ARTICLE

Robust Knowledge of the World rather than Syntax: Using Literature in Second Language Learning and Teaching

Fahd Shehail Alalwi 🄳

Department of English Language and Literature, College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj 11942, Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

Using literature to help acquire a second language has often proven highly valuable, though its effectiveness not always universally agreed upon. The major aim of this paper is to critically review in a qualitative study the practical and theoretical tenets that foreground such use and encourage educators to recognize literature's role in enhancing the competence and performance of students of English as a second or a foreign language. The objective is not simply to recommend inclusion a few literary texts in the curriculum. Rather, there is a pressing need for a more comprehensive approach. It is a need for adoption of an "approach" not mere methods or isolated techniques. Such an approach should foreground the use of literary sources through dynamic interaction to gain the benefits of this reference-point approach. Other approaches often emphasise teaching "about" the target language, rather than facilitating its internalization in a manner that similar to first language acquisition. The proposed literature-based approach approach benefits from insights of neurolinguistics, psycholinguistics and even research in computer science and artificial intelligence. The use of the literature approach also benefits from world knowledge to support natural internalisation of language competence and performance enriched by the complexity of various texts, the diversity of themes, and cultural context. Narratives (short stories, novellas, novels, and storytelling) as well as drama and poetry help learners acquire the natural flow of the target language with its syntax, rich vocabulary, and idioms, while simultaneously contributing general cognitive development.
Keywords: Literary Texts; Foreign Language Acquisition; Natural Method; Syntax; Neuroscience

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Fahd Shehail Alalwi, Department of English Language and Literature, College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj 11942, Saudi Arabia; Email: f.alalwi@psau.edu.sa

1. Introduction

Literature has always been used, in different degrees, in language teaching and learning to put to work the theoretical tenets of the different prevalent approaches to language teaching/learning. However, it was not deemed a theoretical approach in its own right. The relevant theoretical approaches to language learning have been described as grammar-translation, behaviorism, nativist approach (based on cognitive innatist theory) communicative approach, functional theory, among others. Each of these general approaches may use or ignore certain methods and techniques of integrating literature into the teaching/learning process. The use of literary works has been considered merely a method or a technique to implement, when relevant, the objectives of the prevailing philosophy of language learning and teaching at a given time. On the other hand, the practical experience of 'born teachers' has instinctively driven them to introduce literary texts in the classroom or recommend them to avid learners who actually manage to internalise the desired target language as if it were a mother tongue. This approach, which integrates literary texts into the curriculum, has found strong support in cognitive psychology and neuroscience.

The term "approach" here is used in the sense of a set of theoretical assumptions concerning language learning and teaching. It is a general theoretical framework to be implemented through various *methods* and *techniques* designed by educators and teachers. The meaning of *approach* follows the concept explained by both Edward M. Anthony[1] and Richards & Rodgers[2], but the meaning of method as a practical implementation follows Anthony's defining and not that of Richards & Rodgers who use the word *method* to refer to a general framework similar to *approach*. The major argument here is that the use of literature should be an overarching approach, rather than mere method or technique.

1.1. Objective

This paper considers its objectives and ultimate goal to be the clarification of the down-to-earth, rule of thumb benefits (and theoretical support) of using certain types of the target language literary texts to help students learn/acquire a second or a foreign tongue naturally with acceptable competence and performance. The goal is to show that English literary texts are not simply useful for understanding or appreciating literature; they are additionally useful even in teaching English to students of the hard sciences where "accurate" understanding of scientific discourse can go a long way, whereas misunderstanding can lead to errors that could even be catastrophic. The English language is rich in nuances of meaning, and even in scientific texts, differentiating between one meaning and another, or between shades of meaning, can make a significant difference. It is not a machine language with limited, taken-for-granted meanings. Only a naturally internalised competence of the language can deal intelligently with the subtleties of English texts written by humans (not machine-generated discourse). This naturally internalised competence can only seep into the consciousness of learners through living linguistic experiences created by literary texts, especially storytelling, which Roger Schank considers the only way teaching to have a real effect.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The study emphasises the importance of finding a viable way to raise the competence and performance standards of learners of English as a second or foreign language in order to overcome the current mediocre standards. The current situation is one in which long years of teaching and studying English give only substandard results where students know a great deal of vocabulary and perhaps some syntax, but display no perceived proficiency in interacting with English personally, academically or professionally.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Background

