TOWARDS AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TO TEACHING LITERATURE IN AN EFL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

This present research seeks to explore the nature of teaching culture through literature in the Departments of English in the Maghreb Universities. It attempts to confirm the fact that culture-integrated foreign language teaching holds an important place in foreign language education; it is still neglected within the Departments of English. Therefore, the aim of this paper is threefold: first to examine the situation of teaching and learning culture in the Departments of English and to make some practical realistic suggestions as to the way(s) the teaching of English should be reshaped to take account of the recent developments in intercultural studies with regard to foreign language teaching/learning pedagogy. The second aim stems from the belief that knowledge of the cross-cultural discourse operational patterns is necessary in learning a foreign language and that unawareness of cultural barriers may impede both learner's success and teacher's efforts. The third aim is to develop a theoretical framework in order to enhance the conceptualization of the approach that quite fits the learners of English at the university level. Thus, to obtain reliable answers for the fact, the choice falls upon an Algerian University, precisely Tlemcen University.

KEYWORDS: Literature, Culture, EFL, Teaching/Learning Literature & Culture, Cultural Awareness, Cross-Culture

INTRODUCTION

The decision to embark upon A Literary Based Culture-integrated Approach to Teaching English in EFL Classrooms project represents the starting point of a challenging topic which is the teaching of literature in accordance to culture. Thus, this paper, in its preliminary attempt, establishes a general perception in higher education that culture as a matter has little to contribute to the study of literature. For this reason, this present research intends to redress the balance by giving practitioners the opportunity to share their experiences in asserting the use of culture in the literature teaching process. Therefore, this paper will entirely concentrate on a threefold question that aims at: first to examine the situation of teaching and learning culture in the Department of English and to make some practical realistic suggestions as to the way(s) the teaching of English should be reshaped to take account of the recent developments in intercultural studies with regard to foreign language teaching/learning pedagogy. The second stems from the belief that knowledge of the cross-cultural discourse operational patterns are necessary in learning a foreign language and that unawareness of cultural barriers may impede both learner's success and teacher's efforts. The third is to develop a theoretical framework in order to enhance the conceptualisation of the approach that quite fits the learners of English at the university level. In doing so, and in order to obtain a practical reliable result to the fact, the choice falls on an Algerian University, precisely Tlemcen University.

Statement of the Purpose

Questionably, the conceptual framework of this research is based on the view that there can be few purposes more central to the profession of foreign language teaching than the goal of culture and the development of the learner's inter-cultural communicative competence. It, therefore, attempts to show that teaching English at the Department of English at the University of Tlemcen is still conventional in nature and that some changes are considered necessary. Based on the course ineffectiveness to promote the learner's intercultural communicative competence and cross-cultural understanding, this paper explores an alternate approach to teaching English as a foreign language. This approach is based on the premises that language is part of culture; language is deeply embedded in culture; language, literature and culture are not separable; and that teaching any foreign language, necessarily means the teaching of its literature and culture.

Problematic Issue

All EFL learners of English enrol in the English course presented by the Department of English at the University of Tlemcen and graduate three years later. In the course of this study period, they are filled with a body of knowledge related to the legitimised aspects of foreign language teaching such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, phonology, sentence structure, British civilisation, American civilisation, African civilisation, British literature, American literature, African literature, linguistics, educational linguistics, applied linguistics and didactics.

The English courses exit-profile facilitates for the "licence" holders to teach straightforwardly in the educational schools; however, they meet language difficulty once positions as professional translators in oil factories are proposed. They extremely encounter more complexities if they join the foreign University of (Great Britain USA) for postgraduate studies and got into direct contact with the English native speakers and culture, they soon realise on many occasions that despite their fairly good command of the English grammar and pronunciation their speech and behaviour with the natives did not always go well with their intentions. So, then they realise that successful communication is highly complex and involves much more than the vocabulary items and grammar rules they were taught during their graduate studies. In fact, they realise that they are unable to put down to earth the grammar they learnt and that talking to hypothetical classroom invented or imagined characters in artificial social situations in the oral expression classes did not resemble talking to real native speakers of English in real life situations. Consequently, they, then, become aware that successful communication requires far more the socialisation of learning about grammar, vocabulary and sentence structures. The language little exposure in the learning environment involves body, mind and spirit and requires not only linguistic knowledge but paralinguistic knowledge as well because "the conversational use of spoken language cannot be properly understood unless paralinguistic elements are taken into account." (Abercrombie, 1967). To say so, David Crystal (1976: 96) puts forward a number of paralinguistic features that are commonly referred to as "tone of voice". We can make our speech breathy or nasal or husky or creaky to create desired effects. Some people use very obvious lip-rounding when they talk to babies or small animals. Spoken advertisements for certain products are often delivered in a low breathy voice, presumably to make them more attractive. Whispering is one of the best examples of paralanguage; giggling and laughing also come into this category. At last, the conclusion I made while observing the fact, and most EFL teachers seem to have a sharing involvement, is that the production and reproduction of meaning requires both the linguistic and the socio-cultural aspects of language. All this is supposed to mean that the community, its culture and its language where people are born and brought up shape their way of speaking, their communication strategies, their values and beliefs, i.e., all the elements which are likely to make their interaction with members of their community successful.

BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

The teaching of English in Algeria is gaining more and more ground prestige because of the government policies, the opening of the Algerian market to foreign companies and investors and the recent rapid changes in the world (globalization). In fact, the educational system puts into practice the study of English as so important that all learners, regardless of their field of study, are required to learn English as a second foreign language.

As far as the students who enrol to major in English as a foreign language are concerned, the Department of English covers a three-year course leading to a general academic or professionally oriented licence's degree (henceforth bachelor's degree). The third year LMD students may choose an area of expertise either the applied linguistics or literature and civilization.

Broadly Speaking, The Course Syllabus Comprises The Following Categories.

- **Language Practice:** This category comprises the following modules: oral expression and comprehension and written expression.

- **Language Study:** This category comprises linguistics, phonetics and grammar. During the third year, more specialised branches of linguistics such as psycholinguistics and sociolinguistics, semantics and pragmatics are introduced.

- **Literary Texts:** These are devoted to the study of British and American literature and even the Third World literatures.

- **Civilization:** This category comprises the following modules: American, British and African civilization.

- Research methodology.

- Informatics ICT.

In general, the students who follow this course are aged between 18 and 22 years. All of them are native speakers of a dialectal form of either Arabic or Berber and have learnt French as their first foreign language for ten years. Among the EFL students, many do not choose to join the department but are oriented by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research on the basis of the grade/mark they obtain in the Baccalaureate exam. As a result, some of them spend from four to five years to complete the three-year program. In addition, many of the graduates of this department end up as teachers in the secondary schools and few of them manage to work as translators in foreign companies or government institutions. Others, and these are very few, may follow a postgraduate course of studies, an academic research which leads to a university assistant teacher.

The English course syllabus currently in use at the Department of English at University of Tlemcen has rarely undergone any changes. The changes so far implemented were rather of form than of content. The contents of different modules with which the teaching of English was initiated in the late eighties are still in use except for the teacher's individual efforts and inventiveness to bring some changes they think are in line with the recent developments in the field of applied linguistics and foreign language teaching research. These initiatives depend on the lecturer's interests, and, apparently, no comprehensive research into the development and introduction of new modules that would concentrate on the teaching of culture as an important component within the English course syllabus was made. The only exception relates

to the implementation of the LMD system –henceforth, Licence, Master and Doctorate- which, as mentioned above, has introduced new teaching modules which unfortunately are based on the teaching of language rather than culture.

THE APPLIED LITERATURE TEACHING METHODS

Teaching/learning English literature in an EFL context may instigate its approaches from the most conventionally applied ones, stated in Carter and Long (1991: 2). These are categorized as the language model, the cultural model, the personal growth model, and Later Saviour (2004) advocates an integrated approach to literature teaching. To explain them in a pedagogical setting, Lindblom (2003: 97) says:

English teachers frequently teach literature to transcend human experience, to encourage the rising above of material circumstances; this amount to a convenient way for us to shut out the world from our classrooms and our minds. Making matter worse, standardized exams with out-of-context reading-skills questions and literary trivia encourage this reductive view of literature, limiting the potential that English courses have for helping students to engage effectively in public discourse.

