



International Journal of
MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

ISSN: (Print) ISSN 1987-9601

(Online) E ISSN 1512-3146

Journal homepage: <http://multilingualeducation.org/>

Approaches to teaching literature in higher education – international experience

Manana Nizharadze

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi
State University, Georgia

Email: manana.nizharadze@tsu.ge

To cite this article: Manana Nizharadze (2023): Approaches to teaching literature in higher education – international experience: International Journal of Multilingual Education, #22; DOI:10.22333/ijme.2023.22000; pp. 25-33.

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.22333/ijme.2023.22003>

Manana Nizharadze

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Approaches to teaching literature in higher education – international experience

ABSTRACT

Discussion of literature teaching models in higher educational institutions, understanding, and sharing of foreign experience is an exciting and topical issue from the point of view of objectively critical assessment of reality and development opportunities in the modern educational space focused on understanding the importance of knowledge transfer skills, student-oriented and interdisciplinary teaching. The scientific article includes an analysis of the practice of teaching literature based on foreign studies (analysis of the concepts and methodologies of teaching literature). Thus, this article presents an overview of research in the international scientific space (2018-2022), which reflects the diverse approaches and methods of teaching literature in higher education.

Keywords: *Literature, Teaching Models, Methodological Models, Teaching Literature*

Introduction

The twenty-first century is a time of rapid and continuous changes; in this regard, the education system is no exception. Terms such as constant learning, distance learning, competency-based learning, and learning without being separated from work are increasingly active in the educational space. In the conditions of developed technologies, new economic reality, and globalization, increased attention is paid to knowledge transfer and acquisition of the ability to use in practice. In the modern educational space, it is necessary to have multifaceted knowledge of the issue, synthesis of knowledge beyond disciplines, in-depth access and identification of the problem, correct analysis and evaluation, systematic thinking, argumentative reasoning formation, so humanities, in particular, philology and subjects focused on the teaching of literature appears as one of the essential prerequisites for the development of skills mentioned above.

According to the researchers, the last 50 years have changed our perception of how knowledge is structured and learning processes, the importance of conceptual transfer, how the brain works, how to create different learning environments for diverse students, and how to provide them with effective

teaching methods. A valuable toolbox of strategies helps students metacognitively analyze their thought processes. The key is implementing strategies that respect students' intelligence and help them consciously apply knowledge and skills to construct conceptual schemes. Thus, at all stages of education, the need to develop critical thinking, independent learning, problem-solving, and decision-making comes to the fore. Accordingly, the introduction of appropriate teaching approaches and methods was on the agenda, which made the broader use of inductive methods relevant (Stern, 2017, 2-3).

1. The main theoretical foundations used in the process of teaching literature:

Theoretical models nurture the learning process and largely determine the specifics of its conduct because the basis of learning practice is the point of view of how to arrive at knowledge. Combining theories and methods determines the methodological foundations that generate teaching forms and models. The following theoretical models are distinguished within the framework of many studies: constructivism, progressive education theory, humanistic theory, cognitive development theory, structuralism, sociocultural learning theory, transfer theory, formal theory of teaching, descriptive theory of pedagogy, and normative theory of education. In the process of teaching literature subjects and in the process of comparative or hermeneutic analysis of the text and recognizing the metalanguage and subtext, specialists often use the theory of feminist criticism (ideas produced within the framework of feminism and gender studies), new historicism, the theory of psychoanalysis, racial, ethnic and postcolonial, social and Cultural studies (trauma) theories, reader-response theory, text or student-centered theoretical models (Wurth, 2019, 336).

2. We highlight three main methodological models reviewed based on foreign studies: 3 main models of literature teaching are presented: the cultural, language, and personal growth model. The language model is associated with the paraphrastic, stylistic, and language-based approach, and the personal growth model is associated with the unique and moral philosophical system.

