



The Impact of Literary Materials on the Pedagogical Process of Language Learning: An Ex-ray of English Language Teaching in Tertiary Institutions in Kogi Central, Kogi State

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Abstract

Original Research Article

This paper examines the role of literary materials in English language pedagogy within tertiary institutions in Kogi Central, Kogi State, Nigeria. While literature has been recognized globally as a valuable resource for language instruction, its integration into classroom practice remains inconsistent, particularly in multilingual Nigerian contexts. Drawing on existing research from Nigerian educational settings and international pedagogical frameworks, this study analyzes both the theoretical benefits and practical challenges of literature-based language teaching. The paper argues that literary texts—when appropriately selected and pedagogically mediated—enhance linguistic competence, cultural awareness, and critical thinking among learners. However, successful integration requires addressing contextual obstacles including material availability, teacher preparation, and curriculum alignment. The study proposes a culturally responsive framework that incorporates Nigerian oral literature alongside conventional literary texts to bridge the gap between learners' lived experiences and target language proficiency goals. Descriptive and analytical research design are the adequate sources for the analysis of data culled from two texts, *The Lion and the Jewel* by Wole Soyinka and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. The findings will be used to enhance linguistic competence, promote cultural relevance among language learners in Kogi Central and the country at large, and also direct policy makers and curriculum planners on the essential requirements for academic texts publications.

Keywords: Literature integration, English language teaching, pedagogical process, tertiary education, Kogi Central, Nigerian multilingual context.

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Introduction

Background of the Study

Before the advent of structural approach to language teaching, literature has been serving the teaching and learning of language as a resource material for a long time. Undeniably, literature

has been utilized as source to teach language with the assumption to develop basic and intellectual abilities in the learners, and the teaching/ leaning in the classroom was facilitated by the grammar translation method (Regmi, 2022). It has been observed that literacy materials are rich in content and have the creative



language that contributes to language teaching.

The relationship between literature and language teaching has been a subject of scholarly debate for decades. Historically, literature occupied a central position in language education, particularly within the grammar-translation tradition, before being marginalized by communicative approaches that prioritized functional language use. However, recent years have witnessed a resurgence of interest in integrating literary materials into language pedagogy, supported by growing evidence that literature fosters linguistic development, emotional engagement, and intercultural competence. In addition, it enhances communication competence and interpersonal relationship.

In Nigeria, English functions as the official language of instruction, governance, and commerce, yet it is learned as a second or third language by most students who operate in richly multilingual environments. This linguistic reality creates unique pedagogical challenges. Tertiary institutions in Kogi State, including the Kogi State College of Education in Ankpa (which offers numerous English-language programs), serve student populations with diverse linguistic backgrounds, including Hausa, Igala, Yoruba, and Igbo speakers. For these learners, English is not merely an academic subject but a gateway to higher education, professional opportunity, and national participation.

Literature therefore, has been accepted as a meaningful component for the tertiary education curriculum for English language teaching. The objectives of teaching literature in the language courses have been extended to the development of acquisition in yesteryear. Agheyolzadch and Tajabadi (2012) state, from time to time the need or value of teaching literature in the language class, as a teaching material, has been questioned. Using of literature to teach second/foreign languages can be traced back to over one century ago, but in recent times a renewed interest has emerged in the teaching of literature in the language class. According to them, this can be confirmed by seeing many publications heralding the coming back of literature in language class. Khatib et al, (2011)

argue that the attitude toward literature is as a result of paucity of empirical research confirming the significance of literary input for language class.

Despite the recognized potential of literature in language learning, its integration into English language teaching in Nigerian tertiary institutions remains problematic. Preliminary observations suggest that many instructors either avoid literary texts entirely or use them peripherally, treating literature as an end in itself rather than as a medium for language development. Where literature is used, challenges emerge around text selection, pedagogical approach, and assessment alignment.

The situation in Kogi Central is particularly worthy of investigation. This geopolitical zone encompasses diverse communities where English competes with indigenous languages for communicative space. Tertiary institutions in this region face resource constraints, including limited library collections and inadequate instructional materials. Moreover, the curriculum often privileges British and American literary canons over Nigerian texts, potentially alienating learners whose cultural references remain local. This study therefore seeks to "ex-ray" to examine systematically how literary materials impact the pedagogical process of English language teaching in this specific context. In essence, when literature is used to reinforce aspects of the language use, care should be taken to preserve the integrity of the literature so selected.

