Subjectivity and Objectivity in Literature Education in Foreign Language Teaching Programs
The Paradigms of Foreign Language Teaching and Literature

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Abstract

Literature education in foreign language teaching programs is the application which entails student-readers to perceive 'other' cultures via reading literary texts and to get intercultural communication. However, the most significant and awkward trouble for the teachers dealing with literature is the matters of subjectivity and objectivity in literature education which have been argued for many years. Solutions for such an argument need to be recommended by discussing the aims of the changing language teaching paradigms and literary theories.

This paper discusses the trends of foreign language teaching paradigms regarding the positioned situation of literature education in them and offers a solution for the dilemmas of subjectivity and objectivity in literature education by combining literary theories on a large scale.
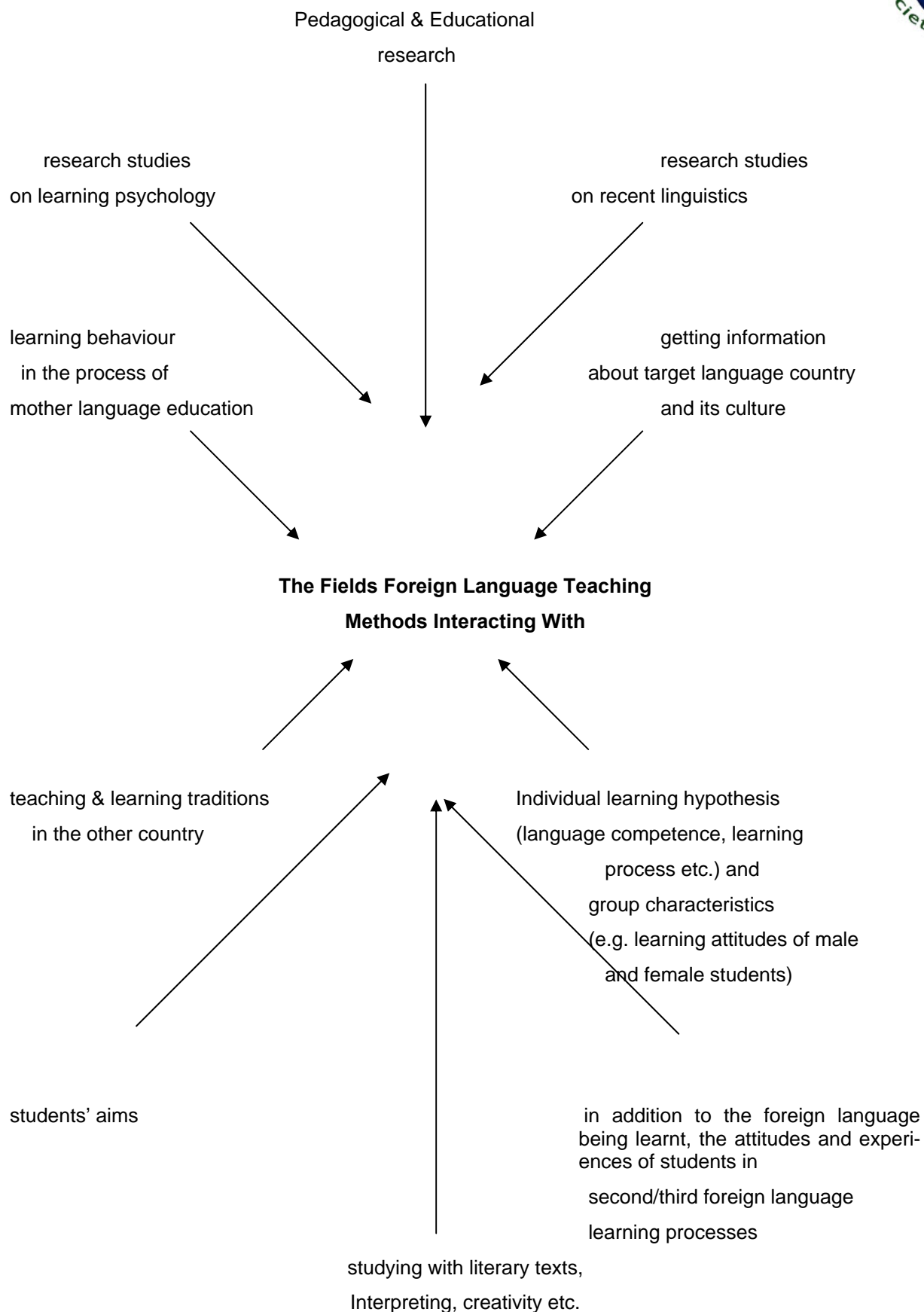
Background

Literary texts which combine external reality as row material for their interpretability are the rich language resources for being used in language teaching and learning environments. And student- reader is placed in an active interactional role in working with and making sense of these language-oriented materials (Brumfit and Carter, 1991)**.** For many years in foreign language teaching (FLT) programs, due to the methodological changes in FLT, literature education has become one of the goals. In this respect, the concepts that what the advantages of literature are in FLT and what the criteria for a better education are need to be questioned.

