Literature in the EFL Classroom
—— From theory to practice ——

Sandra HEALY

Abstract

There is a general belief that literature, especially literature with a capital 'L' does not have a place in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. This paper discusses the reasons why and how literature can become a driving force in EFL education. Firstly, the traditional approaches used in teaching literature will be briefly reviewed. This will be followed by a description of an integrated approach currently being used effectively in EFL classrooms with students of medium to low English proficiency at a large private university in Japan. This particular approach is flexible in its implementation and has been adapted for all ages and levels of proficiency by the author. It may also be used with a variety of genres of literature, including poems, short stories, novels, and plays and fully employs modern technology and multimedia, notably the Internet, Youtube and DVDs.

Keywords : Literature, EFL, integrated approach, classroom practice, modern media

Introduction

As an EFL professional living and working in Japan, I have over a period of years, developed various ways of incorporating literature, and more specifically the study of Shakespeare, into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms at the university level. I have continued to be surprised at how successful this has been, and this is the motivation for writing this present paper. The distinction that has separated literature and linguistics is, I believe, a false one and as Widdowson (1979) suggests, the methods which are used to interpret literary discourse are essentially the same for interpreting any type of discourse.

There are many reasons why we should use literature in the classroom. Firstly, for pleasure. Most people enjoy good stories, and so literature is motivating, often more interesting than the texts in proprietary EFL course books. Secondly, literature encourages students to exchange their thoughts and feelings and interact with one another in a meaningful way, as they share the story and the characters, and suspend disbelief in tandem with their peers. Thirdly, it encourages students to think about concepts and ideas and to develop attitudes towards them. Indeed

recent EFL literature is full of references to teaching students, especially in Asian cultures to develop critical thinking skills in their target language. Fourthly, literature can be instrumental in developing students' linguistic knowledge and skill within a clear context. Finally, literature carries within it cultural expectations and norms that can usually be accessed and understood by the students, and injects confidence into their grasp of the language. In short, literature can be an important factor in promoting the study of English literature, developing students' academic, cultural, linguistic and intellectual learning.

Traditional Models for Teaching Literature

In 'Teaching Literature,' Carter and Long (1991) describe three main models in use at that time to teach literature: the Cultural Model; the Language-Based Model; and the Personal Growth Model, which are exemplified below. Since the time of this research however, several more models which combine elements from these original three, known as 'Integrated Approaches,' have been developed, which have attempted to overcome the limitations and criticisms associated with the main models, and to provide more relevant approaches to teaching literature in the modern EFL setting.

1. The Cultural Model

This model employs traditional approaches to teach literature by exposing students to the background of a text in order to examine the ideas and concepts behind it. In this way, students learn about different cultures and patterns of thought, and either directly or indirectly, will compare them to their own. As this model is most often lecturer-led and does not focus on language work per se, it has been generally considered to be unsuitable by most EFL teachers. In this paper however, I will attempt to show that it is important to expose foreign learners of English to such cultural and content-based stimuli, and that this exposure ultimately enhances their own language performance, aspirations and overall confidence.

2. The Language-Based Approach

In this approach, learners examine texts looking for specific linguistic features such as vocabulary and grammatical structures. EFL teachers can take this approach if they wish to focus on specific features of language by creating such activities as gap-filling, grammar practice activities, and writing summaries. However, criticisms of this model centre on the 'disconnection' or distance between the student, the text, and the literary purpose of the text, in that the appreciation

of the text becomes secondary to the mechanical analysis of the text as a study tool, or a platform for different language activities. In other words, it ceases to become an essential component of the communicative EFL strategies in vogue in today's communicative EFL classrooms.

3. The Personal Growth Model

This model attempts to combine both the above approaches and encourage more student interaction with the text. Literary texts are seen as a resource for both linguistic development as well as the development of an appreciation for literature. Students are not just passive receivers of knowledge as in the Cultural Model, but are encouraged to become autonomous and to think critically. Students' thoughts and opinions are elicited about the text, and they are encouraged to examine different themes and topics related to it. Through these activities, students are able to make more of a personal and meaningful connection with the text. This is a learner-centred approach in which the teacher is a facilitator of learning. However, one drawback of it is that it often lacks a specific language focus for EFL students.

Integrated Approaches

Integrated approaches combine elements from the three main models described above . Duffy and Maley, in 1990, argue that three elements should be included in the teaching of literature in the EFL classroom: 1) the linguistic element – in which students study the language and linguistic structures of the text; 2) the methodological element – in which students are introduced to the English reading process and reading strategies; and 3) the motivational element – in which students are made aware that the enjoyment or appreciation of the text is the most important thing.