Numerous theories of second language acquisition, along with related teaching approaches, have emerged over a long span of time, possibly since the Grammar-Translation method designed in the late Middle Ages to teach and learn Latin, the lingua franca of scholarship, government, and trade in almost the whole of Europe and beyond. Thus, "Grammar-Translation (GT) became the dominant FL teaching method, having evolved out of the historical interest in learned writings in Latin and Greek"[3]. The grammar-translation method focused on grammar as syntax, isolated lexical items and morphological paradigms together with heavy translation into L1. L2, thus, was a topic of abstract study, while performance and communication, let alone natural internalisation, was

ignored. It was not until the rise of the vernacular dialects-turned-languages and the decline of Latin in the 15th century that interest in the modern languages started to occupy the foreground and even the academic scene.

By the 19th century, the Direct Method was developed, adopting the concept of mirroring the style of first language acquisition and focusing on speaking skills. Thus, "grammar rules are not explicitly taught; rather, they are assumed to be learned through practice .. [and] inductive methods … in the target language"[4]. Immersion was the catchword, and listening comprehension took precedence in teaching L2. This method also emphasized teaching speaking skills, while the learners performed the actions representing what they said.

As Kramsch and Kramsch[5] point out, canonical literature was used for "aesthetic education of the few (1910s), for the literacy of the many (1920s), for moral and vocational uplift (1930s–1940s)." However, "from the 1940s to the 1960s, literature disappeared from the language curriculum"[6], and linguistics started to occupy the centre of interest.

In the first half of the 20th century, research, largely in educational psychology led to development of the Audio-Lingual Method, imitating L1 acquisition as the natural way, hence the precedence of oral comprehension and speaking. In the meantime, believing that language use was an issue of stimulus and response, behaviourist teaching methods emphasized repetition and dialogue memorization, and since "all learning is thus characterized as associative learning, or habit formation"[4], the objective was to develop and reinforce habits.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Noam Chomsky (an innatist), refused the behaviourists' method and adopted a method based on the cognitive dimension. He argues that children inherit an innate capacity for linguistic abstract structures, which enables them to understand and formulate new sentences. This modernized the Direct Method by adding this cognitive element.

A social dimension has been added to these concepts of language since the 1970s, introducing elements of expressing, interpreting, and negotiating meaning. This led to the communicative approach in language teaching that involves learners doing meaningful activities to exchange information. Communicative competence became the goal within the wider framework of social interaction. Moreover, within this sociolinguistic approach, the role of the language teacher has shifted from a provider of knowledge to a guide to resources. Teachers should cease to be the "authoritative transmitter of knowledge" and learners no longer be "receptive vessels"[7]. Teachers should not teach; they should help learners learn through guidance and use of sources. Experienced teachers know how the burdens of actual teaching in actual classes may drive them to resort unwittingly to "teaching," i.e., imparting knowledge, coaching for exams, resorting to abstract ideas about grammar (syntax) and accumulating vocabulary items. In this manner, guiding students to sources, i.e., living language situations created by dealing with actual life-like literary texts, may become neglected or postponed indefinitely.

All these theories are approaches that can be implemented through methods and techniques. One of the methods that has been used to apply one approach, or another is the use of literature in teaching (or helping learners acquire) a second or a foreign language. Thus, even the oldest of these approaches, Grammar-Translation, depended heavily on literary texts (Greek and Latin in the early stages). However, the emphasis on abstract indoctrination of grammatical and morphological concepts may have hindered the natural internalisation of the target language. Later when modern languages became the focus of interest, using the grammar-translation method faltered, and educators tended to ignore literary texts and emphasised teaching language skills.

Language teaching methodologies started in the early 20th century as an established profession "as applied linguists and others sought to develop principles and procedures for the design of teaching methods and materials, drawing on the developing fields of linguistics and psychology"[2]. This drove some methods to consider literature as central to language teaching, influenced by the long-stand method of grammar translation. Thus, canonical works of literature were used to develop the ability to read and translate, and literary texts were used as examples. Deficiencies of the Grammar-Translation approach became obvious in the period 1940s to 1960s, as students could not communicate effectively in the target language. Consequently, the Grammar-Translation method fell into disuse.