In the field of foreign language teaching, as the teaching goals are changed, new paradigms have appeared. Regarding the appropriated goals in FLT we can divide the phases in FLT as follows:

1. Language competence: it was an appropriated aim in FLT until 1960s. Audio –lingual method was the appropriated language teaching method.

2. Communicative Competence. It had been the valid aim by 1980s and communicative competence had been the valid method.

3. Cultural Competence: It has been effective since 1980s. In consequence of these trends in recent years, investigating and describing the concepts of "understanding in foreign language" have been the basic objectives. Depending on these objectives, the idea of developing reading skills in foreign language has been supported. The necessity of literature education has appeared in this context.

Following the paradigm changes in FLT, the scope of language teaching has been widened with the interaction of various other fields. Neuner and Cursisa (2001) outline these fields and FLT interaction in the following scheme:

Pedagogical & Educational

research

research studies
on learning psychology

research studies
on recent linguistics

learning behaviour
in the process of
mother language education

getting information
about target language country
and its culture

**The Fields Foreign Language Teaching
Methods Interacting With**

teaching & learning traditions
in the other country

Individual learning hypothesis
(language competence, learning
process etc.) and
group characteristics
(e.g. learning attitudes of male
and female students)

students' aims

in addition to the foreign language
being learnt, the attitudes and experi-
ences of students in

second/third foreign language

learning processes

studying with literary texts,

Interpreting, creativity etc.

As it is described, getting information about target language country and its culture occur as the product of studying with literary texts. In the process of foreign language learning, students interact with foreign cultures. In this sense, intercultural contrastive trends of students in foreign language learning enhance students to question both their own culture and other cultures. Therefore, literary texts are the rich sources for FLT environments.

The recent trends in language learning bring out paradigm changes in respect to learning theories. As it is known that if the current paradigm fails to explain the anomaly, a competing theory proves relatively successful in explaining the anomaly and it replaces the old paradigm. In other words, the adoption of a new paradigm necessarily establishes the creation of new research problems, methods, and expected results.

In this respect, in the field of foreign language learning, new paradigms have continuously appeared. One of the recent paradigms called constructivism is the core of such a paradigm shift. In this new paradigm, the outstanding consideration concerns the need of constituting a context in foreign language with the principles of "context and construction". Constructivism with the principle of accommodating the complementarities between individual construction and social interaction is articulated in contrast to the behaviourist model of learning. As it is known in 'behaviourist learning', which is the basis of the audio-lingual method, learning is conceived as a process of changing or conditioning observable behaviour as a result of an individual's response to stimuli that occur in his environment. In this model, the mind is seen as a tabula rasa to be filled. Learning, therefore, consists of gaining knowledge and teaching is to transmit knowledge objectively. In other words, what an educator transmits is acquired by students. In that case, teacher-centred teaching situation is the target of education and learners are passive in this approach. On the contrary, constructivism takes a more cognitive approach. From the constructivist perspective, learning is not a stimulus-response phenomenon. In this paradigm, learning emphasizes the process not the product; concept development with deep understanding is the challenge. Hence, learner-centred education makes a sense. Within the process, students' errors are seen as a means of gaining insights into how they are organizing their experimental world for both teachers and learners; errors, therefore, are seen as positive data. Learning process requires meaningful descriptions and productions. In constructivist learning process, in which goals and objectives are derived by students, metacognition, self-analysis and self-awareness are provided to encourage students; multiple perspectives of concepts are presented; collaborative and cooperative learning are favoured. This construction takes place in individual contexts through experiences.

In this context, reading skill is a constructivist process. Learners behave autonomously. Literature education, therefore, provides the necessary circumstances and opportunities in FLT for constructivist learning process.