Savvidou (2004) also suggests that a literary text should be approached in three different ways: firstly, as a cultural object; secondly, as a way to approach linguistic analysis; and thirdly, as a method for personal growth. She then elaborates to conclude that an integrated approach is a 'potentially powerful pedagogic tool.' Savvidou carefully sets out a six-stage scheme for those studying.

>   **Stage 1:**   **preparation for and anticipation of the text.**
>   **Stage 2:**   **actual experience of the text**
>   **Stage 3:**   **contributing initial responses to the text**
>   **Stage 4:**   **focus on meaning through intensive reading of the text**

Stage 5:   **analysing the text at a deep level from a linguistic perspective**

Stage 6:   **exploring what the text means personally**

It is clear that these stages come round full circle to connect the text meaningfully with the students' experience. Savvidou was able to convincingly combine elements from the three models in existence in order to provide a more suitable approach to literature in the classroom of those aspiring to acquire English as a Foreign Language in a formal educational setting.

An Integrated Approach in Practice

Perhaps it is fairly easy to understand how this combining of appropriate elements from models might work in theory, but how does it work in practice? I have taught from this integrated position in a variety universities in Japan for the last 10 years, and so what follows is an outline of a tried and tested approach. One of the most important elements which has been scarcely mentioned in research on this topic to date, to my knowledge, is that of evaluation in the classroom. In Japan, in the majority of educational institutions, teachers are required to evaluate students and grade them accordingly twice a year. Rust, Price and O'Donovan (2003), posited that evaluation and feedback were necessary for student development. Evaluation in English studies may include a range of assessment methods, for instance, written tests and extended writing, projects, presentations and other performance-type tasks, and self-assessment. It should be stated that I consider continuous assessment to greatly contribute to providing a better picture of the development of the student than one-off tests, whether paper or aural based. Likewise, carefully handled evaluation by peers, by teachers and possibly other members of the community, in addition to self-evaluation, can provide students with a wider and more authentic audience, and consequently a sound knowledge of themselves and their performance in front of others. More research on this aspect of foreign language learning is needed.

According to Hadley in 2001 a combination of peer, self and teacher evaluation yield the best results. In addition, Cheng and Warren (2005) cite positive attitudes to peer evaluation which have been found to increase motivation and confidence, and also to develop academic skills through higher learning autonomy and the valuable process of self-correction, both of which are key in the sphere of language learning. Ellis (2003) argues that assessment can be achieved continually through tasks undertaken in class, and that student-assessment is central to their progress. Along with assessment, and entirely compatible with it, in general and in the EFL classroom in particular,

is the application of modern technology, such as the Internet, Youtube, and multi-media, in the teaching of literature.

In addition to the above, it is essential to provide opportunities for EFL students studying literature, notably in Japan, to present or to represent their ideas in small groups, or to the group at large, or both. This may mean short presentations in pairs, or in larger groups, or in certain cases of actually coaching students to prepare a theatrical representation of an element or character in the text. In my experience, the most unlikely of students blossoms when provided with an opportunity to act out their emotions and reactions to the work under scrutiny. Reflection and evaluation go hand in hand with this mode of student expression, so it is always valuable to pause and reflect on student performances. In this way, the students bond with the text because they are able to integrate it into their own experience, and they are able to become fully involved in the learning process and express themselves in a number of different ways, Vygotsky (1997).

A practical approach to Teaching Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare

This approach describes an integrated approach to teaching literature which combines both language analysis and experiential learning to enhance both the learners' linguistic skills as well as their personal development. This is a semester long course, but the activities could be adapted to individual lessons and short courses too.

The language and the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* could easily be viewed by language teachers to be outside the scope of the language classroom, however, there are many reasons why this is an excellent choice, as follows:

1. It is a great story, a traditional tale where boy meets girl and falls in love, but their families are quarrelling and this love story ends in tragedy. Most people are able to respond to and enter into a story through the 'suspension of disbelief' as described by literary theorists.
2. William Shakespeare's dramatic works provide us with cultural, historical and social information about Europe in 17th century.
3. Shakespeare is universally regarded as one of the greatest writers in history.
4. In the story, or plot, Romeo and Juliet, the protagonists, are a similar age to university students, and so they can easily relate to them.
5. This play portrays several of the human emotions common to every era and culture such as

love, hate, conflict and violence.

6. The themes running through the play are timeless; e.g. battles of will between parents and their children, secret love, family feuds, etc.

7. There are many film versions and written texts based on the story, both old and new. Therefore plenty of material to capture the imagination of modern students.