In the 1970s, the use of literature in language teaching started to make a comeback as communicative language teaching needed authentic material to help achieve communicative competence in the learners. Therefore, the role of authentic material in communicative language teaching was

greatly emphasised. Authentic material means material not created especially for teaching. This emphasis on authentic materials, in the 1970s and especially in the 1980s led to reconsidering the role of literature in language learning. Literature was now appreciated as a source of authentic texts, and as a means to acquire vocabulary, to develop reading skills, and to enhance critical thinking.

In the past three decades, a distinction has been made between the study of literature for its own sake (the literary texts are the object of the study), and the use of literature as a tool of teaching/learning language. Although such use is still a relatively underdeveloped area of research, some topics have gained traction, such as the role of the reader's response to literary texts, integrated teaching approaches, and the use of multimodal texts, when benefiting from literature for language teaching.

The history of learning and teaching foreign languages is varied with an abundance of theories and methodologies, reflecting the natural developments in the trends of thought prevalent at different stages of history. Unfortunately, the role played by the relevant literature in the learning and acquisition of foreign languages has witnessed a decline during the heyday of structuralism, behaviourism and many other trends such as the communicative pedagogy[8]. However, Alan Maley makes a fresh effort to defend the case for the relevance of literature in today's classrooms of learning English as a second or a foreign language. In the same vein, he later advocated going further in the adoption of the creative element of language, as exemplified in literature, and built a whole system of making creativity, just like literature a method of helping acquire the desired language. In 2018, quoting Ken Robinson, Alan Maley and Tamas Kiss proclaimed, "creativity is the new literacy"[9]. Using literature in teaching its language stimulates the creative ability in the learner, which facilitates internalising the relevant language in a natural way.

3. Discussion

3.1. Major Argument: The Use of Literature is an Overarching Approach, rather than Mere Method or Technique

Many born teachers' rule of thumb tends towards using literary texts to help acquire L2, since literary texts provide a context similar to that surrounding learning L1 for all humans. This context makes use of robust knowledge of the world, i.e., familiarity with the real milieu, including rich personal experiences of feelings, empathy, curiosity, and inclusion of the subject of experience, thus engaging active participation—a tendency supported by theories and new scientific developments. The linguist-turned-computer-scientist Roger Schank, suggests:

> Robust language understanding would require general knowledge about the world and a general method for using that knowledge. (Schank went further, claiming, "There is no such thing as syntax," which upset a lot of linguists but did serve to start a useful discussion[10].

Schank, of course, did not negate the ontology of syntax, but meant to emphasise the futility of teaching abstract notions about language—an unfortunate practice that takes place in many classrooms.

For instance, teachers may waste time explaining how the present simple tense verb, conjugated with the third-person singular, takes an "s," as in "he speaks, works, plays." After years of such explanations and repetitions, students learn abstract rules by rote; then in actual life situations when graduates of such classes speak, they stammer and stutter, saying, "John speak.. speaks about how the cell absorb liquids.. absorbs liquids which infiltrates… infiltrate, …infiltrated .. infiltrating," etc. The human brain does not function well with such abstract language teaching. This is a fact which is quite noticeable when school and university graduates fail to express themselves properly in the foreign language they have been learning for long years.

The diehard remains of the obsolete teaching methods, such as the grammar-translation method and beliefs that language is just a heap of isolated lexical items fitted into abstract syntactic structures, still exert their adverse influence on millions of learners. When 'context' with all its levels is taken out of the equation, the result is misunderstanding and miscommunication. Coming across new lexical items, the L1 learner perceives the possible layers of meaning created by the current context. The same lexical item may occur again in a different context with a slightly or utterly different meaning. The learner's cognitive apparatus copes with the new context effortlessly. This is also internalised unconsciously. The result is that the learner's competence is genuine and

intact as language is acquired within its varied contexts. This applies to morphological distributions, phrases, sentences, idioms, and the rest of the linguistics components. L2 learners can experence the same situation when exposed to adequate narratives in the form of reading materials, listening comprehension activities, in addition to audio and video media. With such an arrangement, no misconceptions or disastrous errors of performance will take place. The lapse into simple feeding of out-of-context vocabulary and information "about" a language leads to faulty understanding. It develops a rigid unconscious conception that sees meanings of lexical items and grammar as universal in all languages and that they can be grasped out of context and expressed with the cerebral part of the brain in the absence of the rest of the cognitive system. Linguistic competence has to be achieved with all the nuances of language usage that a five-year old native speaker has in their consciousness, as acquired intuitively and subliminally, while a foreign learner, using traditional abstract ways of learning L2, fails to function properly with the foreign tongue after long years of misguided study.

