong. They investigated adult learners' preferences of the genres of literature and found out that most of them much preferred more contemporary books in accordance with their proficiency level and literary competence. They also found classics too hard to understand. These survey research would seem to indicate that the success of a reader-response approach is subject to learners' age and proficiency levels along with their literary competence. Therefore, there is a need for an approach that is more compatible to the levels of L2 learners of literature.

### **4.4 Arguments against the young-adult literature approach**

Considering this issue above, we would like to discuss a potential use of young-adult literature approach with young learners. Ronnqvist and Sell (1994) argued benefits of using young-adult literature with middle school students in the short-term English reading program in Finland. They argued, "For young teenage learners, however, the literary texts are often simplified abridgements of canonical classics. It is

better to use real teenage books” (p.125).

They pointed out the drawbacks of using simplified texts as follows:

Vital socio-cultural connotations can disappear, as can subtle nuances in relationships between characters and in the emotional dynamics of the plot. As a result learners sometimes feel that they are struggling in the dark, and they are often good enough readers to sense that there is something they have not been told...What are needed, then, are unshortened texts to which nothing has been done to reduce the pleasure of reading (p.126).

The discussion of simplification may not be simple. Hall (2005) argued, “easiness and difficulty and simplification, are notoriously not simple matters” (p.138). We are not sure about what we can do with this type of text in the EFL/ESL classrooms. It is sometimes said that the writing in well-written graded readers can be, for its audience, experienced as authentic and typical of normal English (Claridge, 2005). Hence, more research is needed into simplification in terms of authenticity to provide insight into the effect of using the simplified literary texts with EFL/ESL learners in future.

However, it is worth considering the potential of the young-adult literature approach regarding the readability of literary texts. Ronnqvist and Sell (1994) stated that not only does young-adult literature offer a diverse variety of genre, theme and plot to which young learners can relate them, but also it resonates well with reader-response theory in which “each reader is seen as creating a partly personal meaning from texts, and as evaluating them in ways that are partly personal as well” (p.128-129).

Additionally, Ghosn (2002) provided the support for the use of young-adult literature in primary school ELT. Ghosn argues, “Traditional ELT materials may fail to provide adequate support for development of L2 academic literacy. Carefully selected children’s literature, however, offers an alternative, motivating medium for foreign language acquisition” (p. 172).

These claims seem to consolidate the claims of Ronnqvist and Sell (1994) who

suggested that young-adult literature is a useful medium as an accessible authentic literature for young EFL learners, which can also correspond to reader-response theory.

Edmondson (1997) showed a suspicious attitude to the extended definition of literature claiming, “we are talking about written texts which have a certain aesthetic value and some perceived status in the culture of which they are artefacts” (p. 45).

Edmondson (1997) seems to pose a question about literariness of the literary texts from a stylistic point of view. He argues as follows.

One should also avoid the circular argumentation whereby any text that is thought to be particularly valuable pedagogically or any text that can be used to encourage creative writing or creative reading in L2 is, by virtue of that fact, claimed to have literary merit (p. 46).

As can be seen in the citation above, the question of whether young-adult literature is considered to be literature or not seems still complex and unanswered. Thus, more research is needed to investigate whether young-adult literature can be a potential supplementary material that offers the same effect or impact on L2 learners as conventional literature.

#### **4.5 Modified framework of the four approaches to literature in ESL/EFL**

The cross-examination of the four approaches shows that a stylistics approach (Deyes, 1982; Sopher, 1981) seems to be criticized by proponents of a language-based approach (Barry, 1983; Gower, 1986) because of its grammar oriented methodologies which may seem to lack a practicality in terms of classroom activity. In return the language-based approach (Carter & Long, 1990; Lazar, 1990, 1994), is criticized by proponents of a reader-response approach (Hirvela, 1996) with regard to its text-oriented tasks that may seem to be limited in terms of eliciting genuine response of L2 learners.

Similarly, the reader-response approach (Elliott, 1990; Gerber, 1990; Ross, 1991)

is criticized by proponents of young-adult literature (Akyel & Yalcin, 1990; Ghosn, 2002; Hirvela & Boyle, 1988; Ronnqvist & Sell, 1994) because it may not seem to be applicable to L2 learners unless they possess sufficient proficiency and literary knowledge that would enable them to read the literary texts and discuss the topics in the target language in the classroom. Although young-adult literature would meet the demands of a wide range of L2 learners who are not ready for the authentic literary texts, one might ask 'Is that really literature?' from a stylistic or aesthetic point of view (Edmondson, 1997).

Figure 2 shows the modified version of the hypothetical framework based on the cross-examination of the articles illustrating the interrelationship of the four approaches: (1) stylistics, (2) language-based, (3) reader-response (4) young-adult literature.