It is well known that reading performance forces reader to grasp the deep structure of his consciousness and entails readers to interpret themselves as well. Now what is needed is to recognize that the process of reading is meaning creation by understanding and interpreting a written text. Many teachers may use literature to assist the development of competence in foreign language; some may include literary texts in order to teach foreign culture; on the other hand some may include literary texts for entailing self-awareness, self-consciousness in order to think critically (via stylistic or critical analysis of the texts). Literature now becomes a means for learning of differences between language varieties. While it is true that there can be no final reading of a literary text, each reader recognizes and interprets the texts in relation to the gained world experience. Thus, responding to literature is not a matter of basic understanding of the language of the text, but it is the significance of the text that is important to the good reader.

In addition, text selection ought to be done according to the language levels of the learners; and to define the purpose and the nature of the course is a must. Each reading performance is to produce a meta text process. Iser (1978: 65) states that "reading itself happens like an event, in the sense that what we read takes on the character of an open-ended situation, at one hand and the same time concrete and yet fluid". And Iser continues, "thus author and reader are to share the game of the imagination, and, indeed, the game will not work if the text sets out to be anything more than a set of governing rules". When a reader reads a text, the text becomes alive in the reading process. Then, what is the role of a teacher? In the reading community of the classroom, the teacher is naturally concerned with a sequence of activities and questions. Reader-response theories are subjective, but in a course, objectivity is the limitation of subjective attitudes as well. "What they do have in common is a focus on the readers' contribution to the same meaning of a text, and in that way they are seen to represent an assault of a sort on the traditional notion of literature as "expressive realism"-the notion that literature

is a reflection of the "real" world, that literary texts have single determinate meanings, and that the authority for their meanings lies with the author" (Gilbert, 1987). When we think of the concept of "author" in text communication, should we go beyond the reader-response theories? Since in text communication, namely narrative communication, not only reader and message are deliberately noted but also author needs to be taken account. Narrative communication has twofold functions as projection in which senders are positioned and as reception to which receivers correspond. Initially narrative communication occurs between real author and real reader. In the reading phase of the text, the second selves of both author and reader, namely implied author and reader, have intercommunication. Because any author does not project all his works with the same sense or any reader does not receive all narratives in the same sense. Projection and reception processes may vary depending on the mood or moment of authors or readers. Therefore, in this reality, it may not be possible to appraise literary teaching only in the direction of reader response theories. Since literary communication occurs among text, author, reader, and context, we cannot disregard one of these items in literature education process.

The major literary theories diverse methods for interpreting literary texts. Mario Klarer (1999) classifies literary theories with respect to their thematic items as follows:

Text	Author / Reader	Context
Biographical	Rhetoric	Literary History
Formalism	Reception	Marxist Literary Theory
Structuralism	Psychoanalytic	Feminist Literary Theory
Semiotics	Reader Response	New Historicism& Cultural
Deconstruction	Phenomenology	Studies

Regarding this classification, it cannot be assumed that any literary theory is alone important in reading process of literary texts. Each has different function while interpreting texts. When we inquire into the literary theories chronologically it is seen that each literary theory has displayed paradigmatic changes in the field of literary studies. Therefore, instead of employing one literary theory, a large scaled approach including certain principles of the literary theories may bring larger perspectives to literary studies and enhance creative readings. In this context, it is possible to make use of some clues of the 20th century literary theories in literature education. The mentioned literary theories can chronologically be determined and gathered in a large scaled literary theory for utilising in literature education. The theories can be divided into two parts as "text-oriented and reader-oriented theories".

Text-oriented Theories

The theories in the first half of the 20th century appeared as a reaction to the traditional theories that focused on the outer world and author as the determiners of literary texts. Russian Formalism defined literature as a system and divided into two categories as "canonized and peripheral literature". When a literary work includes "defamiliarization" items it is canonized; that is, the target goal of Russian Formalism is to define literary system. In literature education, it directs teachers while choosing the literary texts to be studied. New Criticism imposes on an objective vision literary studies. It claims that literary texts can be best understood by applying "close reading" practices. Since texts comprise meaning, literary devices such as ironies, metaphors, wits, images, motifs, symbols, etc need to be analysed and all ambiguities a text includes need to be resolved by close reading. It can be included into the suggested large scaled literary theory for imposing objectivity in literature education. Students may deal with the semantic tensions and literary devices closely -New Criticism, especially in poetry analysis represents a guide for student readers- (Davis, 1986; Dutton, 1986; Culler, 1986; Harland, 1999) Structuralism focuses on structures of texts. While New criticism can be widely applied on poems, structuralism can be followed for analysing narrative texts. The differentiation between surface structure and deep structure of texts noted by the structuralists may direct students to distinguish between the language level and meaning level of a text. The codes operating in a text and the relations among the sings in a text can be described in surface structure and the meaning behind the words can be analysed; thus, student readers may go through the deep structure of a text. By describing narrator and points of view located in a text, students can easily realize that in narrative communication, it is

mainly the voice of the narrator not of real author is heard. Besides characters can be identified by binary oppositions asserted by structuralists as sender-receiver, subject-object, etc.