Roger Schank and his colleagues, including Eugene Charniak at MIT, and students at Yale University, saw natural language not as an abstract system. They focused on issues of representing and reasoning with the knowledge required for language understanding. Understanding how natural language works facilitates the job of language teachers in helping their students acquire L2 in almost the same manner as they acquired their mother tongue (L1). Schank's basic alternative to abstract teaching is the use of storytelling and learning by doing. Basing his theory on what was known about how people learn, and drawing insights from neuroscience, Schank explains that human memory is *episodic* and *dynamic*. It is *episodic* in the sense that it is organized around personal experiences rather than semantic or syntactic categories. It "is one in which we store actual events that have occurred in our own lives."[11] Thus, when reading or listening to a story, the reader/listener identifies with the characters and events of the story. This engages affective as well as rational aspects of the subject, and results in the natural absorption of the vocabulary, phrases, and structures of L2 (exactly as happens with L1). The memory is also *dynamic* in the sense that humans do not passively observe language and learn it. They do something in order to grasp proper use, meanings, and nuances of meaning. This dynamic memory

makes use of previous personal experiences as categories (in the Kantian sense) that shape, process, and understand the new experiences. Additionally, "our memories change dynamically in the way they store information by abstracting significant generalizations from our experiences and storing the exceptions to those generalizations"[11]. This takes place when people are exposed to storytelling, stories, poems, song lyrics, and literature in general. The doing part here is both *implicit* and *explicit*. Simple reading or listening to stories fires neurons in the brain that have to do with previous experiences, emotions and ideas. Thus, there is no obvious external doing, just mere implicit interaction. *Explicit* doing is when students are asked to retell the story in their *own* words (no memorizing of literary theories about a story) in writing or orally[11].

Schank and Abelson argue that:

> stories about one's experiences, and the experiences of others, are the fundamental constituents of human memory, knowledge, and social communication. This argument includes three propositions: (1) Virtually all human knowledge is based on stories constructed around past experiences; (2) New experiences are interpreted in terms of old stories; (3) The content of story memories depends on whether and how they are told to others, and these reconstituted memories form the basis of the individual's "remembered" self"[12].

Stories play a major role in human memory as explained by Schank, who has turned his focus from artificial intelligence to human intelligence. Humans' consciousness is heavily dependent on storytelling. This is suooprted by studies of the nature on human memory. Schank explains:

> The beginning and end of the problem is understanding the nature of human memory. When people engage in a conversation, they are quite frequently, simply telling a story that has been told before, which is being retrieved from their memory as they speak. When they listen to someone else speak in a conversation, they try to match what that person is saying with their own stories to ready themselves to have something to say or simply because they are excited

by the match in stories between the speaker and themselves[13].

Schank's ideas are in harmony with methods and techniques such as immersion, and learning by doing and using narratives as has been done by many teachers and encouraged by pedagogy, but his contribution lies in seeing storytelling as an overarching theory based on cognitive psychology and neuroscience. His is an approach, not a technique.

Theoretical support for learning and teaching (helping to acquire knowledge) through creating a natural context and learning by doing is abundant and long-standing, but has been partially ignored. As early as 1916, John Dewey deplored the stagnant traditional methods of education that acknowledged the importance of learning by doing but kept practicing the old methods of teaching abstract notions:

> Why is it that, in spite of the fact that teaching by pouring in, learning by passive absorption, are universally condemned, that they are still so entrenched in practice? That education is not an affair of "telling" and being told, but an active constructive process, is a principle almost as generally violated in practice as conceded in theory. Is not this deplorable situation due to the fact that the doctrine is itself merely told?[14].

