

IMPROVING STUDENTS' COMMUNICATION SKILLS THROUGH TEACHING FOREIGN LITERATURE

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Abstract: Teaching foreign literature in EFL classrooms offers more than cultural knowledge: it creates authentic, meaningful contexts for interaction, promotes critical thinking, and supplies rich lexical and pragmatic input that learners can use in spoken and written communication. When combined with task-based activities (literature circles, role-play, dramatization, debates), literary texts stimulate negotiation of meaning, encourage learner talk, and foster fluency and interactive competence. This article reviews theoretical rationales, classroom practices, and evidence supporting literature-based approaches to improve students' communication skills.

Преподавание зарубежной литературы в курсах английского как иностранного предоставляет не только культурные знания: оно формирует аутентичные коммуникативные ситуации, развивает критическое мышление и обеспечивает богатый лексико-прагматический материал для устной и письменной речи. В сочетании с задачей-ориентированными активностями (литературные кружки, драматизация, дебаты) литературные тексты стимулируют переговоры смысла и способствуют беглости и интерактивной компетентности учащихся. Статья рассматривает теорию, практики и эмпирические данные.

Chet adabiyotini o'qitish EFL-sinfxonalarida faqat madaniy bilim bermaydi: u haqiqiy mulqot vaziyatlarini yaratadi, tanqidiy tafakkurni rivojlantiradi hamda so'zlash va yozish uchun boy leksik-pragmatik material taqdim etadi. Adabiy matnlar asosida tashkil etilgan vazifalar (adabiyot klublari, dramatisatsiya, bahs-munozara) ma'noni muhokama qilishni rag'batlantiradi va o'quvchilarning interaktiv qobiliyatini oshiradi. Ushbu maqola nazariy asoslar, amaliy uslublar va tajribaviy dalillarni taqdim etadi.

Keywords:

English: literature-based teaching; communicative competence; EFL; literature circles; role-play; dramatization; fluency; intercultural awareness; vocabulary acquisition; task-based learning.

Russian: обучение через литературу; коммуникативная компетенция; EFL; литературные кружки; ролевая игра; драматизация; беглость; межкультурная осведомлённость; лексика; задачей-ориентированное обучение.

Uzbek: adabiyot orqali o'qitish; kommunikativ qobiliyat; EFL; adabiyot klublari; rol o'ynash; dramatisatsiya; ravonlik; madaniy ong; lug'at; vazifa-yuzasidan o'qitish.

In contemporary language pedagogy, communicative competence—ability to use language effectively and appropriately in real-life contexts—remains the principal objective of many EFL programmes. Traditional skill-based instruction (isolated grammar and vocabulary drills) often fails to provide the authentic, meaningful contexts learners need to practise negotiation of meaning, pragmatic choices, and spontaneous interaction. Integrating foreign literature into language curricula offers a complementary route: literary texts are authentic

examples of language use, rich in discourse patterns, idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and varied registers. Literature-driven activities (e.g., guided reading, literature circles, dramatization, debates, and task-based follow-ups) create purposeful reasons to communicate and supply material for rehearsal of conversational strategies and fluency-building tasks.

Research over the past two decades indicates that literature-based approaches can positively affect learners' vocabulary growth, pragmatic awareness, critical thinking, and willingness to communicate—factors central to improved spoken performance. For example, literature circles and reader-response activities increase learner talk time and create opportunities for negotiated interaction, which in turn support fluency and accuracy gains when scaffolded effectively. However, successful implementation requires careful text selection, alignment with proficiency levels, and well-structured post-reading tasks that transform receptive engagement into productive use. Pedagogically, literature offers a bridge between language form and communicative function: teachers can exploit narrative sequences, character voices, and social dilemmas to design speaking tasks that reflect authentic communicative goals (e.g., persuading, reporting, hypothesizing). This article synthesizes theoretical rationales, classroom methodologies, and empirical studies that show how teaching foreign literature can be harnessed to improve students' communication skills in EFL context.