The cultural model of teaching literature – students discover and conclude a text's social, political, and historical context. This approach reveals the universality of thoughts and ideas, allowing students to learn about different cultures and ideologies. Within this approach, literature is viewed as a source of facts or information to be imparted by the lecturer to the student. It emphasizes the role of literature in values, ideas, and knowledge accumulated in a culture over a historical period.

The language model of teaching literature – offers students the opportunity to approach the text systematically and methodically. It integrates language and literature as a source of learning to improve the student's language skills. It uses literature to study different functions of language, such as grammar, vocabulary, and language structures. The language model includes a paraphrastic approach,

a stylistic approach, and a language-based approach. The paraphrastic method primarily paraphrases and reformulates the text in more straightforward language. Students use simple words or less complex sentence structures to make the original text easier to understand. This model helps students to interpret the text and develops language awareness and knowledge. A language-based approach allows students to pay attention to how language is used in studying literature. The following techniques are used: role play, discussions, forum and debate, drama activities, brainstorming, story completion, and summarization.

The personal growth model of teaching literature - focuses on the student's personal development, emotions, and unique characteristics. This model requires students to relate literary texts, themes, and issues discussed to personal life experiences. The cultural model includes a personal responsibility and moral-philosophical approach that allows students to develop and connect language, personal interests, worldview, character, and emotions.

Accordingly, within the framework of the three main methodological models mentioned above, not only stylistic, paraphrastic, language, and information-based teaching is distinguished, but also personal response (students' response reflects the worldview of the author. Students discuss texts in the light of their experiences and personal life analogies). They apply brainstorming, small group discussions, journal writing, and a moral-philosophical approach (focused on discovering moral values, ethical dilemmas, character thinking systems, and the person on principles in reading a specific literary text).

Critical literacy's main purpose is to enable students to identify the effects of naturalization and to understand how and why the "status quo" is presented as self-evident and unchanging. Critical literacy helps to expand students' critical awareness of the role of language in social relations and power in terms of generation, maintenance, and change. Another frequently discussed approach to literary analysis is New Criticism (direct observation of such formal elements as rhyme, meter, imagery, and theme).

Some examples of interesting methodological approaches and teaching techniques used in the process of teaching the selected literature within the framework of the study of international experience:

1. Scholars and lecturers believe that the Internet can be an essential source of creativity when facilitating discussions and debates about the moral dilemmas at the heart of superb literary works. By creating a forum or "comment section" to discuss the analyzed novels and based on a thorough analysis of the impact of modern technology on the process of teaching literature, the

researchers try to define the position of literature in the 21st century and indicate its importance in terms of the mental, emotional and moral development of students. This approach allows studying biographies, life stories, interests, works, and characters of interesting authors according to social media. In the form of practical activities, students are asked to document their findings (in the form of notes, charts, and diaries, as well as creative essays, reviews, and analyses), collect and analyze data: authors' sites, sources, biographical moments, facts, social networks, published information, articles, Studying and evaluating videos and interviews and writing a one- or two-page Analysis (Skobo, 2020, 87-90).

According to Scholes, the teaching of literature should not propose a flow of information, It should help students develop specific skills. Studying literature, especially in the first two years, should base on three skills: reading, interpretation, and criticism. Students read the literary text and give an immediate response based on their sensibility and experience. They can also be engaged in writing activities. Rewriting and manipulating literary texts can favor the internalization of meaning because students acquire a deeper penetrating knowledge of the elements that constitute the literary text. The second and much more important step is interpretation because students ought to question themselves about what kind of messages the literary text suggests. They read the text in close reading and then they proceed to cultural connections and contexts. Criticism, as a final stage, is related to the reading of the literary text from ideological and pedagogical perspectives (Manzollilo, 2016, 2-4).