In *The Aims of Education and Other Essays* (1929), A. N. Whitehead warned against teaching "inert ideas," i.e., ideas that are disconnected bits and pieces of information stripped of real-life context, experiences, and culture. He went as far as saying, "Education with inert ideas is not only useless: it is, above all things, harmful."[15] The alternative, dynamic ideas he supports are based on "utilising an idea, I mean, relating it to that stream, compounded of sense perceptions, feelings, hopes, desires, and of mental activities adjusting thought to thought, which forms our life"[15]. These sense perceptions feelings, etc., are engaged through exposure to narratives and literature in general. In a few words, Whitehead's theory of education can be summed up in his eloquent aphorism: "knowledge does not keep any better than fish"[15]. Fish cannot live out of water, and similarly, knowledge cannot thrive out of context, the larger context including the learner's personal feelings and experiences. The ideas of philosophers Dewey[14] and Whitehead

might sound outdated in a world enamoured only with the new and fashionable, but they are supported by modern and most recent ideas of computer scientists, psychologists and neuroscientists.

3.2. More Recent Theoretical Support

The interest in using literature in language learning, together with interest in teaching through doing, has always existed but has never taken precedence over other approaches. It kept its place as a set of methods and techniques to be tried alongside other methods and techniques. However, renewed interest gave it some prominence, emerging alongside better understanding of how the human brain works. In *The Art of Reading*, Damon Young refers to how "Emory University researchers found out that participants reading a novel had more neural connectivity in the language and sensorimotor regions of the brain,"[16] which shows how reading a narrative engages the reader's affective as well as rational perception in a dynamic way. In addition, Carol Clark explains neuroscientist Gregory Berns and colleagues' findings, stating:

> "The neural changes that we found associated with physical sensation and movement systems suggest that reading a novel can transport you into the body of the protagonist." Berns says. "We already knew that good stories can put you in someone else's shoes in a figurative sense. Now we're seeing that something may also be happening biologically."[17]

Neuroscience explains how our brains are hardwired, i.e., structured, for stories as stories may have been woven into the architecture of the human brain. In *Cognitive Neuroscience of Language* (2014), David Kemmerer presents some of the highlights of recent research in "cognitive neuroscience that has begun to illuminate the cortical networks that underlie the processes necessary to produce and understand stories"[18]. These processes establish coherent relationships between sentences and real or fictitious situations. He further illustrates the importance of "narrative coherence"[18] where the brain tries to connect events in the manner of beginning, middle and end (the Aristotelian setup, climax and resolution). This is how the brain responds to language as narrative, even when no formal narrative is involved.

In *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are* (2020), neuropsychiatrist Daniel J. Siegel explains the essential role played by stories in brain functioning, as stories engage both hemispheres of the brain. Narrative requires:

> both right and left hemisphere modes of processing information. The right brain's perceptually rich, analogical, context-dependent, autonoetic, mentalizing representations create much of the imagery and many of the themes of the narrative process. The logical, linear, "making sense" interpretations of these representations and the communication of narrative details stem from the left hemisphere's interpretive and linguistic processing of representations[19].

Thus, the left hemisphere sequences the logical side of issues such as cause and effect, storing factual memories. This is integrated with the right hemisphere, which processes visual and autobiographical memory in addition to intuitive and symbolic imaginative construction of reality. This integration creates a coherent narrative[19]. Siegel further posits that storytelling strengthens neural connections and creates new neural pathways, which may may even shift the architecture of the brain (*passim*).

A recent brain imaging study conducted by the Center for Neuroscience at the University of California, Davis, points out that the hippocampus can be seen as the brain's storyteller, connecting separate, distant events into a single narrative. In real life, people use a single narrative to remember multiple, separated events, as activity in the hippocampus can bridge these events to form a coherent narrative[20], which enhances the memory function. This is the same episodic memory investigated by Roger Schank.

Similarly, biologist James E. Zull claims that learning is "deepest" when it engages the most parts of the brain, stating:

> Learning is deepest when it engages the most parts of the brain; you can see the value of stories for the teacher. We should tell stories, create stories, and repeat stories, and we should ask our students to do the same[21].

This occurs since the brain is structured, or wired, to detect patterns created when stories are stored as images and symbols. Then, "language scripts and structures" are linked to such visual images, i.e., "language cues our images"[21]. The result is that what is perceived and understood through stories is more effective for natural learning.