The Language Model

To teaching literature attempts to develop student's linguistic competence and helps them to have a direct contact with a text. It is not principally concerned with the aesthetic, moral or philosophical merits of literature; nevertheless, it focuses on the way language is used in a literary text. This approach is helpful in developing critical response to texts; thus, the teachers in literature classroom attempt to facilitate students to acquire a store of information related to the target text and ignore to manipulate the exiting possibilities, which the magnificent content of literary texts provide (Chandran, 2006: 151). It is a student centered model that basically focuses on the study of the language of the literary text. The latter is used to exemplify certain types of linguistic patterns, such as literal and figurative language. Although this model exposes the students to the fragments of language and the various creative uses of language, it aims to "**help students find ways into the text in a methodological way".** (Carter and Long, 1991:2). This is another way of saying that it seeks to inculcate in the students the quality of exploring and examining the literary language, and, therefore, enhance their literary competence. Another prompt for using this approach is to promote the student's language skills. Teachers may use the text to devise a variety of vocabulary and grammar activities. The students, then, will have the opportunity to enrich and develop their language input. This model also makes frequent use of stylistic analysis of the text to assist the students in meaning construction, and, hence, reading literature more competently. However, despite its merits, the language based model is played down by many researchers such as McKay (1982) who argues that this model neglects the reader's response to the text as it may be too mechanistic and demotivate the pleasure of reading literature.

The Personal Growth Model

Stresses the need to engage the students with literature. This idea is overtly expressed by Carter and Long (1991:3) when they posit that the personal growth model enables the students to **"achieve an engagement with the reading of literary text…and helping them to grow as individuals".** In other terms, the model in question focuses on maximizing the student's personal pleasure in reading literature. When reading a literary text, the students are actively involved with its content. This active interaction will result in creating a more memorable, yet absorbing literary experience. Furthermore, this model views literature as beneficial for encouraging the students to draw on their own

personal experiences, feelings and emotions. Students, therefore, are no longer passive recipients of readymade interpretations. Instead, they become active participants both intellectually and emotionally as they are continuously prompted to let out their opinions and thoughts. Yet, this model stresses the pedagogical responsibility of the teacher in the choice of the texts not solely for their stylistic features, but also to consider whether these texts meet student's interest.

Formal Lecturing

The teaching of literature at Abu-Bakr University is teacher-centred rather than learner-cantered. Learners fail to process information and use classroom learning to solve world issues outside the classroom. Consequently the study of literature is no more regarded as rewarding in education. Literature is simply viewed as types of knowledge of learning. Learners acquire sufficient data of the literary genres such as poetry, drama, novel, short story etc., they improve their language competence, they become aware of the socio-cultural context of a given text; but they fail to use information and acquire the ability and necessary skills to analyze, appreciate and interpret literature independently because they are not creative thinkers. But this is not meant for master studies who may, of course, achieve competence in analytical, critical and generative thinking. They, indeed, find, in due course, a genuine involvement in a piece of literary art which consequently results in achieving desired emotional, intellectual and aesthetic growth.

They are just receivers of information, favouring those who have good memories to recall back during examinations because literature remains for them a subject to be passed at the end of the course.

All through the six LMD semesters, precisely the four last ones, Lecturing is the solely way a literary course is delivered. It is noteworthy that the method is considered as the most useful "common form of teaching" as Edwards, Smith and Webb (2001: 01) think. At Tlemcen University the teachers impart information about literature in general or about a specific text and students passively listen to the teacher, take notes of the lecture, read handouts-papers in case of their availability, collect necessary references and prepare to sit for their examination at the end of the term. This is applicable even to the two modules (comparative literature and English literature) which are doubled in terms of sessions: i.e. a one and a half hour session lecture, and another course (TD) of the same timing in which the student is supposed to participate more than the teacher or at least in a bidirectional way of learning, such as discussions, seminars or tutorials are hardly arranged to activate student's evaluative and creative thinking abilities.

THE RATIONALE FOR TEACHING / LEARNING LITERATURE

A large number of educationalists put forward a number of reasons for the benefits of teaching literature in the FL classrooms. These reasons, known as a chemistry of variables, are stated in Parkinson and Reid Thomas (2000: 9-11) in a list containing the followings:

- **Linguistic Model:** Literature provides examples of "excellent" writing, linguistic diversity, and expressive varieties. (See the linguistic model)

- **Extension of Linguistic Competence:** Literature stretches the competences of learners who have mastered the linguistic rudiments. (See the linguistic model)

- **Mental Training:** Literature trains the mind and sensibility better than any other discipline. Training the mind is the benefit traditionally claimed in classical humanist defences of any discipline within the arts or humanities.

