

# The Use of Literary Texts in Teaching French as a Foreign Language to Engineer Students: A Linguistic and Cultural Challenge (The Case of Engineer Students at Polytechnique Privée d'Agadir)

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The use of literary texts in the language classroom is a common practice given the variety of themes explored in the literature and semantic richness offered in the texts carefully prepared by their producers. Thus, for teaching FFL (French as a foreign language) at a university and in technical training for learners, literature is essentially made of words elegantly arranged, fairly complex sentences, etc. Taken together, these components make easier the construction of meaning.*

*With the proliferation of intercultural contacts between Moroccans and sub-Saharanans, the development of intercultural competence is also becoming a priority in the teaching and learning of the FFL. In this context, the teaching of literary texts aims to prepare students for multiple interactions and to become aware of the existence of other social groups, other peoples, other cultures around the French literature and culture. The objective of this paper is to analyze the forms of exploitation of the literary text as a teaching tool, especially to study the impact of learning French as a foreign language on cultural awareness and the effect of teaching strategies on the development of intercultural communication.*

**Keywords:** *Didactics of FFL - Text - Literary Competence - Mediated Intercultural Communication - Culture.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Becoming more and more powerful, techniques provide great advances in everyday life, in the future of our society and its environment, but they also carry the risk of heavy nuisances.

Moreover, while their complexity makes them difficult to understand, and the power of information increases, misinformation can lead public opinion to exaggerated feelings of safety, baseless psychosis and irrational fears. Engineers have to assume, therefore, an essential and dual role in society, first in the mastery of these techniques in the service of the human community, and also in the dissemination of information on their real possibilities and limitations and in the evaluation of the benefits and risks they generate. Because, specific to the characteristics of their profession, engineers

have a marked behavior of scientific rigor, it becomes increasingly imperative that they have training in humanities studies through the study of languages including French as foreign Language.

However, the current lack of interest in humanities and its limited importance in their training, the question of the status of literature in teaching FFL to students such as engineering students rises.

In the early years of the twentieth century, new needs in terms of communication led scholars to reconsider the learning of foreign languages. Moreover, the didactic reflection carried out during this century led to excluding the literary text of classroom practices. The priority given to oral activities in several methodologies and the ideological heritage of literary texts and their difficulty, are some of the factors that have pushed away the methodological discourse. In spite of this, in many classes, teachers had no choice but to continue to use them, because if they had no consistent teaching materials with recent methodological requirements and nothing was proposed at advanced levels. Therefore, teachers returned to the literary text and the methodology they had themselves known in their learning.

Literature and its importance has always been a matter of great debate, especially in the context of teaching FFL. Working on literature in FFL classes with science students is a choice and an exercise of thought and logic that fits the context.

During the 1970s, the communicative approach led to new classroom practices and pedagogical use of new media. The teacher became freer, they could choose the documents they presented to learners, and the introduction of authentic materials in the classroom provided an extra source of motivation.

The literary text finds its place among these authentic documents after a few years, but its image is often linked to the traditional method, the grammar - translation activities that no longer correspond to the communicative approach. We must rethink the teaching of literary texts and different theoretical works will be published in this goal. It would still wait till the second half of the 1990s that textbooks have some literary texts. Currently, the educational value of the exploitation of the literary text in FFL is acquired.

The use of literary texts in the language classroom is a common practice given the variety of themes explored in the literature and the semantic richness carefully elaborated by the producers of texts. Thus, for teaching FFL at the university and in technical trainings for engineering students learners, literature is essentially adequate as it is made of words elegantly arranged, fairly complex sentences, learned phrases, etc. Taken together, these components facilitate the construction of meaning.

With the proliferation of intercultural contacts between Moroccans and sub-Saharanans, the development of intercultural competence is also becoming a priority in the teaching and learning of the FFL. In this context, the teaching of literary texts strives to prepare students for multiple interactions and to make them aware of the existence of other social groups, other peoples, other cultures around the French literature and culture.

The objective of this paper is to analyze the forms of exploitation of the literary text as a teaching tool, especially to study the impact of learning French as a foreign language on cultural awareness and the effect of education on the development of intercultural communicative competence strategies.

Literature and the teaching of languages are closely linked. However, in the discrepancies of teaching methodologies, literature seemed to lose its place, but just to find later other perspectives,

combined with other objectives. Yet, as a FFL teacher for science learners, I felt that there is a gap between teaching literary texts and teaching French as a speaking technique.

Issue:

If we consider these classes, we will realize the importance of literary texts as a teaching tool because the prospects of education are different from those of literary classes. What are the representations of teaching literature in communication classes?

This module is a two-hour course of practical work: a volume of 56 hours in total. At the end of this module, the student will be able to control methodologies adapted to the teaching and learning of French. The course is structured around three objectives: strengthening of linguistic and communicative skills of students, acquiring certain argumentation techniques and developing analytical and synthetic processes.

Parallel to the objectives of the course, students develop skills needed to carry out communicative activities. Hence, we should use an appropriate pedagogical approach to learning writing and speaking, as well as ensure to enrich their vocabulary in all uses of language for both scientific and technical use.

Instructional materials and the formula used allow learners to adopt a learning -based approach relying on collaboration, communication, and individual and team work. These teaching methods bring to manage time flexibly in a structured way and to respect the rhythm of the course.

During this course, students are expected to perform various readings. They will also apply their knowledge through exercises and attach the strings linking theory to practice. General knowledge is essential

The school pedagogy targets clarity and relevance, critical thinking, and oral and written performance. But obviously the talents and temperaments in this area are incredibly diverse.