Cognitive psychology, or philosophy informed by cognitive psychology, as exemplified in Daniel Dennett's *The Intentional Stance* (1987) and *Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking* (2013), shows how people think through the "intentional stance." We adopt a stance, "a certain *predictive strategy* … [which] consists of treating the object whose behavior you want to predict as a rational agent with beliefs and desires and other mental states exhibiting what Brentano and others call *intentionality*"[22]. It is a stance of interpretation that presupposes the rationality of people, as well as inanimate and animate entities in order to understand and predict events or reactions. Thinking of things, events, and other people as characters in a narrative (an important functional illusion structured in language, imagination, symbols, metaphors) facilitates our understanding of the world, revealing a great deal about how the human mind works. This stance is driven by our "intuition," which is pumped up, creating a frame conducive to understanding. It is a tool of thinking that can be described as "heartfelt, table-thumping intuition"[23]. Our minds think of things as agents (active persons with a will and consciousness). This theory of mind illustrates how people intuitively comprehend the world around them through this primitive, empathetic method. We recognise agents in the world by identifying predicted, repeated patterns, as in a narrative. We are part of a narrative. For instance, when people read a story, they instinctively empathize with the fictional characters and engage both the rational and affective aspects of their consciousness. This immersion in fictional or real events creates many brain connections that, in the case of language learning, reinforces a natural method of internalising various language structures.

Such approaches, which subscribe to the idea that the brain is hardwired for stories, are mostly adhered to by constructivists who posit that learners construct knowledge rather than just passively take in information because when exposed to narratives the receivers actively engage their prior experiences and emotive aspects of their consciousness in grasping the meaning of the relevant story. However, researchers with behaviouristic tendencies do not interpret this

as a hardwired brain tendency to appeal to storytelling or learning in general. They have their reservations.

3.3. Reservations Accounted for

Sparks points out that hard-wired learning is much less than perceived[24]. It is true that the brain has great plasticity and changes with experience, but it is not hardwired for learning. Quoting Daniel T. Willingham, a psychology professor at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Sparks explains, "All of our outcome measures, the things we are hoping to see, are not neurological changes; they are behavioral changes." Willingham, however, admits that the research conducted by his university does not measure dendritic connections; it only measures how well students can read since more studies are required to see how this applies to actual classrooms.

Nevertheless, the behaviourists' focus on experience does not disprove the agency of the learner and the concomitant ready response of the brain's plasticity. Additionally, further interdisciplinary studies covering supplementary domains—including cognitive psychology, pedagogics, quantitative research on students' competence and performance, and even narratology—promise more certain outcomes.

The difference of views here lies between the constructivists (or innatists such as Chomsky), and the behaviourists. Debates continue between nativism and empiricism; however, learning requires both the innate apparatus and empirical experience, which provides input to this apparatus. The outdated and unnecessary dichotomy of the nature/nurture question has been overrated as both sides of the equation work together in harmony[25,26]. It is even a false dichotomy as Jason Dean explains, "The truth is that nature and nurture interact with each other with seamless reciprocity"[27].

Some teachers find using literature in language teaching/learning problematic or unsuitable for students of the hard sciences who merely need scientific terminology, basic vocabulary, and syntax. The problem arises when many language teachers, trained in literary departments of English, and using literary texts as a vehicle for teaching a foreign language sometimes lapse into "teaching" literature and using hard to understand sophisticated literary texts. Naturally, this is a self-defeating method. The language of some literary texts presents an insurmountable hurdle for learners, at least in the initial stages of learning. Literary vocabulary and syntactic structures "are often considered to be too complicated, making reading a highly demanding activity"[28]. Such difficulties arise from infelicitous selection of texts. For the literary vehicle, i.e., the use of literary texts, to perform its function properly, the learner's grasp of the story should be smooth, intuitive and almost effortless. Joyce's *Ulysses* is a bad vehicle that does not go anywhere; Hemingway's *The American Wife* reaches its goal instantly. The point is to use a text written by a *raconteur*, i.e., a writer who tells anecdotes in a skillful and amusing way, monopolizing the reader's attention and stirring both mind and heart. In teaching English as a language and culture, Dickens and Hemingway are suitable choices among many others. Simplified versions of the great classic works of the literary canon have always contributed to language teaching. However, elegant English translations of Maupassant, Chekhov, or even Aesop's tales can also play a role, with a slight modification of the culture associated with the language to be taught/learnt. The proper choice of suitable literary texts is of paramount importance. Curriculum designers will naturally keep in mind that a smoothly flowing narrative (like that of Hemingway, Maupassant or Chekhov) will subliminally serve its function as a vehicle of language learning. The emphasis on extensive rather than intensive reading will also make the learning process a matter of natural acquisition, not teaching or imparting knowledge to passive recipients.