It survives in a more respectable form in what has become one of the more scientific defences of literature in the language classroom. In an interview, H.G. Widdowson argued that "reading literary discourse can assist students in the development of sense-making procedures of the kind required for the interpretation of or sensitization to language use in any discourse context" (Carter, 1988:17-18).

- **Authenticity:** Literature is genuine linguistic material, not a linguistically artificial textbook (Duff and Maley, 1990),

- **Open to Interpretation:** Literature can serve as a basis for "genuine interaction" between learners because it is open to interpretation, (Idem),

- **Motivating Material:** Literature is more likely to engage with and motivate a learner than artificial teaching inputs because it is generated by some genuine impulse on the part of the writer and deals with subjects and themes which may be of interest to the learner (Idem),

- **Memorability:** Literature is a memorised archive of linguistic usage, especially poetry (Maley and Moulding 1985),

- **Rhythmic Resource:** Poems assist the learner in assimilating the rhythms of a language (Idem),

- **Cultural Enrichment:** Reading literature promotes cultural understanding and awareness. (Collie & Slater, 1987).

- **Convenience:** Literature is a useful, constructive and practical resource.

Shortly after, many scholars were urged to look for factors requiring the use of literature as a powerful resource in the classroom context. In view of that, Collie and Slater (1990:3), proposed four main reasons. These are language enrichment, valuable authentic material, personal involvement and cultural enrichment:

Language Enrichment

EFL learners may develop their knowledge with many features of the written language, reading a significant and contextualized body of text. They learn about the syntax and discourse functions of sentences, the variety of structures, and the different ways of connecting ideas, which develop and increase their own writing skills.

Valuable Authentic Material

Most works of literature are authentic materials. They are not principally meant for teaching a foreign language. Thus, in a classroom context, learners are exposed to actual language samples of real life. They become familiar with many different linguistic forms.

Personal Involvement

The learner is personally involved once s/he reads a literary text. He is enthusiastically drawn into the text, and pursues the development of the story to find out what happens as events unfold via the climax and dénouement. The learner again finds himself concerned in the story and close to certain characters with shared emotional responses.

Cultural Enrichment

If any EFL learner is asked about the ideal way to increase his/her understanding of verbal/non-verbal characteristics of language learning, s/he will recommend a likely visit or an extended stay in the host country. But, since the financial resources are the main impediment of a linguistic travel for many learners, the other remaining alternative means is to get in touch with the available literary works, such as novels, plays, short stories, etc. facilitate understanding how communication takes place in that country. These literary genres, though imaginary, present a full setting in which characters from many social/regional backgrounds can be described; i.e. their thoughts, feelings, customs, traditions, possessions; what they buy, believe in, fear, enjoy; how they speak and behave in different settings.

THE CASE OF CULTURE

Teaching culture in the EFL context has incited many educationalists to implement typical models to teach a foreign language. This requires a multi-disciplinary enterprise consisting mainly of linguists, practitioners, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, etc. They all have one point in common which clearly showed that language and culture are closely related. This view prompted, later, foreign language teaching practitioners to make a move from teaching culture along with language to teaching culture within language. To gain more insights in the matter, teaching culture had gone historically through two approaches. One represents the traditional approach of teaching culture along with language which is based on the theory which stresses the close relationship between language and culture, Brooks (1971:58) posits "Language is a bearer of culture and should be treated culturally and used by the students with concern for the message it bears"; the other one characterizes the modern approach of teaching culture within language giving more importance to the understanding of the foreign language people, society and culture, and the learner's own culture. Claire Kramsch, in this respect, sees that culture is "facts and meanings" (1993:24) and language is seen as social practice. She (1993:9) believes that as language users "every time we say something, we perform a cultural act". According to her, the teaching of culture is more than a fifth skill in foreign language classrooms but a central component as a must; therefore, to say it so, intercultural awareness is a combination of skills and attitudes which together make up inter-cultural competence. This could not happen without a contact between cultures that entails on conflicts which represent differences rather than similarities between the native culture and the target culture. These differences are to be taught through dialogues: "It is through dialogue with others that learners discover which ways of talking and listening they share with others and which are unique to them" (Kramsch, 1993: 27). The awareness of the prevalence of different cultures indicates that inter-cultural dialogue is an imperative for our world today, for dialogue between cultures, notably to question, to find equivalents among diverse cultural discourses with different human's experiences. Culture remains this vast field in which one consciously walks towards full experience of life. At another important level of the approach, Kramsch mentioned the importance of the cultural context while teaching culture and she wrote that foreign language teaching "takes cultural context as its core" (1993: 13) within a dialogic pedagogy that makes context explicit. Consequently, this interaction between text and context facilitates the learners to interpret cultural aspects.