The objective of this study tends to bring teachers and learners of the English language in tertiary institutions focus attention in communication competence rather than vocabulary and grammar, subscribe to variance in the use of the English language based on context. Also create stimulating teaching and learning through appropriate choice of literature materials in language teaching and to incorporate the experimental value of literature into the technical requirements of English language teaching.

Research Questions

This paper addresses the following questions:

1. What types of literary materials are currently used in English language teaching in tertiary institutions in Kogi Central?
2. How do these materials affect learners' linguistic competence, engagement, and cultural awareness?
3. What challenges impede the effective integration of literature into language pedagogy in this context?
4. What pedagogical strategies can optimize the use of literary materials for language learning?

Literature Review

This section reviews various contributions of scholars that have carried out works relevant to the topic in discourse. The crux of the study is the search for effective and efficient method of making the teaching and learning of the English language easier, more interactive and to motivate the learners to achieve the objectives of the classroom teaching. One of the resource materials that the teacher of the English language falls back on to enhance classroom instruction is literature materials. Through both literature and language differ in content and methods, but they are inseparable from each other. This is because language is skill oriented and encompasses the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), while literature that focuses so much on ideas, experiences and aesthetic values uses language as a medium of expression. According to Collie and Slater (2002) the orientation of literature is not the practicing of skills but the expression of the human in its many facets.

The compatibility therefore, is that the process involved in experiencing involves the use of language as a medium of expression. Language here can be seen to be a means to an end, not an end in itself. In the pedagogical process of language, the use of literature text as a source material is very important because of its sociolinguistic richness. The use of language changes from one social group to another.

Likewise, it changes from one geographical location to another. Straja (2015) opines, the ever-increasing need to communicate and be up to date with language as it changes and is used in global interactions imposes on learners and teachers of foreign languages the need to consider all proven and meaningful means of language acquisition in order to develop skills and competences. In essence, literary devices provide the much needed varieties in language use making every situation or context easier to be communicated.

Furthermore, Carter and McRae (2001) recommend using literature to help students go beyond acquiring basic knowledge of the language to learning about the language and how it works because using literature can help develop the four skills in language. The use of literature as a technique for teaching basic language skills, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation is required within the field of English language teaching and learning.

Going by Keshavarzi (2012, p.172), "Choosing appropriate text is the first step to teaching English in the ESL/EFL classroom". The right material selection should visualize learners as active participants in the learning process and what they learn and internalize should not only improve their self and personality but equip them with such noble ideas and rich ideological vision that they become active contributors to the society of which they are members. A good amount of such materials come from literature. Indeed, Literature encompasses a distinct universality relatable with the human condition and nature.

Impact of Literature in English Language Teaching

Various reasons have been offered on the consideration of literature materials as good source of instructional tools for teaching the English language. Khatib et al (2011) argues that this attitude towards literature is due to a paucity of empirical research confirming the significance of literary input for language class. Notwithstanding the few controversial points regarding whether literature can be used to

enhance the efficiency of language learning programs, the relevant literature abounds with the reasons why literary exploration can be beneficial in the language classroom. Many scholars who have advocated the use of literature to teach English language proffered several benefits. Ubukawa and Miyazuki (2003) propose six purposes for using literature in the language classroom as follows: motivating material, access to cultural background, encouraging language acquisition, expanding students' language awareness, developing students' interpretative abilities, and educating the whole person.

Bagherkazemi and Alemi (2010) count some advantages of using literature in the FL classroom as paraphrased below:

- i. It provides meaningful contexts;
- ii. It involves a profound grasp of vocabulary, dialogues and prose;
- iii. It appeals to imagination and enhances creativity,
- iv. It develops cultural awareness;
- v. It encourages critical thinking; and
- vi. It is in line with communicative language teaching principles.

However, some scholars have posited some arguments against the appropriateness of literature texts as materials in the teaching of English language or foreign languages. This is a result of the nature of literary language which is regarded as violation of the rules governing linguistic structure in terms of the literary devices employed. Savvidou (2004) says that the belief that the reason why few experts often consider literature inappropriate to the language classroom may be found in the common beliefs held about literature and literary language and these views reflect the historic separation between the study of language and the study of literature. This study therefore stands to explicate the undeniable value or impact of literature materials in English language teaching process. The above purposes can easily be realized through the commitment in the task of upholding the knowledge of context and methodology.