8. A huge variety of specific teaching resources are available.

Classroom Activities

What follows is the outline of seven activities to be used in the EFL classroom. The activities may be undertaken in the order given in one class or used over a series of lessons according to the teacher and the students' needs.

Activity 1 - Watch the Story

The story of *Romeo and Juliet* can be easily broken into suitable sections, as can nearly all stories. In each class, the students watch between five and twenty minutes of the play on DVD or video which raises interest in the story and deepens understanding of the texts and vocabulary that follow. I have used several different versions of *Romeo and Juliet*, including, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1997) directed by Baz Luhrman, *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) directed by Franco Zeffirelli, and Shakespeare's Animated Tales by Morgan and George (1992). Also the BBC website 'Shakespeare in 60 Seconds' and various related Youtube sites have been used and continue to appeal to students.

Activity 2 – Initial Response

Students are invited to respond to the scene they have just watched. An example of the elicitation of response may concern the opening scene of the story in which there is a fight. They are asked if they are surprised that one of the greatest love stories in history begins with a fight, and if they liked it or not and why. They discuss this with their partner and then break into two groups – the "yes" group and the "no" group, and share their reasons why they felt this way with the class. Students may also be asked to write down their opinions about what they have seen and heard, and share them with their partner or group. Another example is for students to imagine they are one of the characters in the scene. Different students can take different characters' roles, and try

to empathise with the character and respond to what happened in the scene from that character's point of view. The costume ball provides an opportunity for many different characters to give their perspective on the first meeting there of Romeo and Juliet.

Activity 3 – The Text

In activity 3, students look at the text. There are several ways to do this for the works of Shakespeare: students can study the text in its original form, study it as a play in modern English, or read it written in story form as a graded reader. Other types of text such as poems or short essays may be used in their entirety, whereas longer works can be given in small sections.

The first step is to give the students some scenes from the original stage work in their original form. At first, this may seem too difficult for foreign language students, but of course such tasks must take students' proficiency and inclinations into account. For example, if the opening Prologue is read in its original form, the students can be asked to find and circle all the words related to love and all the words related to hate. To do this activity students usually work in groups or pairs and may use their dictionaries. Below is The Prologue from Romeo and Juliet.

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona, where we lay our scene,
From ancient <u>grudge</u> break to new <u>mutiny</u>,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.
From forth the <u>fatal</u> loins of these two <u>foes</u>
*A pair of <u>star-cross'd</u> **lovers** <u>take their life</u>;*
Whole <u>misadventured</u> piteous overthrows
Do with their <u>death </u>bury their parents' <u>strife</u>.
*The <u>fearful</u> passage of their <u>death-mark'd</u> **love**,*
And the continuance of their parents' <u>rage</u>,
Which, but their children's <u>end</u>, nought could remove,
Is now the two hours' traffic of our stage;
The which if you with patient ears attend,
What here shall miss, our toil shall strive to mend.

Students are usually surprised to find that they can do this, and also that there are few words with

positive meanings. Indeed, there are only two mentions of the word "love" (shown in bold), whereas there are many negative words related to fighting and death (underlined).

The 'Balcony Scene' in which Romeo and Juliet declare their love for each other can also be studied in its original form, with the students examining the descriptive and figurative language used. An important quotation is:

But soft, what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief
That thou, her maid, art far more fair than she. . . .
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars
As daylight doth a lamp; her eye in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night. (II.i.44–64)

In this quotation Romeo compares Juliet to the sun saying she is so beautiful she can change darkness into light. Students are easily able to pick out the figurative language and relate it to the motif of dark and light that threads through the whole play.

Modern versions of the play written in story form can be given to the students to read either inside or outside class. Several versions exist as graded readers and simplified stories for children, for example, *Romeo and Juliet*, retold by Rachel Bladon (2006), a Macmillan pre-intermediate graded reader and *Romeo and Juliet*, retold by Anna Claybourne (2006), an Usborne book for children aged over 6.

It is also possible to use modern versions of the play script with EFL students to study, learn, and act out dramatically, for example, *Romeo and Juliet* by Raynes and Poggi Repetto (2003). Using this book students can read the play in story form in simplified English, undertake a variety of language-focused tasks, as well as act out the play using a simplified script in modern English aimed at EFL students. The scripts have proved time and again to be a successful base from which the students can create their own dramas.