LITERATURE INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

The models discussed above are somewhat ideal types, but in reality there is a greater overlap between them. This has led Savvidou (2004), as formerly stated, to advocate an approach that integrates the three models. An integrated approach stresses that literature in a EFL classroom can make the learning experience much more enjoyable and

stimulating than classroom instruction that requires mere acquisition of the linguistic component of the text. This approach, therefore, contributes to student's personal development; it enhances their cultural awareness and develops their language skills.

As can be understood, the afore-mentioned models seem to favour to a higher degree the language. The language model serves to raise the learner's linguistic competence, the personal growth enriches the learner's lexical stock and constructs their styles –of course- by reading literary texts, and the cultural model puts the emphasis on the issues related to culture as anthropology and principally linguistics. To put it differently, a paramount support is prearranged to language because of its legitimacy over the other subjects. This is thanks to its status as to be normative, systematic, systemic, segmental and paradigmatic; whereas, culture and literature are doctrinal but not normative.

Yet, a number of contextual problems may account for the ineffectiveness of teaching and learning culture through literatures (British, American and African), in the Algerian Higher Educational system. The problems include the literary text itself; the teacher may choose any text without referring to its nature; if it fits the linguistic or the culture purpose. To solve such a problem, the teacher may provide some kinds of answers to the following questions:

Why do learners read?

What do they read?

Who are the writers writing to/for?

How do they read?

Therefore we should try and ensure that they are reading for a **purpose**, on a specific **topic** and with a certain **reader** in mind, and that we have an awareness of the **way** we read, i.e. understand, analyze, and yet interpret.

At another level, the relationship between language and culture has been a topic of absorbing interest to many writers. Accordingly, this correlation regards literature as a conflicting point, and this may project on the learners some bad attributes in the acquisition because they have to understand separately the language with its components and then the culture.

It is significantly assumed that literature is to a higher degree taught theoretically. It is based most of time on lectures-giving. This frame still affirms its usefulness in many areas of language study and in the reading of literature; however, it also raises ineffectiveness in EFL classrooms because teaching/learning literature as such, has become a dull, burden and boring experience for students in academic institutions. Moreover, Literature classroom does not help them develop a spirit of collaboration, flexible attitude and ability to transfer the learnt information to the life around. Students remain unable to acquire the ability to assign that literary truth presented in form of allegory, fairy tales, or myths is not documentary but symbolic and is applicable to their life. Literature as an academic subject has thus become of secondary importance.

The conditions necessary to actualize the student's potential for a good literature learning process constitute the real, vital needs that a new and modern teaching method should be striving to meet. Hereafter, the now crisis in teaching and studying literature demands an approach and methodology to teach literature, which can revive the importance of the study of literature and make it as a medium to help students develop the skills that cope with the ever-changing modern

technological world. Literature as an academic subject is in need of a teaching methodology, which enables students not only to collect information about the authors, history, and literary principles, but also to have the ability to think creatively and create opinions and new ideas and thought, and apply the classroom study to practical life. In so doing, the students can process information and discover numerous ways out to the problems met in their life. Supporting this view, Saaty (2001: 06) states:

> **Knowledge is already known, and to teach it to people is just getting that knowledge repeated in many memories and does not add to our human potential. What we want for sure is to use knowledge in ways that make people creative because creativity adds to our potential. Knowledge is a means, creativity is an end because it keeps mind busy with new challenges to solve problems and expand the dimensions of consciousness.**

Modern Research in didactics has confirmed the possibility to improve the human cognition (**Bloom taxonomy**) that is able to generate creative solutions and transform solutions into action, and skills to process, synthesize, and evaluate information. It is realized as Geersten (2003:17) says that the infusion of higher-order thinking skills has potential to redesign higher education and change the meaning of "higher education from extended years of formal learning to lifelong habit of high level thinking."

