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THE INTERFACE BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE: DESIGNING AN INTEGRATED MODEL

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Abstract

Teaching language through literature is not anything new. However, the 'Integrated Model" was first coined by Duff and Maley(1990). As there is no clear and concrete framework of an 'Integrated Model' before us, it remains a matter of speculation. The fundamental difference between the 'integrated model' and 'language through literature' is that the former pays attention to language and meaning while the latter is concerned with language alone. Besides boosting language proficiency, an 'integrated model' would encourage reflective learning, engage learners in problem-solving, initiate them into participatory and cooperative learning, and train them to relate the text to life experience as suggested in post-method pedagogy. An equally important goal is to develop students' logical thinking and critical and analytical abilities. This paper proposes to explore how the best language can be taught by adopting the 'Integrated Model.'

Keywords: Interface, language, literature, integrated model

Literature Review

Language and literature are inherently related. Literature exists in language, and its content gets communicated through language. "A literary text is authentic text, real language in context to which one can respond directly" (Brumfit and Carter, p. 15). However, language conveys a message of the content and signifies the meaning of symbols that give more than the literal meaning of the words. This feature of language facilitates multiple interpretations of a literary text. A creative writer uses symbols, metaphors, etc., to express oneself in unique and unusual ways. Duff and Maley (1990) point out that literary texts are authentic and, therefore, "offer genuine samples of an extensive range of styles, registers, and text-types at many levels of difficulty" (p. 3). In addition to it, the language of literary texts puts forth many natural features of the language like vocabulary, word forms, structures, conventions, figures of speech, and different uses of language.

The power of literary texts is underscored by Gilory and Parkinson (1996) as "authentic material which does not become stale" (p.215). Literature provides EFL/ESL learners with the opportunity to explore language in its

multiple varieties. For example, a drama may explain how dialogue, speech, and conversation work to attain the desired effect. Prose shows how language flows naturally and expresses human thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Songs and poetry convey the melody of sounds of the language and use decorative language. In short, English literature is a fascinating subject that can provide a platform to engage learners in fruitful language learning.

According to Richards (2005), materials must necessarily be motivational. Materials should generate and maintain interest, promote fun in learning and provide opportunities for students to speak about themselves. Literature exposes students to complex themes and new and unexpected usage of language. Stories and novels sustain students' interest through their gripping plots. For example, when we read *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, we come across a tale unmatched in the entire range of eastern or western literature and cannot stop until we have finished reading. This involvement is more absorbing and enduring than that afforded by the narratives in newspaper reports.

Kramsch (1998) states that literature promotes multicultural understanding leading to socio-linguistic, pragmatic, and intercultural competence. Maley (1993) thus emphasizes: " Cultural awareness-raising is an aspect of values education. For example, Somerset Maugham's "Luncheon" gives us a peep into the European mind and society. In other words, literary texts have considerable potential for language learning and appreciating a foreign culture (Fenner 2000, p. 146).

Literature helps expand students' language awareness (Lazar 1993). A literary text is different from other forms of discourse. It breaks the usual rules of syntax, collocation, and even cohesion. This is more frequently the case in poetry. For instance, Though wedded we have been / These twice ten tedious years ("The Diverting History of John Gilpin Shewing how he went Farther than he intended and came safe home again "-(6-7) by William Cowper). Here the prose form of the two lines will be 'Though we have been married for these twenty tedious years.' However, the poet has expressed the same message in a different structure. We may wonder why we should expose students to such 'wrong' use of language. However, these are not inappropriate uses as such but deviant uses. Cruz (2010) maintains that a literary text provides students with a clearer idea about the structures of a written text and sensitizes them about how written text is different from the spoken tongue. (p.4)

A critical aspect of studying literature is developing students' interpretative abilities (Lazar 1999). This is because literary texts are often rich with multiple levels of meaning. A word in a poem may have a powerful symbolic meaning beyond its fixed dictionary meaning, or a poem may have two layers of meaning- one literal and another metaphoric. Robert Frost's "Road Not Taken" is such an example. Again, when Robert Frost says: "But I have miles to go before I sleep," it may mean that he has to cover a long distance before taking a rest. However, it may also have a metaphoric meaning that implies he has many duties to perform before his life

ends.

