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**Werner Delanoy, Maria Eisenmann and Frauke Matz (Eds.)**

***Learning with Literature in the EFL Classroom***

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**Reviewer**

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The title of this book, *Learning with Literature in the EFL Classroom*, states its purpose clearly. It is a topic that could not be more relevant at a time when literature has been, generally speaking, marginalised in foreign language classrooms under the narrow implementation of communicative and task-based methodologies favouring more ‘pragmatic’ types of reading texts and reinforcing language study as a mere functional skill. The aim of exploring the humanistic and educational value of literature is itself a highly valuable and praiseworthy undertaking in this volume. Moreover, in every chapter, the authors link their theoretical claims to finely developed work with concrete literary texts, illustrating the diversity of Anglophone literatures as an invaluable resource. All the chapters are written in English by academics from German-speaking countries, which may be of additional interest to non-German readers perhaps less familiar with bibliography in German on the subject of literature in the FL classroom.

The editors organise the eighteen chapters into five distinct sections, within a ‘post-theoretical’ approach, aiming to combine different perspectives, where the ‘foundation for teaching and learning literature is provided by a concept of reader response criticism which pays equal attention to texts and their respective readers, that is to say the communicative acts performed by both’ (p. 8). This valuable humanistic focus aims to address theoretical and practical concerns. These practical concerns, however, regard educators’ perspectives only – theory is not incorporated into empirically grounded FL learning. In other words, it does not shed light on how foreign language readers actually read and react to the stimulating proposals in the volume. In fact, empirical work on the actual readings by learner-readers remains an underexplored research area. In the introduction, the editors rightly maintain that while literary discourse can be empowering for learners, it provides

for the development of key areas: creativity, critical thinking and empathy for other people. Moreover, literature engages the reader both cognitively and emotionally, allowing for the promotion of intercultural learning, arguments explored before in prominent work by Bredella (2004a; 2004b) and others (see more recently, Bland, 2013; Nikolajeva, 2014).

In Part 1, 'Theories of Literature Teaching', Werner Delanoy and Laurenz Volkmann provide chapters on a theoretical, conceptual exploration and understanding of literature and the opportunities it offers in the EFL classroom. The authors articulate thought-provoking literary theoretical insights with pedagogical needs and practices. Delanoy underlines the centrality that interpretation plays in our lives in a globalized society where meanings must constantly be negotiated and discussed, drawing on several theoretical contributions, mostly based on reader-response criticism, accounting for how a dialogical interaction with the text can bring about meaning creation and transformation. Delanoy further clarifies that pedagogically, educators should consider the function of mediating between literary texts and readers, i.e. 'the function of tasks is to help learners engage with literature in aesthetically motivated, personally meaningful, and dialogue-friendly ways' (p. 29).

Volkmann's contribution could be considered as complementary to Delanoy's in that the author combines more specifically intercultural competence and literary literacy, exemplified by literary texts that offer critical incidents and encounters with alterity. While I would tend to disagree with the author's assertion that 'enhancement [through literary texts] of foreign language or communication skills is always intercultural learning per se' (p. 51), as it seems to rely solely on the potential of literature to develop interculturality, I totally subscribe to his claim stating that 'interpreting literature shares strong homologies with interpreting culturally different others' (p. 51), an argument more fully explored by Gonçalves Matos (2012).

The subsequent chapters are organized according to different learning levels: Part 2: Primary Level; Part 3: Intermediate Level and Part 4: Higher Level. Part 2 contains chapters by Margit Hempel and Janice Bland, who make a powerful case for authentic literary texts such as picturebooks and poems with primary EFL learners. Hempel underlines the cognitive and emotional learning potential of storytelling with picturebooks, providing opportunities for literary and visual literacy alongside language learning. Bland

examines how 'pleasurable repetition characterises the early language of childhood and children's literature' (p. 85), while noting children's opportunities for developing humour, cultural learning and empathy, as long as language is contextualised and meaningful through the classroom co-construction of storyworlds.