Raees Calafato (2023) draws attention to a paradox concerning the issue currently under discussion. There is a "growing movement in support of blurring the divisions between language and literature teaching," and many teachers subscribe to the belief in the necessity of using literary texts as vehicles for language teaching, however, actual practice often falls short of the desired goal. The culprit is mostly literary incompetence of many teachers in appreciating, understanding, analyzing, and interpreting literary texts. Research, similar to the present study, has consistently focused primarily on the learner, rather than the teacher. Calafato's quantitative study showed this disparity through an online questionnaire exploring creativity orientations towards literature, teaching approaches, and beliefs regarding literature of 170 language teachers in Central Asia"[29]. His findings revealed that a large number of teachers who accept the validity of using literature in language teaching have not themselves

developed the habit of reading literary works associated with the language they teach.

4. Conclusions

The use of literature in teaching English as a second or a foreign language has appeared in various periods, yet often only as a limited method or technique used sporadically, marginally, or neglected altogether. Nevertheless, many born-teachers' rule of thumb has always tended towards using literary texts to facilitate L2 acquisition since literary texts provide a context similar to that surrounding learning L1 for all humans. This context makes use of robust knowledge of the world introduced by literary works in a manner that engages the learner's personal experiences of feelings, empathy, curiosity, and inclusion of the subject of experience—a tendency supported by cognitive and neuro-scientific theories.

Schank posits that knowledge is retained better through stories, as human memory is *episodic*, and *dynamic*. Knowledge is stored and retrieved as episodes, anecdotes, or narrative segments. This memory is also dynamic; it does not passively receive information; it is active in grasping it in relation to prior experiences. It is also visual as it responding morereadilyto the mental visualising of events as perceived through stories, metaphors, symbols. Thus, the brain may be regarded as "hardwired" for stories or knowledge that is "represented" as stories in the form of images and symbols. Neuroscientists studies have shown that stories engage both hemispheres of the brain: the left hemisphere organises the logical sequencing of events and cause–effect relationships, storing the factual memories, while the right hemisphere processes visual and autobiographic memory, as well as the intuitive and symbolic imaginative construction of reality.

The use of the literature approach also benefits from authentic knowledge of the world provided by narratives that reflect familiar experiences of the learner. Narratives (short stories, novellas, novels, and storytelling) together with drama and poetry help learners acquire the natural flow of the target language with its syntax, rich vocabulary, and idioms, which adds to their general cognitive development. In such use, there is no focus on literary texts from the artistic point of view as the texts are merely a vehicle for the achievement of the final purpose of learning the language even for students of the hard sciences. The falsely-intuitive methodology that teaches scientific terminology (and no literary texts) to students who study English for the special purpose of studying one of the hard sciences or technology later simply produces learners (scientists) who can hardly grasp the proper meanings of scientific texts. Their linguistic competence and performance are mediocre or even drastically deficient. This applies to students of the humanities as well since the English language works in the same way in both domains.

However, using literature in language teaching was not deemed a theoretical approach in its own right. The relevant learning theoretical approaches have been described as grammar-translation, behaviourism, nativist approach (based on the cognitive innatist theory), the communicative approach, functional theory, among others. Each of these general approaches may use or ignore some methods and techniques of integrating literature in the teaching/learning process. The use of literary works has been considered just a method or a technique to be implemented when relevant to the objectives of a certain period. On the other hand, the practical experience of 'born teachers' instinctively drove them to introduce literary text in the classroom or recommend them to avid learners who actually manage to internalise the desired target language as if it is a mother tongue. This approach, integrating literary texts in the curriculum, has found strong support in neuro-scientific studies.

Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

The data used in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

[1] Anthony, E.M., 1963. Approach, method, and technique. ELT Journal. XVII(2), 63–67. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/XVII.2.63

[2] Richards, J.C., Rodgers, T.S., 2014. Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching, 3rd ed. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.