After structuralism, i.e. after the 1960s, with the social trends new paradigms, as in all other fields, appeared in the field of literature. Until the1960s, text oriented approaches in literature had been widely viewed; however paradigmatic change was a must. In all fields of education, a tendency from modernism to postmodernism appeared. Individuals and the needs of individuals became more efficient in the new trends. This shift was also observed in literary theories and the reader-oriented theories have been stated.

Reader-oriented Theories

Among the reader-oriented theories, reception aesthetic theory is the most prominent one. It provides a meaningful way of discussing a text. It gives more freedom to a reader in front of a text; he recreates the text he reads; a substantial variety of responses to a text can be included to interpretation of it, and so on. Although in the field of literature education, reception aesthetics may lead to subjective attitudes, the freedom it gives to a reader cannot be disregarded (Selden, 1989). Literary semiotics, like reception aesthetic, focuses on the role of reader in interpretation process of a text. Although semiotics is often encountered in the form of textual analysis, it actually deals with the signifiers of the signs located on a text. Hence, a reader pragmatically interprets the sings within a text depending on the context of it. Since a literary work is identified as "open work" by semioticians, readers are expected to behave as interpreters and recreators of open works (Eco, 1979; Barthes, 1977). They are tasked to complete open areas in a text individually. Among the reader response theories, feminist criticism deals with the gender differences as senders and receivers of a text. In this context, both readers and authors are involved in literary communication in discourse level.

The reader response theories which are briefly mentioned here are the most beneficial theories in learner-centred literature education system. Because student readers may be directed to response to texts autonomously. They may behave more creatively and get the chance of interacting with each other in education process by discussing their responses.

In the field of literature education, students must be evaluated and graded according to their performances. But subjective attitudes in reader response theories may create troubles while evaluating students. Therefore, in literature education, both text-oriented and reader-oriented theories can be dealt with the clues they involve as mentioned under the headings of text-oriented and reader-oriented literary theories. In that way, outlining the subjectivity and objectivity in literature education, we, as educators, can use the literary theories in order to create learner-centred education environments. In addition, we know that literary texts reflect the facts of the outer world via senses of authors and poets. Hence, in reading and interpreting process of texts we cannot disregard the author-oriented theories such as biographical, psychoanalytic, phenomenology. The facts of the outer world are dealt within the literary theories such as literary history, Marxist literary theory, new historicism and cultural studies.

Conclusion and a Proposal for a Sample Literary Syllabus

When we think of constructivist approaches to language learning, multiple perspectives of literary theories may encourage students to construct knowledge in their attempts to make sense of their world by interacting with their environment. In literature education, subjective or objective attitudes have been questioned for many years. If we compare the similarities between constructivist learning theories and reader-oriented theories we can claim that both theories focus on the individual in learning process. The more autonomous an education system is, the more subjective it becomes. Therefore, objective attitudes need to be introduced to classroom environment. That can be best realized with the integration of all literary theories in accordance with students' needs. A concrete view on the integration of the mentioned literary theories can be suggested within a sample syllabus design:

As the initial phase, teachers select the literary texts regarding students' needs, language levels, cultural background, canonized literary system, and so on. Then, students read the given texts autonomously and receives the information in the direction of their reception stipulation (reader-oriented theories). They discuss the texts regarding their own interpretation. In this process, students behave cooperatively and in a collaborate way. In the later phase, students analyse the texts by using the clues presented in the texts and by analysing linguistic items on the surface structure of the text. In

that way, students can get the capability of using language they learn actively and consciously (text-oriented theories). Intertextual relations are taken into consideration (both text-oriented and reader-oriented theories). If necessary, students get information about the authors and poets of the texts (author-oriented theories). Context cannot be disregarded in this phase, because students may be involved in investigating what effects of the outer world have (the impacts of outer world). They are tasked to complete all the open areas in the texts by using the things told in the text via up and down readings. In that way, with the subjective and objective attitudes of the mentioned theories, literary communication and interaction can be created within constructivist view in literature education process.

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