In Part 3, Carsten Albers sums up and elaborates on the advantages of using poetry in the intermediate EFL classroom, addressing the reasons why this potential has been neglected and offering suggestions for a different approach. The author illustrates with concrete poems the possibilities for developing language skills, cognitive understanding, literary appreciation, emotional understanding, and expressive creativity. Frauke Matz and Anne Stieger consider young adult novels and short fiction, demonstrating how these can become good friends of adolescent development, discussing text choice criteria and offering valuable reading suggestions. Carola Surkamp concentrates on 'playful learning with short texts', arguing for an action-oriented approach to work with this type of dramatic texts, underlining 'the visual and sensual [*sic*] experience' (p. 142) and highlighting the potential offered by interaction and non-verbal communication to stimulate empathy, creativity and to foster aesthetic, sociocultural and affective learning. Very importantly, '[learners] also gain the insight that social realities as well as individual and social identities are not given, inherent, and permanently fixed, but that they are rather products of continuously updated and modified actions that can be negotiated and therefore changed' (p. 143).

Part 4 addresses literature learning at a higher level and includes six contributions, focusing on different aspects of using literary texts, such as narrative competence and a toolkit to analyse short stories by Peter Freese; reading Shakespeare plays in contemporary times by Rüdiger Ahrens; the American Dream by Peter Freese; postcolonial literature by Maria Eisenmann; transcultural learning and global education by Laurenz Volkmann and dystopian novels by Frauke Matz. Through these varied lenses, we understand how reading contributes to our identity construction as readers by vicariously experiencing other perspectives and by temporarily living in secondary worlds. Freese's contribution on the American Dream seems to adopt a cultural studies approach and a wider concept of literature that the author, however, fails to account for, including several texts such as a few canonical literary texts, paintings, advertisements, cartoons, and pop songs to study the

topic. Eisenmann argues that the EFL classroom should include postcolonial literature to facilitate transcultural awareness by exploring Othering, exclusion, and working with Bhabha's 'third space' and 'in-betweenness' concepts. Volkmann further explores global issues and transculturalism through literary texts, covering teaching goals, competences, topic focus, text selection and tasks. Matz encourages the development of political awareness and critical thinking through dystopian novels according to eco-didactic principles to foster inter/transcultural competences in 21<sup>st</sup> -century learners.

The last section, Part 5: 'New Approaches and Future Perspectives for Literature Learning', is grounded on a reviewed, inclusive concept of literature and the canon, in view of the emerging technological developments that transform the reading process. The importance of the image (filmic, photographic, etc.) in our society justifies that the focus on written texts could be broadened so as to include a more open and inclusive definition of 'text' (see Pegrum, 2008). Wolfgang Hallet describes the features of multimodal novelistic narration and demonstrates multiliterate reading with examples. Christian Ludwig investigates the multi-dialogical process of autographics in the EFL classroom, combining the development of language competences with inter/transcultural competence and other curricular requirements. Nancy Grimm and Julia Hammer show how educational apps can be used to work with literature creatively and interactively. As the editors point out, two traditional boundaries of ELT and literature are crossed in the final contributions, where Gabriele Blell argues for the inclusion of plurilingual literature, movies and other forms of art production that show creative potential. Here multilingualism is seen as a rich resource for linguistic, literary and cultural learning in a globalized world. Finally, René Schalleger attempts to draw attention to digital media and the educational use of videogames, claiming that the motivational force of these media can meet the needs of a new generation that has developed different ways of thinking and interacting with others. However, the need to account for digital media as included in the concept of 'literature' in the title of this volume is not addressed, which could be seen as less satisfactory, although it does not diminish the very relevant overall contribution of the book.

In sum, this book is certainly a most relevant proposal for the renewed use of literature in the EFL classroom, in that it provides educators with innovative, motivating and relevant proposals within a suitable theoretical framework. The examples given are

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rich in the (inter)cultural and sociolinguistic exploration of literature, making a case for the crucial significance of learning with literature in our challenging times of globalisation, migration and international de-territorialized communication. Overall, it offers finely developed ideas and activities for language educators in the field: academics, language teachers, university students and student teachers of EFL, particularly those more aware of an approach focusing on language *education* rather than on language learning.

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