A comprehensive synthesis of thirty peer-

reviewed studies (2000–2025) in Eghodare,(2024) identified five recurring themes: pedagogical effectiveness, learner engagement, cultural relevance, cognitive development, and critical thinking integration. The authors conclude that "literature is not a peripheral supplement but an indispensable resource for cultivating linguistically competent, emotionally intelligent, and critically aware global citizens."(p.44)

The Link between Language and Literature

Language and literature share a connection that goes far deeper than most scholars realize. While we use language every day to communicate simple ideas and complete practical tasks, literature transforms this everyday tool into something extraordinary. According to Ayakoroma (2016), there is a general agreement that literature foregrounds language and uses it in artistic ways. Eagleton (2014), explains that, literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language, deviates systematically from everyday speech and delivers interaction with uncanny peculiarity.

Language as a means of communication operates on multiple levels within literary works. On the surface level, it communicates the basic narrative or information. It is crystal clear that most published literature works are done in English language. Language is the central feature of the culture of any community and a reflection of the thoughts, feelings, values, beliefs and experiences of a community of speakers. Therefore, the universal language, English gives literature the wider audience that it enjoys today.

At the other hand, literature uses languages symbolically, in this form; writers employ words not only to represent things, but to convey layers of meaning that can be interpreted in multiple ways. Collie and Slater (2002) states, the link with languages is a key factor in studying literature which is not written in one's mother tongue. Through literature study, the second language learner can internalize and consciously adopt the rhythms of natural speech (as in drama), economy and richness of diction (as in poetry), rhetorical and organizational devices (as

in prose). When it comes to the learning of lexis and structure, the literature material can be structured so as to focus attention on problem areas. Literature as content for teaching English as a second language works on the premise that language and literature are inseparable; they are inseparable from the lives of language speaker as well as interpreting a piece of literature in a language class which exploits the interpretive skill (language) of both the teacher and the students (Rahesuiarein, 2019).

The orientation of literature lesson is not the practicing of skills but expressing of human condition in its facets. Being that, the process involved in experiencing involves the use of language as a medium of expression, language is a means to an end, not an end in itself. That is to say that, though literature uses language as medium of expression, its concern is not to communicate language skills or vocabulary, but the author's ideas. To identify and implement best practices in linguistic pedagogy, Santiago and Ortiz, (2020) and Lim et al (2022) emphasize the importance of employing diverse instructional techniques, such as reader-response approaches and collaborative learning methods to scaffold students' understanding. The incorporation of literature materials in language teaching enriches effective learning environments.

Literature Integration in Nigerian Contexts

Research specifically examining Nigerian educational settings has identified both opportunities and challenges. In the domain of foreign language instruction, Amos (2025) reveals that integrating Nigerian oral literature—proverbs, folktales, and songs—into French language classes improved students' comprehension, confidence, and retention. Students showed higher engagement when lessons connected to familiar cultural materials, suggesting that culturally responsive literature integration enhances learning outcomes.

Omoyela, (2025) in a study exploring pedagogical strategies for teaching literature in foreign languages across North Central Nigerian colleges of education identifies significant

challenge of students. He posits that, students struggled with complex literary genres, pronunciation difficulties, cultural barriers, and limited language proficiency. However, the research also discovered strong educator support for multimedia tools, authentic texts, and student-centered methods.

In the Nigerian tertiary landscape, Kogi Central is served by several tertiary institutions offering English language programs. The Kogi State College of Education in Ankpa, for instance, offers numerous English combinations including English/CRS, English/Economics, English/Political Science, English/Social Studies, English/French, English/Theatre Arts, English/History, and English/Igala. These programs prepare future English teachers, yet the pedagogical approaches used within them—particularly regarding literature integration—remain under-examined. A locally published handbook on literature for tertiary institutions by Azeez (2019) suggests awareness of literature's importance, but evidence of systematic integration into language pedagogy is lacking.