The instrument used to achieve all this is the communication software that enables people to interact outside of the classroom in online environments such as chatrooms, forums, and videoconferences. Thomas Barker and Frank Kemp believe that this is the ideal basis for a new postmodern pedagogy that reflects contemporary worldviews and creates a model in which all members participate equally and learn together. The website <http://www.learningliterature.it/> was initiated at the University of Salerno to support the first two years of a three-year English literature degree. The website includes two interactive areas: one for informal conversation among students and the other for didactic purposes. "Today that means a student may connect to Jane Eyre through the voice, sounded on the air by a best friend's smart speaker, of a favorite actor, Thandie Newton, whose association with the film adaptation of *Beloved*, enjoyed with that same friend a few months earlier, triggers an enthralling effect of Morrisonian resonance in the Brontë novel. We make an error of theory but also one of pedagogical practice when we treat these new, complex yet determining mediations of literary experience as just so much noise" (English, 2020, 425).

2. Specialists offer us examples of interpretative consideration of Shakespeare's work in terms of psycho-philosophical doctrines presenting moral-ethical collisions: connecting

Shakespeare's work with Kant's thought, which highlights the interpretative problem: how Shakespeare's representation of Roman society asks us to consider the effect of ideal, universal concepts of "duty" on the concrete historical suffering of individuals and groups in context. For example, the interpretive problem of *King Lear*: how Shakespeare's political and family devolution drama explores the role of emotion as human "sympathy" in shaping virtuous action and social justice in an unjust world. Also, connecting Martha Nussbaum's "Rational Emotions" and *Romeo and Juliet* with an interpretive problem—how does a judgment that considers both individual and collective interests in justice, such as fair treatment, help us talk about the world of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which historical forms of social hierarchy such as gender, Age, and rank determine a person's relationship with others. Those interpretations provide students to explore their own beliefs about and experiences of “knowing” suffering and loss—and the effects of art on those views. This generates crucial questions about the relationship between literary tragedy and actual human loss. Students share how they define tragic literature. As they articulate their preconceptions of formal tragedy, someone inevitably asserts that literary tragedies explore the “fate” of tragic heroes determined by their “fatal flaw.” This allows students to consider its consequences for their sense of the power of the literary imagination as a tragic form and the relation between self and others at the heart of ethical theory (Metzger, 2019, 116).

So, this course involves interpreting Shakespeare's tragedies in light of specific ethical theories. Below, there is a list of the pairings of the course and their specific interpretive problems:

“Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (on virtue and justice) and *The Rape of Lucrece*. Interpretive problem: How do the diverging testimonies of the narrator, the rapist Tarquin, and Lucrece challenge us to consider how cultural experience, point of view, and systemic power create or negate the possibility of virtuous auditors and justice as action or equity?

Kant's “Transition from the Ordinary Rational Knowledge of Morality to the Philosophical” and *Coriolanus*. Interpretive problem: How does Shakespeare's representation of Roman society ask us to consider the effects of ideal, universal notions of “duty” in the context of the particular, historical suffering of individuals and groups?

Hume's “Of the Influencing Motives of the Will” and *King Lear*. Interpretive problem: How does Shakespeare's drama of political and familial devolution explore the role of emotion as human “sympathy” in the construction of virtuous action and social justice in an unjust world?

Martha Nussbaum's “Rational Emotions” and *Romeo and Juliet*. Interpretive problem: How do judgments that consider both individual collective interests in justice as an equitable treatment aid us in negotiating the world of *Romeo and Juliet*, in which historical forms of social hierarchy such as gender, age, and rank determine one's relation to others?

Patricia J. Williams' "The Obliging Shell" and Othello. Interpretive problem: How does Shakespeare represent the challenges of social justice in a world of historical oppression established by categorical fantasies of racial purity and pollution?" (Metzger, 2019, 118-119).