Foreign literature supports communicative development through several interlocking mechanisms. First, literature exposes learners to authentic discourse—extended stretches of pragmatic, stylistic, and rhetorical language—which models how language functions in different social contexts. Second, literature provokes cognitive engagement: interpretation, inference, and perspective-taking encourage learners to use language for higher-order purposes, thereby strengthening pragmatic competence and discourse management. Third, literature-based tasks often adopt a learner-centred, task-based pedagogy: tasks derived from texts (role-plays, debates, adaptations) require real negotiation of meaning and information gap exchanges, which are central to communicative language teaching (CLT) theories. These mechanisms are supported by recent literature reviews that identify increased opportunities for meaningful output and interaction when literature is used as core material.

2. Classroom strategies that promote communication (approx. 300 words)

A number of practical, research-backed strategies transform literary reading into communicative practice:

Literature circles / small-group discussions: Students assume roles (summarizer, connector, questioner) and discuss sections of text, which increases student talk-time and requires justification and elaboration—key to spoken fluency. Evidence shows literature circles improve speaking performance when tasks require negotiation and reflection.

Dramatization and role-play: Adapting scenes for performance pushes learners to experiment with prosody, register, and performative language. Acting out characters' intentions fosters pragmatic awareness (e.g., requests, refusals), gives rehearsal opportunities for formulaic language, and reduces performance anxiety through shared, scaffolded enactment.

Task-based follow-ups: After reading, design tasks with clear communicative outcomes—debates on moral dilemmas in the text, mock interviews with characters, or group projects creating alternative endings. These tasks convert comprehension into negotiated, persuasive,

and narrative speech acts. Studies indicate such task-based post-reading activities yield measurable gains in fluency and willingness to communicate.

Integrated multimodal approaches: Use audio recordings, film adaptations, and digital storytelling to complement texts; multimodal input increases engagement and gives varied models for spoken language production. Online platforms can host discussion threads and synchronous speaking tasks, extending classroom interaction. Recent work emphasizes effective online literature pedagogy for enhancing interactive skills.

3. Selecting texts and scaffolding (approx. 160 words)

Text choice is critical: materials should be linguistically accessible yet cognitively stimulating. Short stories, adapted novels, poems, and excerpts work well when matched to learners' proficiency and cultural background. Scaffolding includes pre-teaching key lexical items and pragmatic expressions, modelling target discourse moves, and providing task rubrics and language frames (e.g., "I agree because...", "I hypothesise that...") to lower affective filters and increase participation. Guided pre- and post-reading tasks (prediction, summarizing, role preparation) ensure students move from comprehension to communicative use. Research emphasizes that literature's potential is unlocked only when teachers design tasks that explicitly require production and interaction rather than passive comprehension.

4. Empirical evidence and limitations (approx. 160 words)

Empirical studies report positive outcomes: increased speaking opportunities, improved narrative competence, expanded lexical repertoire, and higher motivation and engagement indices in literature-focused classes. For instance, controlled studies of literature circles show gains in speaking fluency and complexity when compared with control groups exposed to traditional instruction. However, limitations exist: findings vary due to small sample sizes, heterogeneous methodologies, and differing implementation fidelity. Barriers include teachers' confidence in literary pedagogy, time constraints within curricula, and assessment systems focused on discrete-point tests rather than communicative performance. Addressing these challenges requires teacher training, curricular flexibility, and assessment models valuing communicative tasks.

Teaching foreign literature offers a robust, multifaceted pathway to improving students' communication skills in EFL contexts. Literary texts provide authentic language input, diverse registers, and culturally rich scenarios that naturally elicit discussion, negotiation, and performance. When teachers transform texts into communicative tasks—literature circles, role-plays, debates, and task-based projects—learners receive purposeful reasons to speak, opportunities to rehearse pragmatic functions, and a context for expanding lexical and discourse resources. Empirical research and reviews suggest that such approaches increase learner talk time, foster fluency, and enhance pragmatic and intercultural competence, particularly when instruction is carefully scaffolded and aligned with learners' levels. However, maximizing benefits requires attention to practical constraints. Teachers need training in text selection and task design, and curricula must allow time for student-centred discussion and performance. Assessment systems should incorporate performance-based measures (oral portfolios, recorded role-plays, graded discussions) to valorize communicative gains. Future research should pursue larger-scale, longitudinal studies that measure not only short-term fluency gains but also sustained pragmatic competence and transfer to spontaneous real-world communication. In sum, foreign literature—if used strategically and interactively—can be a

powerful engine for developing the communicative competence that lies at the heart of language learning.

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