Some devices make a text beautiful and aesthetically pleasing. These are known as rhetorical devices. These include metaphor, simile, rhyme, and rhythm. Gillian Lazar (1993) calls them meta-language. Some other items under this category include paradox, oxymoron, metonymy, synecdoche, apostrophe, alliteration, assonance, and so on (p. 44). Consider, for example, when Robert Burns Says: "My love is like a red, red rose" instead of 'My beloved is beautiful .'Which expression will be more pleasing to his beloved? The first or the second one?

Indeed, the first is because he associates so many attributes with her. Instead of saying "my beloved," he says, "My Luv." Instead of just saying that she is beautiful, he compares her to a red rose which is lovely, tender, and full of fragrance. Being a Scotsman, he uses the spelling "Luv" and not "love," which indicates how the word is pronounced in his dialect, making the relationship more intimate. Also, notice the alliteration 'Luv'…like red, red rose. Ghosn(2002) says that literature manifests language in its most refined form and thus fosters vocabulary development in context. A similar view is echoed by Widdowson (1975) as he says the study of literature is fundamentally a study of language in operation. Here we see that poems exhibit elegance of language.

Choice of words or diction is another important aspect one should try to explore in literature. J. Povey (1979) observes that "Literature will extend linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary uses and complex and exact syntax" (p.90). The choice of words determines the meaning. Particularly words carry various meanings in poetic lines. To quote Brown: It saves a model. So! Keep looking so—/My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds! (Andrea Del Sarto, 25-26). Browning uses the phrase 'serpentining beauty' in "Andrea Del Sarto," which is powerfully suggestive. On the surface level, it refers to the physical charm, but the suggestion of a snake indicates that this beauty is not without its venom. In Browning's poem 'My Last Duchess,' the word moon carries a powerful metaphoric meaning: "My face, my moon, and my everybody's moon." the implication of which is that the Duchess is equally generous to the Duke as much as she is to a commoner. Her putting him on the same footing is repugnant to the Duke.

Maley (1989) argues for literature for its economy and suggestive power in the language classroom. Literature does not say everything explicitly. It has implicit messages that have to be decoded. It may use a few words, but they can mean a lot. Literature has suggestive power, and one has to read between the lines. For instance, when Mathew Arnold says: 'The sea is calm tonight' in his poem "The Dover Beach," it may mean there are no tides and peace all around. It also means it is a suitable time to enjoy the charms of life.

Critical thinking is of utmost importance in educational settings worldwide as it is the cornerstone of education, especially at the advanced level. The language of literary texts is representational, enabling readers to re-create the experiences by using their imagination and creativity (Widdowson 1983). Apart from cultural

and linguistic elements, literature can also stimulate students' imagination to develop critical abilities and increase emotional awareness (Ghosn, 2002).

Kind of materials to be used

The question pertinently arises: What kind of material is suitable for language teaching? The answer is that any good piece of literature (poem, story, anecdotes, travelogue, etc.) is fit for language teaching. However, precisely speaking, a definitive text would be a text that a) engages effectively, b) challenges cognitively, c) promote language awareness, and d) helps learners to reflect critically about and respond imaginatively to the world where they live" (Lima 2010). The inclusion of short fiction in the ESL/EFL curriculum offers the following educational benefits (Violetta-Irene, 2015, p.76)

--Makes students' reading tasks easier due to being short and straightforward compared with other literary genres.

-- Provides more creative, encrypted, challenging texts that require personal exploration supported with prior knowledge for advanced-level readers.

-- Motivates learners to read due to being an authentic material

-- Gives students the chance to use their creativity

-- Promotes critical thinking skills

-- Facilitates teaching of foreign culture

--Makes students comfortable and free

-- Helps students to go beyond the surface meaning and dive into underlying meanings

Indisputably, stories and storytelling are an essential part of language teaching since they are pervasive in every aspect of our lives (Tatsuki, 2009). The text selected here to work with is O' Henry's "The Gift of the Magi," suitable for higher secondary or first-year undergrad level students. It is a story of a couple who sacrifice their most precious gifts for each other. The story has something of universality about it. It is appropriate for this age group who are likely to enjoy it.