Also, teaching Shakespeare through translated versions and performative possibilities helps students to discover how the same speech can be used to perform. Students annotate the text and video clips and ask and share questions. They no longer encounter Shakespeare as a curated, editorialized, pre-processed narrative, but as a network of interpretive possibilities. Students learn to listen for motives behind stories, rather than the plot of the narrative. Students analyze performances and dramatic texts to change the present. "By foregrounding the linkage between early modern English drama and contemporary ideologies in global contexts, we address 'the ways the past is at work in the exigencies of the present [including] the long arc of ongoing processes of dispossession under capitalism. In pedagogical practice, this means fostering connections among seemingly isolated instances of political and artistic expression. It is paramount, in a time of hate, to cultivate the ability to recognize multiple, potentially conflicting, versions of the same story. Unambiguous, clean, and sanitized, singular narratives usually occur during a dark moment in history. Teaching Shakespeare through translated versions and performative possibilities draws attention to dramatic ambiguities and choices that directors must make. In dramaturgical terms, it helps students to discover how the same speech can be used to perform . . . radically divergent speech acts" (Joubin, 2021, 18-25).

During analyzation of any literary text, we can use the Vicarious learning technique, when a student reads a story, a poem, etc. This tool is also called the "story teaching approach," in which a story or incident is presented. For example, when discussing the play "Romeo and Juliet," which develops against the background of violence and interpersonal conflicts, we can use not only family feuds but also civil wars, rebellions, revolutions, disputes between states and people, personal alienation, wrong social Analysis of the dilemmas that present the breakdown of structures and identity. Or we can implement a Metaphorical game when students solve a problem. In the first stage, the teacher fixes the educational (research) problem, which turns the problematic situation into a psychological dilemma. In the second stage, students will be divided into two competitive groups and begin to work out ways and methods to solve the problem. The third stage is the final meeting when students publicly defend the developed solutions. Informational, research, creative, and applied projects can be implemented within this format. Metaphorical play is aimed at developing new activities and changing behavioral attitudes. The main goal of the extended game is for students to find a new way to solve the problem (Carvalho, 2021, 6-8).

3. The University of Zagreb offers students a course in Canadian literature presented in the English curriculum as an alternative to the well-established Anglophone canons of American

and British literature to introduce students to the Western genre and contemporary Canadian literature in English from the point of view of its specific socio-historical context. The Canadian context offers students new reading strategies and paradigms that allow them to recognize that narratives are constantly shifting sites of production and reception, be they literary, political, economic, or ideological. Students analyze how the traditional Western genre has been transformed into a postmodernist text, in this case, most notably historiographical metafictional, and ecocritical. Students critically examine the history of national identity, multiculturalism, and myth-making. Finally, they must complete a small research project and a 3,000-word research paper on a topic of their choice (Polić, 2020, 272-275).

Katherina Dodou provides an interesting analysis at Sweden University about the value of studying literature: In so far as conceptions of literature were made known in syllabi, the predominant understanding imparted that literary works are complex responses to particular intellectual, material, and cultural conditions. Students were expected to apply knowledge about literary and historical periods and their characteristic features. It meant regarding literature as mirroring, inquiring into, or intervening in societal practices. Some syllabi, at the MA level especially, were explicit about their assumptions concerning literature. “These formulations suggest that literature was regarded as providing unique insights into cultural mentalities and a host of social, political, ethical, and intellectual matters” (Dodou, 2020, 272).

Conclusion

In several scientific works dedicated to new challenges, current problems, or teaching literature, similar trends, and approaches have been identified and confirmed, which reflect the peculiarity of literature-oriented subjects, the form of transmission of artistic works, and the teaching process. For example, we will often meet representatives of various literary currents (symbolism, impressionism, expressionism, futurism, avant-garde), writers, and poets against the background of painting and photography samples. It is an accepted and established standard to compare and contrast stories, novels, or novels with films and staged performances based on these works, which makes the work of this or that author even easier to remember, perceive, engaging, relevant, and impressive, and, most importantly, allows students to ask open questions, discuss and interpret texts in a variety of ways. Also, a comparative analysis is often used - comparing authors of different eras, literary schools, cultures, and ethnic groups and their works, ideas, problems, artistic systems, worldviews, writing styles, and characters.