Hence, today in the modern part of the world teaching of thinking skills is considered a primary objective in the educational institutions. Thinking skills programmes are organized and regularized in educational institutions and curriculums in most of the developed countries of the world. Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment (IE), The Somerest Thinking Skills Course, Martin Lipman's Philosophy for Children, Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education (CASE), Thinking through Geography, and Activating Children's Thinking Skills (ACTS) are some of the examples in this regard (McGuinnes, 1999). Thinking skills programmes are conducted either as separate programmes designed for teaching of thinking or as infused programmes designed to teach for thinking. In infused programmes thinking is integrated with the existing curriculum. The present research explores the strategies and techniques used in the thinking skills programmes and attempts to apply them to the teaching of literature. Thus it attempts to prove that fusion of the thinking skills with the teaching of literature can help develop student's cognitive abilities and improve their critical and creative thinking.

To conclude this part, and as being cconsidered the most traditional approach to literature teaching, the cultural model tends to be a teacher-centered approach where the teacher provides the students, by means of lecturing, with the social, political and historical background of the texts. This model also places paramount emphasis on the history of literary movements, the different genres, biographical facts about authors and various synopses. Within it, the literary text is viewed as a product and used as a means to learn about the target culture. Carter and long (1991: 2) examine both the tenets and the functions of this approach; they write:

> **Teaching literature within a cultural model enables the students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own and space and to come to perceive traditions of thought, feeling and artistic form of within heritage literature of such cultures endows.**

Stated differently, the implementation of the cultural model in literature teaching seeks to raise the student's cultural awareness and promote their appreciation of other universal thoughts different from their own. This model, hence, considers literature as a valuable means of bridging cultures and developing a sense of understanding and tolerance towards the other's distinctiveness.

TOWARDS NEW PARADIGMS

In a rather detailed examination of the key criteria, Lazar (1993:15-9) claims that literature in the EFL classrooms develops language acquisition, expands language awareness, offers access to cultural background, reinforces student's interpretative abilities and educates the whole person in so far as it enhances the learner's imaginative and affective competences. In other words, literature may well raise awareness of other cultures, enhance literary competences and evolve language mastery. Additionally, in the same line, Burke and Brumfit (1986:171-2) state that literature promotes literacy and oracy, critical and analytical ability, social skills and the use of the imagination; inspires learners with open-minded, ethical and humanitarian attitudes, respect cultural tradition; and provides information about literature and language. It in fact requires learners to explore and interpret the social, political, literary and historical context of a specific text. By using such a model to teach literature, we not only reveal the universality of such thoughts and ideas but encourage learners to understand different cultures and ideologies in relation to their own.

Noting that literature is the most typical, genuine and authentic document, we have proposed a practical framework, which is not a thoroughly reflected model of literature teaching, but it springs from a personal experience that gives you an idea about the so-called likely adequate method. In brief, and in the basis of Lazar's and Bruke's and Brufit's claims, this model therefore is conceptualized in a dialectical question that stresses the point of which is more prominent; the language, the culture or literature as such.

Ideally, we intentionally figure out a model of teaching literature and put it into action, known as the **mutual paradigm** which gives an equal importance to all walks of English language components; i.e. language is necessary to literature and culture, culture is necessary to literature and language, and literature is necessary to language and culture. Thus, literature is interactively and in integratively taught in accordance to language and culture.

Basically, literature English foreign learners are placed in a position as "native-like", endowing them with a truly cultural competence, equipping them with culturally-relevant pragmatic and socio-psychological components around which to build effective identities which will enable their socialization in the target culture and enhance the effectiveness with which they participate in that culture with no otherness.

To do so, the learners are compulsory involved in constituting the literature pedagogical objectives courses after being defined by the practitioners who certainly understand what potential students want to achieve. In short, some of them are listed: thus, by the end of the course, Learns should be able to

- Identify a particular literature and culture as belonging to a certain type of people,

- Identify a people according to the literature they are reading and the culture they are analysing,

- Identify type, form, and genre in respect to the literature and culture studied,

- Understand the importance of the particular literature and culture studied,

- Show how to assign certain literary genres and cultural elements to a particular language,

- Relate the content to language and society,

- Master the skill to compare and contrast differences and similarities,

- Understand the development of language as related to literature and culture,

- Analyse and appreciate a piece of literary work,

- Compare and contrast forms, genres and types,

- Apply theoretical and critical approaches to different genres,

- Earn how to link history and culture to language,

- Define a context for translation, etc.