Criteria for Choosing Literature Materials for English Language Pedagogy

Planning the approach to be used by the teacher in delivering English language lesson is not an easy task. It requires careful preparation. When teaching young adult learners of universities, the teacher needs to think with great care, anticipating the difficulties the learners of English as a second language are likely to have and working out strategies for handling those materials such as literature excerpts in the domain of English language teaching.

When selecting literature material to be used in language classes, the language teacher should take into account the relevance of the text. The literature material selected should cater for both the psychological and linguistic needs of the English language learner. That is to say that the behavioural objectives of the topic should be considered by the teacher who selects the source material. Where the learners require vocabulary development, the teacher will select the text that has some linguistic items necessary for the class.

The same goes in the context of grammar, pronunciation and so on.

According to Keshavarzi (2012 p.172), "Choosing appropriate text is first step to teaching English in the ESL/EEL classroom." The right material selection should visualize learners as active participants in the learning process and what they learn and internalize should not only improve their and personalies, but equip them with such noble ideas and rich ideological vision that they become active contributors to the society of which they are members.

The overriding criterion in selecting literary materials for English language teaching involves a consideration of the relevance texts which caters for both psychological and linguistic needs of the students. In essence, the students' age, their emotion, intellectual maturity, interest and hobbies should be taken into consideration (Collies & Slater, 2002). Literature material is not only meant to enhance language proficiency and ease teaching and learning tension, but also to expose students with complexities of human life, culture, behaviour and other social norms (Mustakim et al, 2024). For the criteria for choosing literature materials to enhance English language teaching to be detailed, Kham and Alasmari (2018), state that literature facilitates fostering the learners' language skills, and focused on the adoption of different approaches to the teaching.

Focusing on the above goals, when selecting a literary text for English language teaching, the teacher should balance the objectives of the language topic with the literature content. If the behavioural objective has to do with the vocabulary development, the literary text should ensure that it met the requirement for the age of the learners. The simplicity of the language use should be able to sustain the learner's zeal. Moreover, the diction of the literary text meant for English language teaching should be simple, this may facilitate the comprehensibility of the literary materials though not the most crucial, but the comprehensibility of the English language topic. The simplicity of the words makes the understanding easier.

Challenges Specific to Kogi Central

Several challenges likely impede effective literature integration in this context:

Resource Scarcity: Tertiary institutions in Kogi State face material constraints, including limited library holdings, inadequate classroom copies of literary texts, and lack of technological infrastructure for accessing digital resources.

Teacher Preparation: Many English language lecturers may lack training in literature pedagogy specifically oriented toward language teaching. The study of North Central Nigerian colleges found that "while students showed moderate engagement, they continued to face emotional and linguistic hurdles in interpreting texts", suggesting that teacher mediation strategies require strengthening.

Linguistic Diversity: The multilingual composition of classrooms with students speaking Igala, Hausa, Yoruba, Ebirá, and other languages creates variable English proficiency levels. Literary texts that assume uniform linguistic background may hinder students from particular language communities.

Curriculum Constraints: The pressure to cover prescribed syllabi and prepare students for examinations may discourage teachers from investing time in extended literary engagement. Literature modules in Nigerian polytechnic curricula, for example, have been critiqued for being poorly integrated with overall language learning objectives.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in three complementary theoretical perspectives that illuminate the relationship between literature and language learning. These three are chosen, not as rigid, fundamental approach, but as most appropriate to the rhythm of this study.

Reader-Response Theory

Rooted in the work of Louise Rosenblatt (1978), reader-response theory posits that meaning emerges from the transaction between reader and

text. Unlike approaches that treat literary texts as containers of fixed meaning to be decoded, reader-response theory emphasizes the active role of the learner in constructing interpretation through personal experience and linguistic knowledge. In language teaching, this theoretical stance encourages pedagogical practices that value learners' responses, promote authentic communication about texts, and recognize that comprehension involves both efferent (information-gathering) and aesthetic (experiential) reading stances.

Socio-cultural Theory

Vygotsky's sociocultural theory running through 1924 to early 1930s provides a second anchor, emphasizing that learning occurs through social interaction within zones of proximal development. Literature offers rich material for collaborative meaning-making: classroom discussions, pair work, and group projects centered on literary texts create opportunities for scaffolded language use. The theory also highlights the importance of cultural tools in cognitive development; literary texts serve as such tools, mediating learners' access to sophisticated language forms and cultural knowledge.