Activity 4 – Themes and Topics

An enormous number of themes and topics are raised in the story of *Romeo and Juliet*. The most obvious theme is "love," and this theme can be explored in many ways. One way which has been successful, is to look at music that has been inspired by Shakespeare's play. Serge Prokofiev, a Russian composer (1891-1953), composed his ballet based on the story in the 1930s, and to date it is one of his most performed works. Students watch a clip of the famous Russian, male dancer Rudolph Nureyev performing the *Balcony Scene* as Romeo, with the British dancer, Margot Fonteyn as Juliet, on Youtube. For many Japanese students it is the first time to watch ballet, and so they are usually very interested in it. It also provides an interpretation of Romeo and Juliet that focuses on movement and music, and, so an opportunity to understand the story through another context.

Several pop songs have been written involving Romeo and Juliet, for example Dire Straits *Romeo and Juliet* (1980). Several other songs refer to Romeo and Juliet as models of passionate love and suffering, and of course, there is the soundtrack by Hooper which was released with the 1997 film *Romeo and Juliet* (see references). One project students can undertake is to choose a piece of music to match a scene, or even the whole film, or in a group create a soundtrack for the play themselves using music which is current in their age group.

Characterization is another area to explore and this can also be done in several ways. Students can choose one character that they are interested in, research that character and do a "box presentation" on their character. In a box presentation, the students choose six or more objects to represent their character, either literally or metaphorically. The students present their character to a group in their class using the objects as memory aids for themselves and points of interest for the others. Some examples of objects students have brought in are 'sunglasses' to show that Romeo is handsome and cool, lighters to represent Romeo's passion and dice to show Romeo and Juliet's fate. The students' peers evaluate their presentations and give each other feedback. The students evaluate each other using a rubric in which they give a grade based on the objects and how relevant they thought they were, how interesting they felt the content of the presentations were, clarity of English and the presentation "skills" of the presenter such as eye contact and voice projection. In addition the students' comment upon one aspect they thought was good and one aspect they thought could be improved. These presentations have invariably been very interesting to all participants in class and highly rated by the students. In end of term evaluations of the class

students have mentioned that they enjoyed doing the presentations and seeing the objects that the other students chose to exemplify their characters.

Characterization can also be explored through a focus on clothes and appearances in films, in stories and in real life. In one activity students examine the costumes used in the film *Romeo and Juliet* (1997) directed by Baz Luhrman, and in particular the *Costume Ball* scene in which all of the characters wear costumes which represent their personalities and roles in the story. For example, Romeo is dressed as a knight and Juliet as an angel reflecting their goodness and purity; Lord Capulet (Juliet's father) dresses as Julius Caesar, Lady Capulet (Juliet's mother) dresses as Cleopatra showing both their power and egocentricity, and Mercutio (Romeo's best friend) dresses as a woman to reveal his 'crazy' and fun personality. Through an examination of the costumes students can understand more about the characters.

To take this further, students may also look at different kinds of youth culture groups and how their appearances represent a way of life or thought, for example punk rockers, or hip hop, and in Japan *gyaru,* and *otaku*. Students can then write passages based on these different groups, their histories and what they represent and research the implications of youth culture further.

The students also undertake several other types of writing assignments throughout the course. They write a film review of one of the stories we have watched on visual media, or possibly another related story such as the film *Shakespeare in Love* directed by John Madden (1998) or *West Side Story* directed by Robbins, J. & Wise, R. (1961). They write an academic style essay about one of the characters from the play, usually the character they presented in the Box Presentation using evidence from the text to support their suppositions. They also write an essay on who they think was to blame for Romeo and Juliet's death, giving reasons and supporting them with evidence from the story. Other writing activities include writing a love letter from Juliet to Romeo or vice versa, writing a diary for Juliet, and writing a newspaper article describing the deaths of Romeo and Juliet. In these activities students practice different genres of writing, which in turn highlight the use of different grammatical and linguistic forms.

Activity 5 – Language work

In this section a closer examination of certain linguistic features is undertaken, for example vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Language activities can include, for instance, the names

of familial relationships, to collocations using the word "love," or tense work related to the events in the story. The past perfect and past simple forms can be contrasted when students examine the relationship of events that happen in the story, for example, 'Romeo had been in love with Rosaline, until he met Juliet.' As in all of the other activities, flexibility adaptability, and appropriateness are the key factors.

Activity 6 – Dramatic Representation/Presentation and Representation

In this activity, students act out scenes from *Romeo and Juliet* themselves. This has surprisingly positive results, with students who are usually quiet in class being transformed.

The students use either a version of the script in modern English, original English, or a version written by themselves, which may be incorporated into activity 5. Once again this stage is extremely flexible and open to many variations. The students enact simplified versions of the scene studied in that class, focusing on different aspects of presentation, for example voice, eye contact, and gestures, slowly building their skills over the semester. Students often lack skill at using gestures to dramatise their words and one way to address this is to give the students a copy of the scene with the dialogue on the right half of the page, and space on the left side in which to note the gestures and actions that should accompany the words. In this way the students focus on the non-verbal messages that are important to overall understanding.