To put into action the afore-mentioned objectives, the FL learner should operate as a **Critical Reader.** She learns to draw inferences and arrives at conclusions based on evidence" (Carr, 1988). So, she applies a technique, based on a careful, thorough, thoughtful, and active analytic reading, for **discovering** information and ideas within a text. Someone is involved in reading critically whenever s/he is interested in a text, making a variety of comments about it, responding to it. Consequently, all these mental processes have one thing in common is to understand the text thoroughly. By definition, critical reading would appear to come once the reader has fully understood a text by discussing it so that the reading sticks in her/his brain very long and very often, and is likely to be remembered when necessary.

To cover this task successfully, the Critical Readers must go beyond a superficial reading of the text by taking notes, highlighting important passages that include agreements or disagreements, comparisons and contrasts to other texts, questioning, previewing, reciting and reviewing what s/he reads. S/he tackles difficult language problems and deciphers the imagery (metaphors, symbols…) and the cultural facet. In general, it is a matter of a problem-solving perspective because learning literature does not and cannot take place in a social vacuum; when a literary text is approached from a problem solving attitude, the reader is asked to evaluate evidence, draw conclusions, make inferences, and develop a line of thinking (Riecken and Miller, 1990) that help him/her enjoy a good reading (book, story, fairy tale, poem…). Arguably, it is confirmed that the literary text has two paradigms: social and individual; the social paradigm is based on social, cultural, economic, political, ethnic, dialectal, anthological issues whereas the individual is purely psychological, i.e. it has an idiosyncratic form. Besides, there is an added variable factor to the original paradigm which is not constant, of course, hence-forth is the ethical issue. This precept formulated from the ritual locutions or sanctimonious declarations of having discovered the true moral purpose of the author represents genuine, usable, consequential knowledge, as opposed to dialectic between the reading experience and one's own life experience. Bleich (1978: 158).

To fully understand a text, both in terms of what it means and how it is constructed, the critical reader must read and discuss it in a number of ways. Here are closely three overlapping combinations of **reading strategies**:

- What a text says (restatement)

- What a text does (description)

- What a text means (interpretation)

Restatement: Reading What a Text Says

Restatement generally takes the format of a summary or paraphrasing the same text but differently. It is concerned with basic comprehension, with simply following the thought of a discussion, and it is an understanding of each sentence, sentence by sentence, and on following the thought from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph therefore it is involved with memorizing and rote learning.

Description: Describing What a Text Does

The focal point of this step of reading is the action of a text itself because it shows a unity (Aristotle, Poetics); so this unity cannot be conceived unless the reader goes through description. It concerned with describing and recognizing the structure of a discussion by examining what a text does for conveying ideas, this type of reading is concerned with describing the discussion throughout the followings: what topics are discussed?, what examples and evidence are used?, what conclusions are reached?

In doing so, the critical reader wants to recognize and describe how evidence is disposed and managed to reach a final position by identifying the structure of the discussion as a whole, rather than simply following remarks from sentence to sentence.

Interpretation: Analyzing What a Text Means

This ultimate type is very revealing for the critical reader because it makes him/her analyze and assert a meaning for the text as a whole by inferring. A literary text isn't about information but meaning; so the critical reader increases understanding by recognizing the craftsmanship of the creation of a meaning. And for this reason, Bennet (1995: 35-36) argues such a claim as:

> **Meaning is an event, something that happens not on the page, where we are accustom to look for it, but in the interaction between the flow of print and the actively mediating of the reader**.

Finally, to illustrate the distinction between what is said, what is done, and what is meant an example is stated: I left my driving-licence home. This **statement says** that I left my driving-licence home. By making that statement, I **do** something: I **describe** where my driving-licence is, or that I am without it. In the end, the **meaning** conveyed or inferred is that I do not drive.

CONCLUSIONS

In brief, one can say that teaching / learning literature and culture interactively is a strategic frame that provides applicable objectives strengthening the fact of awareness and cultural understanding, which in turn help to promote international understanding and ultimately develop the sense of tolerance vis-à-vis other's differences; this being one of the most idealistic aims of literature teaching / learning. It cannot be attained and maintained without, first and most, a transformation of the cultural barriers into cultural bridges developing a sense of understanding and tolerance towards the other's distinctiveness.

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