The Literary Integration Pedagogical Framework (LIPF)

Recent scholarship has synthesized existing research into coherent models for literature integration. The Literary Integration Pedagogical Framework proposed by Holbah et al. (2025) unifies three dimensions: socio-cultural scaffolding (connecting texts to learners' cultural contexts), emotional engagement (fostering personal investment through narrative), and critical literacy (developing analytical capacities). This framework proves particularly relevant for the Nigerian context, where cultural bridging and critical thinking are pressing educational needs.

Data Analysis

The corporation of literature text in the pedagogical process of English language class avails teachers and students with opportunities of different learning activities. For the purpose of the objectives of the study, *The Lion and the Jewel* and *Things Fall Apart* have been used as primary texts. Excerpts culled from the texts are to be used to explicate the pedagogical imports necessary for employing literature as materials in language teaching. Exploring the texts to exemplify how literary text or literature as instructional materials “impact communicative competence on the learners instead of just vocabulary and grammatical knowledge.” With this, we have to align with Koushki (2019) who states that literature in general is beneficial to foster language skills, and fairy tales in particular, appeal to student’s innate curiosity, language skill and life skills: Communication, creativity and critical thinking, collaboration and confidence. For example, the extract culled from *The Lion and Jewel*:

Do you know what it is to be the Bale's last wife?

I'll tell you. When he does-- and that should not be long;

even the lion has to die sometime-- well, when he does, ...pp. 22-24

Sadiku in the statement used communication skill of repetition for emphasis and suspense which makes Sidi to focus on the inevitable event, death. The language enrichment helps the English language learners to learn about the syntax and discourse functions of sentences, the variety of possible structures, and the different ways of connecting ideas which develop and enrich their own writing skills.

The parenthetical insertion brings about rhetorical interjection which gives the listener time to catch the implication in spoken delivery. The presumptive repetition brings in the interruption which resumes to land the consequential promise “... you will have the honour of being the senior wife of the new Bale.” (p.20)

Students learning to enrich their proficiency in

English language learn to create effect in language use through creating emphasis by using repetitive parallelism, such as:

The men then continued their drinking and talking. Ogbuefi Idigo was talking about the palm-wine tapper, Obiako, who suddenly gave up his trade.

“There must be something behind it” he said, wiping the foam of wine from his moustache with the back of his left hand. “There must be a reason for it. A toad does run in the day for nothing.” (Things fall apart, p.15).

The above language skill where repetition/parallelism is used for emphasis, a concrete proverb can be used to prove a certain claim. These add a cultural weight to the suspicion-*why the man gave up his trade*. Here the learner’s communicative competence is improved not vocabulary development or grammatical knowledge but the art of communication. The literature materials employed into language teaching classroom always enriches both teachers and learners with imaginative and creative knowledge. The creativity in Achebe’s description of the atmospheric condition of the wrestling match between Okonkwo and Amalinize creates the picture in the reader’s mind and therefore catches the attention and understanding. Achebe states:

The drums beat and the flutes sang and the spectators held their breath... Every nerve and every muscle stood out on their arms, one their backs and their thighs, and one almost heard them stretching to breaking point. In the end Okonkwo threw the Cat. (p. 3)

The creativity in the use of personification to describe the intensity in the trucking of the drums and the sound of the flutes which makes the music feel alive. The reader thereby feels involved because of the language used. The students become enthusiastic to find out what happens as events unfold through the climax;

they feel close to certain characters and share their emotional responses. At this point, the prominence of the selection of a literary text in relation to the needs, expectations and interests, language level of the students is evident. There is also the opportunity for the teacher to uphold the integrity of the literary text by explaining the device used by the author which may appear contrary to the grammatical and semantic rules of the English language. *“In the end Okonkwo threw the Cat.”* Semantically, the lexical item, “throw” is not appropriate in Standard English, rather the word “defeated”. The learners at this instance learn the use of transliteration as a device that the writer uses to distinguish his writing. Achebe tries to represent the flavour in his native ideas and communicative expressions.