[3] Hilgendorf, S., Chapelle, C.A., 2020. History of Language-Teaching Methods. The Concise Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics. John Wiley & Sons Inc.: Hoboken, NJ, USA.

[4] Omaggio, A., 1993. Teaching Language in Context: Proficiency-Oriented Instruction, 2nd ed. Heinle & Heinle: Boston, MA, USA.

[5] Kramsch, C., Kramsch, O., 2000. The avatars of literature in language study. Modern Language Journal. 84(4), 533–573.

[6] Carter, R., 2007. Literature and language teaching 1986–2006: A review. International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature. 17(1), 3–13.

[7] Lee, J., VanPatten, B., 2003. Making Communicative Language Teaching Happen, 2nd ed. McGraw-Hill Education: Boston, MA, USA.

[8] Maley, A., 2012. Literature in Language Teaching. In: Alsagoff, L., McKay, S.L., Hu, G.W., et al., (eds.). Principles and Practices for Teaching English as an International Language. Routledge: London, UK. pp. 299–317.

[9] Maley, A., Kiss, T., 2018. Creativity and English Language Teaching: From Inspiration to Implementation. Palgrave Macmillan: London, UK.

[10] Russell, S.J., Norvig, P., 2022. Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach, 4th ed. Pearson Education Limited: London, UK.

[11] Schank, R.C., 1999. Dynamic Memory Revisited. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, UK.

[12] Schank, R.C., Abelson, R.P., 1995. Knowledge and Memory: the Real Story. In: Wyer, R.S., (ed.). Knowledge and Memory: The Real Story, 1st ed. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: Hillsdale, NJ, USA. pp. 1–85.

[13] Schank, R.C., 2015. Conversation-Based Search: How to Build an Intelligent Corporate Memory. Socratic Arts. Available from: https://www.rogerschank.com/conversation-based-search (cited 15 February 2024)

[14] Dewey, J., 1916. Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education. The Macmillan Company: New York, NY, USA.

[15] Whitehead, A.N., 1929. The Aims of Education and Other Essays. The Free Press: New York, NY, USA.

[16] Young, D., 2017. The Art of Reading. Scribe Publications: London, UK.

[17] Clark, C., 2013. A Novel Look at How Stories May Change the Brain. Emory University press release: Atlanta, GA, USA.

[18] Kemmerer, D., 2014. Cognitive Neuroscience of Language. Psychology Press: New York, NY, USA.

[19] Siegel, D.J., 2020. The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are. The Guilford Press: New York, NY, USA.

[20] Cohn-Sheehy, B.I., Delarazan, A.I., Reagh,Z.M., et al., 2021. The hippocampus constructs narrative memories across distant events. Current Biology. Available from: www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/09/210929112809.htm (cited 15 February 2024)

[21] Zull, J.E., 2011. From Brain to Mind: Using Neuroscience to Guide Change in Education. Stylus Publishing: Sterling, VA, USA.

[22] Dennett, D.C., 1987. The Intentional Stance. The MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, USA.

[23] Dennett, D.C., 2013. Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.: New York, NY, USA.

[24] Sparks, S.D., 2012. Neuroscientists Find Learning is Not 'Hard-Wired'. Education Week. 31(33), 1.

[25] Traynor, B.J., Singleton, A.B., 2010. Nature versus nurture: Death of a dogma, and the road ahead. Neuron. 68(2), 196–200. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2010.10.002

[26] Dizikes, P., 2010. 3 Questions: Evelyn Fox Keller on the nature-nurture debates. MIT News. Available from: https://news.mit.edu/2010/3q-keller-1129 (cited 15 February 2024)

[27] Dean, J., 2021. Why Nature vs. Nurture is a False Dichotomy. Developmental Psychiatry. Available from: https://developmentalpsychiatry.com/2021/08/03/why-nature-vs-nurture-is-a-false-dichotomy/ (cited 15 February 2024)

[28] Bobkina, J., Domínguez, E., 2014. The Use of Literature and Literary Texts in the EFL Classroom: Between Consensus and Controversy. International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature. 3(3), 248–260.

[29] Calafato, R., 2023. Literature in Language Education: Exploring Teachers' Beliefs, Practices, Creativity, and Literary Competence. Pedagogies: An International Journal. 19(1), 80–98. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1554480X.2022.2164500