Different Approaches to Teaching L2

Carter and Long (1991) describe three main approaches to teaching literature: The *Cultural Model*, the *Language-based model*, and the *Personal Growth Model.*

Cultural Approach employs a traditional approach to teaching literature. This model encourages the exposure of foreign language learners to different cultures to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space.

Language-based Approach pays attention to the way language is used. This Approach is meant to increase general awareness of language. It focuses on specific features of speech such as available grammar, vocabulary, and use of stylistic analysis by creating tasks leading to multiple language activities. By using a wide range of authentic texts, instructors can introduce learners to various types and difficulties in the English language.

The personal Growth Approach stresses The personal enjoyment and emotional gain students can procure by engaging with such text (Maley, 2001). This model attempts to encourage students' interaction with the text. It enables learners to draw on

their opinions, feelings, and personal experiences. Texts are seen as sources of linguistic development as well as literary appreciation. Literary discourse sensitizes readers to the process of reading, that is, the use of schemata, strategies for intensive and extensive reading, etc. This model recognizes the immense power to move readers.

Integrated model

'Integrated Model' combines elements from three models to provide a more suitable approach. Integrated Approach attempts to overcome the limitations and criticisms of the previous models and provides more reliable approaches to teaching literature in the modern EFL setting (Healy 2010, 179). It has also been suggested by Savvidou (2004) that a literary text should be approached in three different ways: firstly, as a cultural object; secondly, as a source of linguistic analysis; and thirdly, as a method for personal growth. She considers the integrated Approach a "potentially powerful pedagogic tool" and sets out a six-stage scheme.
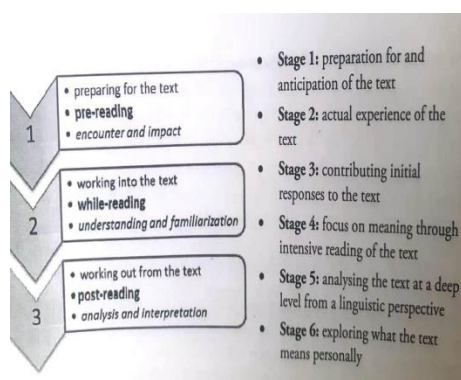
Savvidou's six-stage scheme

Tasks and activities on "The Gift of the Magi."

Taking Savvidou's proposed framework as a guide, the following 'Integrated model' has been constructed.

I.   PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

These activities are intended as warmer or icebreakers. Warmer induces students to guess, speculate and talk about the topic they will deal with in the class. This could be done in several forms: a short discussion that students do in pairs, or it may be a whole-class discussion. The course teacher can ask some questions and put students to brainstorm about what the topic might be about. The teacher may provide some hints or background information to facilitate the discussion. Khatib et al. (2011) propose the following lesson scheme for schema building for the pre-task phase:

A. Brainstorming
   i)   Contextualization of the task (through pictures, realia, questions, and answers)
   ii)   Illustration of the context
   iii) Introduction of some of the critical vocabulary items (through matching, predicting, and guessing
B. Group scaffolding
C. Performing a similar task chorally

Here are some discussion questions which can be used as a warmer.

- What do you think the title of the story will be about?

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- Have you ever heard the word Magi? What does the Magi stand for?
- What kinds of gifts, if any, do you exchange on religious occasions?
- Talk about the most beautiful gift you have ever got.

II.   WHILE-READING ACTIVITIES

These activities are intended to help students to –

-- understand the plot and characters

-- increase the analytical and interpretative ability

-- acquire vocabulary and nuances of meaning

-- pick up style and language

Considering all these aspects, some tasks such as gap filling, problem-solving, and role-playing can be developed to engage students in various activities, including discussion and writing (Maley2001, 183).

Section A: Initial response
- Why is buying the right gift for Jim important to Della?
- Why does Della count the amount of money three times?
- What makes Della flop down on the couch and howl? Do you think Della is hyperactive?

Section B: Focusing on meaning through intensive reading and fostering critical thinking
- How do their financial circumstances contribute to the development of the plot?

- How does the last sentence of paragraph 2 help establish the story's theme?
- Why is the use of income discussed in terms of the full name or initial?
- How does the repetition of the word 'grey' convey the mood of Della?
- How does the story generate tension and overlap between commerce and religion?