Another relevant aspect that worth consideration is criteria for selecting appropriate literature materials for language teaching, the teacher should make critical assessment for instance, *“The men then continued their drinking and talking. Ogbuefi Idiogo was talking about the palm-wine tapper who suddenly gave up his trade* (culled from Things Fall Apart, pg 15). The above passage can be used to teach the consonant sounds /t, p, k, g, d, ð/ or the aspirated and non-aspirated sounds, /p, t, k/. The teacher will carefully point out the sounds and articulate them along with the learners.

Literature materials can also serve as a resource material for vocabulary development in English language classroom.

Lakunle: A savage custom, barbaric, out-dated rejected, denounced, accursed, excommunicated, degrading, humiliating, unspeakable, redundant, retrogressive, remarkable, and unpalatable. (*The Lion and the Jewel*, p.7)

The synonyms as stated can only be made available as a pedagogical tool in English language classroom when the appropriate criteria for making choice of materials are followed, starting from considering the needs of learners, materials that motivate their learning, cultural

background, etc. The above vocabulary would be appropriate pedagogical materials if the age and emotional conditions of the learners are taken into consideration.

Language and literature are known to differ in content and method. Notwithstanding that communicative skills and ideologies are expressed through language, the orientation of literature lesson is not the practicing of skill but the expression of the human condition in its facets, it involves the presentation of facts or ideologies for discussion in the class. At the other hand, language teaching is a selection of items and units for practicing skill, structure and functions in speech and writing. The teaching method is designed to promote effective communication. It is skill oriented and therefore encompasses the four language skills. The learner should endeavour to make use of the practical value of learning about English as a Second Language as well as make use of it.

It is pertinent to point out that when literature materials are used to illustrate or reinforce aspects of English language, the methodology should be carefully mapped out. The pedagogical methods emphasise language teaching as identified in the English language curriculum, but as literature organizes language in the most exemplary fashion, the learner of English as Second Language must understand the importance of applying the model to suit his language use. Also very important to note is that care should be taken to preserve the integrity of the literature so selected. The learner should endeavour to make use of the practical value of learning about the English language as well as make use of it. This does not mean that the substance of literature, its experimental value should be relegated at the background to the technical requirement of English language study (Collie and Slater, 2002). Both texts reveal the cultural settings of the two writers which help in interpreting human interactions, historical events, and creative narratives. The

knowledge of the cultural setting of others by the language learners facilitates understanding how communication takes place in the country. Through the incorporation of literature texts in the teaching of language, the learner can discover

the way the characters in such literary works see the world outside.

Findings:

Through the analysis of the data the following are revealed:

- i. Grammar and vocabulary are means of communication, but context and competence give meaning.
- ii. Imaginative and creative knowledge evaluate functional academic standard of quality learning and direct curriculum planning.
- iii. Appropriate choice of literature material for English language teaching gives teachers focus to pedagogical tools and methods.
- iv. Knowledge of varieties of words is garnered for contextual functional communication.
- v. As literature materials aid the instruction of English language, its integrity should also be preserved.

Summary and Conclusion

The study has examined the impact of literature materials in the pedagogical process of English language teaching in tertiary institutions in Kogi Central, Kogi State. The excerpts culled from *The Lion and the Jewel* by Wole Soyinka and *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe gave insight into the research work. The materials exemplified the pedagogical impacts of the instructional materials. The evidence, drawn from Nigerian and international research, indicates that literature—when appropriately selected and pedagogically mediated—significantly enhances linguistic competence, learner engagement, and cultural awareness. However, successful integration requires addressing substantial challenges: resource scarcity, inadequate teacher preparation, linguistic diversity, and curriculum constraints.

The Kogi Central context presents both obstacles and opportunities. The region's linguistic diversity, while challenging, also provides rich resources for cross-linguistic and cross-cultural

literary exploration. The presence of Nigerian languages such as Igala alongside English in institutional programs creates unique possibilities for comparative literary study that could deepen meta-linguistic awareness.

Ultimately, the question is not whether literature should be used in language teaching, but how it can be used most effectively in specific contexts. For Kogi Central, an approach that honours local literary traditions while progressively introducing global English literature offers the most promising pathway. By bridging indigenous practices and modern language teaching, educators can create learning experiences that are both culturally grounded and linguistically ambitious. Literature, in this vision, becomes not a supplement to language teaching but its vital center.

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