In scientific or educational books and textbooks, research, and articles, we will repeatedly meet the discussion of the works of writers and poets in the context of such psychophilosophical theories as, for example, identity models - psychosocial and national identity - Erik Erikson's "self-identification crisis" and "mirror metaphor," Marsha's four statuses of identity, or according to Carl Gustav Jung's archetypes, Sigmund Freud and Julia Kristeva's psychoanalysis. The discussion of literary works is often based on highlighting the importance of female authors, female writing, female characters, female voice, and the national, historical, cultural, socio-political, or intimate subtext behind it in terms of feminist criticism of Simone de Beauvoir, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Kate Miller. Also, to identify social, cultural, and psychological traumas, the national context, and the ideological worldview professors often use socio-cultural theories (B. Anderson, P. Berks, E. Gellner, A. Smith, S. Jones, L. Greenfield, and J. Hartman).

Thus, in teaching literature, educational activities should be selected accordingly and based on active learning principles to develop critical thinking. It is essential to choose activities related to the actual context whenever possible - direct observation of the phenomenon, reflective thinking, service learning, journaling/reports, and dialogue in or outside the audience. Lecturers should be guided by pedagogical methods that enable students to use visual, collaborative, and experiential learning strategies. Knowledge construction, or the creation of a cognitive schema, allows the student to absorb new knowledge in the context of existing knowledge. Thus, students should be involved in such activities as collecting data, processing information, defining issues, naming problems, creating hypotheses, analytical and argumentative thinking, multifaceted demonstration of their abilities, individual and group work, applying the acquired knowledge in practice, and Confirmation of written competence.

References

Bezanilla, M., J., Nogueira, D., F., Poblete, M., 2019, Methodologies for teaching-learning critical thinking in higher education: The teacher's view. *Thinking Skills and Creativity* (Vol. 33), 2-

8.

- Carvalho, A., Jesus, S., Olim, L., Campanella, S., 2020, Pedagogical innovation in higher education and active learning methodologies – a case study. *Education and Training: Emerald Publishing Limited*, 3-12.
- Celso, P., 2021, Teachers' approaches in teaching literature in the New Normal. *International Journal of Science and Research (Vol. 10)*, 879-881.
- Dodou, K., 2020, The value of studying literature: a review of the English higher education Curriculum in Sweden. *Nordic Journal of English Studies (19(1))*, 257-298.
- English, J., F., 2020, *Teaching the novel in the audio age*, Cambridge University Press, 419-425.
- Giese, L., 2021, *Teaching Shakespeare Online. Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England (Vol. 34)*, Published by: Rosemont Publishing & Printing Corp DBA Associated University Presses, 157-162.
- Joubin A., A., Starks, L., S., 2021, *TEACHING SHAKESPEARE IN A TIME OF HATE*. Cambridge University Press, 18-28.
- Manzolillo, M., 2016, *Teaching Literature through Online Discussion in Theory and Practice*. Purdue University Press (Vol. 18), 2-4.
- Metzger, M., J., 2019, *Shakespearean Tragedy, Ethics, and Social Justice*. Edinburgh Univeristy Press, 115-122.
- Olo, D., Correia, L., Conceição, R., 2021, Higher education institutions and development: missions, models, and challenges. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research (12 (2))*, 4-19.
- Parojenog, R., G., 2020, Approaches In teaching literature employed by senior high school teachers. *IOER International Multidisciplinary Research Journal (Vol. 2, NO. 2)*, 55-56.
- Polic, V., 2020, *Teaching Western Canadian Literature in the Croatian Context A Case Study*. University of Nebraska Press, 272-275.
- Skolo, M., 2020, *MODERN TECHNOLOGIES IN TEACHING LITERATURE*. Sinteza Publications, 98-90.
- Stern, J., Ferraro, K., Mohnkern, J., 2017, *Tools for Teaching Conceptual Understanding, Secondary Designing Lessons and Assessments for Deep Learning*. SAGE Publications, 2-3.
- Teixeira, S., J., 2021, Pedagogical innovation in higher education and active learning methodologies – a case study. *Emerald Publishing*, (7–8).
- WURTH, B., K., 2019, *LITERATURE AND POSTCOLONIAL CRITICISM*. Amsterdam University Press, 336.