Section C: Helping with language

Helping with vocabulary
Task :1
1. 'Close dealing' means-
a) bitter argument   b) hard bargaining   c) criticizing   d) being friendly
2. 'Twenty dollars does not go far. Here 'not go far' means-
a) inadequate   b) go a short distance   c) difficult to earn   d) make little effort
3. It did not exactly 'beggar description .'Here the phrase means-
a) story about a beggar   b) poor description   c) Too bad to describe d) boring description

Task: 2
While reading, underline the unknown words and guess the meaning from the context.

poverty	apartment	nimble	unwrap	overcoat	Coax
sniffle	chronicle	imputation	package	critically	Locate

was				

Task: 3

Teaching vocabulary in context

Fill in each blank space in the following passage with words from the boxes. There are more words than you need.

It was difficult to 1. ……….. the house as I had lost the address given to me by a friend of mine. I found it at last and rang the bell. An older man opened the door, and he looked 2.…………. at me. He was wearing an old 3. ………. which was proof of his 4.………… He asked me to come in with the air of a man full of suspicion. I stepped inside the 5………., small, dark, and dirty. When I told him that the 6.……. It was from his son; he became quite friendly with me.

Helping with grammar
Task 1:
Read the following table and make three meaningful sentences from the table using the structure 'too…………….to.'

Subject + verb		Adjective		
Della was	**too**	Poor	**to**	Buy a good present for Jim.
She loved Jim		Well		Bear so many responsibilities
Jim		Young		Argue about it

Task 2:
They're too nice to use just at present. Jim was sensible enough to understand Della's distress.

Based on the above examples, do the following sentences as directed. An a. It is boiling outside. None can go out. (*too*)

b. The house is costly. We cannot afford it. *(too)*

e. The city is reasonably safe. We can move around at night (*enough*)

Task 3:
I cut it off. The pattern in the sentence is verb + it + adverbial particle. Make meaningful sentences from the table below.

Subject+ verb	object	Adverbial particle
He knocked		down
I kicked it	it	up
Please put		off

Helping with oral communication

What Vygotsky (1978) has to say about the *Zone of Proximal Development* is "learning awakens a variety of internal development processes that can operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and cooperation with his peers." (p. 90). Vygotsky's theory is essential for task

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designers to have adequate background knowledge about learners.

Task 1:
Forming groups of two and asking students to role-play for Jim and Della

Task 2:
Engaging students in debating whether Jim and Della behaved sensibly by parting with their most valuable possessions.

Helping with writing
Task: 1

Write a summary of the story by framing sentences in the gaps in the table.

In this story, the problem starts when----------------------

----------.After that-------------

----------------------. Next------

.Then,----------------------------
--------------------.The
problem climaxes with --------

Task: 2

- Write five statements about Jim. Three should be accurate, and two should be false.
- "Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent

of quail."- How would you explain this reaction of Jim? Write five sentences.

III.   Post-Reading Activities
The post-reading activities help students (Lazar)
--To make interpretations of the text
-- To understand the narrative point of view
-- Practice the language skills
-- Help learners express their viewpoints and experiences
The following activities can be done to understand the story better in writing and then discussion.

- What lessons of human values do you draw from your reading of the story?
- Do you agree with the author's view as expressed in the concluding sentence, "Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are the wisest? Everywhere they are wisest. Are they the magi."?
- In the story, the strong family relationship is reflected. Do you believe that nowadays families have such feelings? Generally, how have relationships changed? In what ways?
- If you were to write a similar story, how would you develop it? Would you give a similar or different ending?

Conclusion
Suppose this model can be applied at the higher secondary level and, more importantly, at first-year undergrad levels in English Departments in Bangladesh. In

that case, it will help learners appreciate literature and encourage meaningful language learning. In Bangladesh, language learning is mostly a matter of silent and passive individual activity. 'Integrated model' will engage students to take part actively in language learning through classroom interaction. This model has two hurdles to succeed: one at the policy level and another at the pedagogy level. English Departments at colleges and universities have to accept this model at the policy level. Teachers must be aware that language and literature are interdependent and complement each other at the pedagogy level. So they have to be integrated.

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