One version, is "A One Word Drama". (See Appendix 1) In this activity, the students read through a simplified scene of the play in which each character's utterances are reduced to one sentence per turn. The students then reduce each line to one word which encapsulates as much of the meaning and emotion as possible. They then perform their "One Word Drama" for the class, trying to convey the meaning through their voices and actions.

In another activity, students create posters. Firstly, the students make storyboards of the key scenes studied so far. They sketch the scenes and write short summaries for each part. Then, they mimic the scenes they have drawn and take pictures of themselves in their poses. The photographs are then printed and in the next class the students make posters, cutting up the pictures and adding graphics and words to create large posters, which are displayed for other students in class. This focuses the students on conveying meaning through poses and body language, as well as fostering group co-operation.

At the end of the semester, the students make a video of the complete story. They are divided into groups, and given a part of the play to prepare. The students are encouraged to bring in costumes and props. They learn their lines and practice their performances until they feel ready to film themselves. Once they have finished filming , they evaluate their performances and redo parts. Once everyone is satisfied, the video is copied onto a DVD for each class member.

Activity 7 – Reflection and Evaluation

Students are expected to reflect on the play and what they have learned in each class. The lesson and the course as a whole are also evaluated in several different ways.

Self-evaluation and reflection are very important parts of the course. One way this is done is by students watching videos of their performances and evaluating themselves. This may be done several times throughout the course. Sometimes the students are provided with a rubric of things to check, and other times they freely write their own thoughts and feelings about their performances, and goals for things to improve on.

Students are also asked to evaluate each other. The criteria for evaluation need to be stated clearly, and may be either created by the teacher or the students. The evaluations are collected and given to the presenter as feedback on their performance for them to reflect on.

Students are also evaluated by the teacher by means of continuous assessment. Each project undertaken, each piece of writing handed in, each performance given is graded, and feedback given to the student.

Conclusion

The approach described above is a practical and flexible approach to the teaching of literature in the EFL classroom. With the careful selection of texts, tasks, and activities, literature can be used successfully with all ages and proficiency levels. Students are motivated through their interactions with the text, the media used, the teacher, and the other students in their group. As many opportunities as possible are provided for personal responses to the text in written or aural form, and it is important to minimise any so-called disconnection from the text. In addition, focus on the

linguistic elements of the text improves the learners' language development. As mentioned earlier, self-, peer-, and teacher evaluation should be encouraged in order to enhance student learning from a reflective process. It is hoped that through the combining of all of these factors that students will be successful in their study of literature, and that literature may come to have a central place in the EFL classroom.

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Appendix 1

<u>Fight Scene Act 3 Scene 1</u>

Read each sentence and then write one word that each character might say.

1. It's a hot day and Benvolio is worried that the Capulets will be out looking for a fight. ___
   *Home*_____
2. Tybalt and other Capulets enter. Tybalt wants to fight. _____
3. Mercutio tries to make Tybalt fight by teasing him. _____
4. Tybalt wants to fight Romeo. _____
5. Romeo enters. _____
6. Tybalt calls Romeo names. _____
7. Romeo, who has just got married to Juliet, doesn't want to fight Tybalt because they are
   now in the same family. _____
8. Tybalt tells Romeo to draw his sword. _____
9. Romeo refuses. _____
10. Mercutio doesn't understand why Romeo won't fight. _____
11. Tybalt and Mercutio fight. _____
12. Romeo steps between them. _____
13. Mercutio is injured. _____
14. Tybalt and his gang run away. _____
15. Mercutio curses the Montagues and the Capulets. _____
16. Mercutio dies. _____

英語学習クラスでの純文学の理論から実践

サンドラ　ヒーリ

要　約

　一般的に文学作品，特に大文字の『L』で始まる文学作品は外国語としての英語学習（EFL）において教育の余地がありません。本論文は，文学が英語教育の推進力になりうる理由とその方法を論じます。文学を教える際に使われる伝統的なアプローチの再考の後，日本の総合私立大学における中級から初級レベルのEFL教室で効果的に現在使われている統合的教授法についての説明，そしてこのアプローチが柔軟で様々な年齢層と英語レベル，詩，短編，小説，演劇を含むいろいろなジャンル，テクノロジーとマルチメディア，特にインターネット・Youtube・DVD をといった媒体を通じて適応されたことが述べられます。

キーワード：大文字，EFL，伝統的なアプローチ，マルチメディア