Teaching literature in this context is not to teach knowledge as physics, mechanics or automatics, or transmit an art like the piano or painting. It is more of a modest attempt to convey taste refining and the ability to think and develop an analytical mind.

## **2. TOWARDS A BETTER TEACHING OF FFL:**

This taste and ability are known to contribute to the training of the engineer as a citizen and make them a better person.

However, the practice of literary reading and the production of scientific knowledge do not overlap. So, the literature has given its name e in this science context to become «French for technical and ethical purposes". Can it serve as a transitional link to a humanistic enrichment? What should be expected of this teaching of French both as a «human sciences" within a “pure science” context? And Why?

## **3. WHY LITERATURE?**

The literary text has long been used in learning FFL whatever the methodology used might be.

For example, in the grammar - translation method, we seek only to teach grammar on the basis of the literary text because of its formal, highly sophisticated and erudite character.

As to the methodological development, it should also be noted that it begins to give more importance to communication and the functionality of the language. Thus, the direct method, the structural method, or the audio lingual method have almost led to the complete disappearance of the literary text as a didactic tool in the acquisition of the FFL.

Yet, it would be useful to see how we can take advantage of the literary text in the FFL class: Our learner -future engineer- is the best choice to deal with the literary text as an authentic document where he can see and harmonize all a set of knowledge he knows through the study of other subjects.

Moreover, the engineering student looks ideal for working with the literary text because its horizon of expectation is very high and, because he already shows a good level of reading and logic. So, it is not worth it to guide his reading. Instead, it is useful to make him aware of his own comprehension strategies in French.

This reading skill accordingly allows us to reflect on the intercultural dimension.

### **The choice of literary text, an intercultural challenge:**

From this point of view, one of the first activities being proposed with a literary text is the reading activity. To promote creativity and the relationship of text to the reader, we propose several texts asking learners to read and choose a text to work deeply on.

This freedom of choice is very convenient if one takes into account that we can later ask the learner to explain in a reasoned way why he chose this text.

Then, the activity of reading a literary text allows us to work on writing, comprehension and oral production. At the same time, we can facilitate intercultural interaction with other learners of subSaharan origin who can discuss with ease and without any culture shock. The aesthetic and universal dimensions of the text make it accessible and allow the knowledge or at least the desire to know the culture of another language. It seems, in our opinion, a very attractive trait in terms of learning a foreign language.

In the end, it the work is based on the intercultural competence of the reading of the engineering student, a skill that must be very rich in the university context when considering his language proficiency, his knowledge of the world, his socio-cultural experience, his personal reading strategies he has developed, his discursive competence in the mother tongue and French, all the readings he has already made , etc. .

As for writing, it would be recommended that the activities we should offer would enhance the creativity and autonomy of the learner. Thus, we can ask him to do summaries and reading cards, explaining argumentative strategies on his choice...

### **The engineer takes into account the human, social and economic factors of society:**

It has been noticed that the reading and writing of literary texts reinforce the freedom and creativity of the learner, but they produce an interaction of knowledge in that they serves to realize the high degree of intercultural potential.

The training of future engineers should not simply rely on technological elements and rational criteria, it must also take into account through appropriate societal qualities, cultural aspects of all kinds of society where he would work, including professional, social and environmental standards.

From this point of view, the learner must take into account their knowledge in a variety of fields (literature, French language, native language, culture and civilization, etc. . )

It is very advantageous therefore to organize workshops in reading class and to work sometimes on the reading skill and other times on the writing skill.

#### 4. THE WOULD BE ENGINEER:

The engineering student is a responsible citizen who must ensure the link between science, technology and the human community; he is involved in civic action for the common good. He shares his knowledge and transmits his experience to society. He registers his actions in a process of "sustainable development". He regularly updates his knowledge and skills according to the evolution of science and technology. He listens to his partners, he knows how to admit mistakes and learn from them lessons for the future. He is therefore open to other disciplines.

**Autonomy:** An engineering student must perform some work in a given time. The engineer organizes his work and daily schedules based on the business he or she must deal with...

**Creativity:** The engineering student applies analytical skills, creativity, communication combined with strong technical skills.

**Diversities:** With a very diverse training, the engineer can perform a variety of jobs during his career according to their choices and opportunities that arise.

**Human relationships:** An engineer works in a team or with other engineers or with other business teams (sales team, finance team, marketing team) this is a very rewarding profession. An engineer communicates with people from different functions and cultures. Sometimes he works in different sectors (banking, commerce, industry,); the engineer is involved in diverse business life.

#### 5. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, we would like to conclude this article by highlighting once again the profitable nature of literary texts as a teaching tool in the classroom as a means of teaching FFL and making suitable the intercultural dimension of teaching a foreign language.

It goes without saying that the philological context proposes a model of an ideal learner, his reading skills are considerable, and his rich horizon of expectation and knowledge in several subjects allow him to enjoy the exercise of language that he offers in all its dimensions. In addition the fact of not guiding the reading of the learner and giving him the chance to freely manipulate the text seems a very profitable strategy to enhance creativity and interaction of learners. The teacher, as a mediator must not remain on the sidelines of the treatment and handling of the literary text; however, he will provide the learner with the tools he may need to get him to enjoy as possible the literary text based on his intellectual baggage.

Thus, at the same time of learning the French language, he will realize that learning a language is not only a linguistic challenge since it is also a intercultural.

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