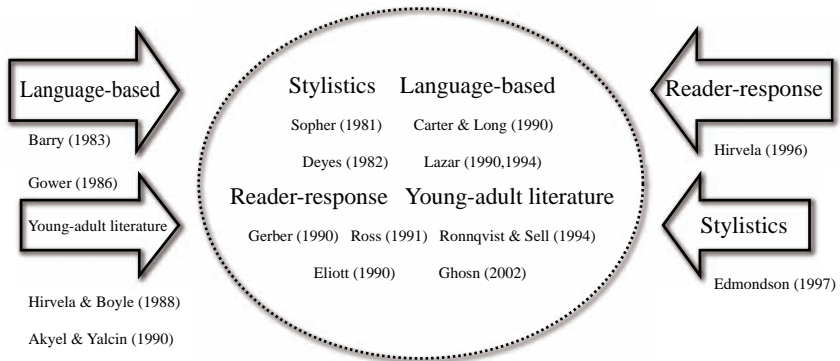


Figure 2. Modified framework of the four approaches to literature in ESL/EFL

#### 4.6 Integration of the four characteristics of approaches

It can be said that the discussion about the four approaches to literature has been going around and around in circles in terms of the following: (1) grammar (2) classroom activity (3) student reaction (4) proficiency. It is of course, necessary to discuss whether we can simply categorize them into (1) through (4) or not. We would

argue that it is almost certain that the four different approaches are merging into one common approach where they can compensate their respective weaknesses.

Figure 3 shows the integration of the four characteristics. Having discussed the interrelationship using the hypothetical framework in the previous section, it is possible to suggest that we need to consider the integration of the four characteristic approaches in the role of literature in EFL/ESL. In other words, speaking about the role of literature in the EFL/ESL classroom, it would seem that we can merge all four approaches into one for L2 learners.

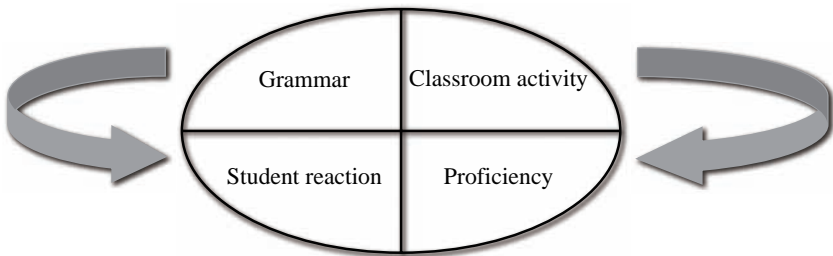


Figure 3. Integration of the characteristics of the four approaches to using literature in ESL/EFL

## 5. Conclusion

The role of literature has undergone many changes in the history of EFL/ESL; however, it is still uncertain about what roles literature can play in these settings. Hence, we have sought to reconsider the role of literature in EFL/ESL in this paper. To begin with, we reviewed the historical backgrounds of the use of literature in EFL/ESL. Literature had been central to language teaching and learning through the Grammar Translation in Europe up to the early twentieth century and was dismissed during the 1950s to the 1970s. However, after the rise of CLT in the 1980s, literature returned to foreign language education as an authentic material that provides a source for linguistic activities to promote communication ability and there has been a significant increase in the number of articles regarding its potential use for L2 development since then.

In order to clarify the role of literature, we have then attempted to identify

the rationale behind the use of literature in terms of CLT drawing on the notion that literature offers a process of making sense, which is different from other discourse. We have examined the studies from the *ELT Journal* to validate our theoretical basis and found that literature has been approached in several ways in EFL/ESL classrooms. We extracted four common approaches from the examination of the articles from the *ELT Journal* since they have appeared to be common denominators throughout the journal articles.

We have placed these approaches to literature in ESL/EFL based on the notion of Widdowson (1983), and built a hypothetical framework in order to determine the interrelationship of the four. And then we have categorized and analyzed the articles from *ELT Journal* into four categories on a hypothetical framework in an attempt to explain each role within the framework.

From the cross-examination of these articles, we have found that the four approaches are closely interrelated. They have appeared to be subsumed into the following characteristics: (1) grammar (2) classroom activity (3) student reaction (4) proficiency. Moreover, we have found that the discussion about the approach to literature in the EFL/ESL classroom seems to be more concerned with the integration of subsumed characteristics above, as though these four characteristics seem to complement one another.

As a result of this, we have pointed out that there needs to be a merger of the four approaches as an optimal model in terms of the use of literature in EFL/ESL, where literature might be approached through the consideration of transaction across the four characteristics: grammar, classroom activity, student reaction and proficiency. Furthermore, we have suggested that literature could play an important role in offering these four elements, which are crucial to the development of foreign language education.

With regard to the limitation of this paper, there is a need for empirical research to confirm our model either on validity or effectiveness with EFL/ESL students in the actual classrooms.



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