StandardWissen Lehramt

Die Bände zur Didaktik des Englischen werden herausgegeben von Engelbert Thaler

ENGELBERT THALER

Teaching English Literature

Der Autor:

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Vorwort zur Reihe

StandardWissen Lehramt – Studienbücher für die Praxis

Wie das gesamte Bildungswesen wird sich auch die künftige Lehramtsausbildung an Kompetenzen und Standards orientieren. Damit rückt die Frage in den Vordergrund, was Lehrkräfte wissen und können müssen, um ihre berufliche Praxis erfolgreich zu bewältigen. Das Spektrum reicht von fachlichen Fähigkeiten über Diagnosekompetenzen bis hin zu pädagogisch-psychologischem Wissen, um Lehren als Unterstützung zur Selbsthilfe und Lernen als eigenaktiven Prozess fassen zu können.

Kompetenzen werden nicht in einem Zug erworben; Lehrerbildung umfasst nicht nur das Studium an einer Hochschule, sondern ebenso das Referendariat und die Berufsphase. Die Reihe StandardWissen Lehramt bei UTB bietet daher Lehramtsstudierenden, Referendaren, Lehrern in der Berufseinstiegsphase und Fortbildungsteilnehmern jenes wissenschaftlich abgesicherte Know-How, das sie im Rahmen einer neu orientierten Ausbildung wie auch später in der Schule benötigen. Fachdidaktische und pädagogisch-psychologische Themen werden gleichermaßen in dieser Buchreihe vertreten sein – einer Basisbibliothek für alle Lehramtsstudierenden, Referendare, Lehrerinnen und Lehrer.

INTRODUCTION | 0

Reading and literature play an important part in people's lives, and that should be reflected in the English language classroom. Grammar-Skamm may be right when claiming that "reading is like swimming: it cannot be taught". But teachers can make the same and, by providing a literature-rich environment, motivate pupils.

This book intends to help teachers in pursuing this task. As if the an introduction, it aims to look at all the major areas of teaching English literature in a user-friendly way, but does not dig too deeply into each field. English literature does not only mean the literature of England or the British Isles, but all literature written in English. The book consists of four parts, complementing each other, so that university teachers may — if they wish to do so — have a weekly meeting to each chapter, covering the whole course in one term. The first part (zero) tries to answer the questions of what literature is and why, where, when, and what for it should be taught in foreign language classrooms. The second part discusses the competences that our students should develop in literature classes (knowledge, skills, attitudes). The main genres, i.e. novels, plays, poems and also short narrative forms, are the focus of the third part. The final part goes further, exploring the relationship between literature and modern media and discussing ways of assessing students' LGC (literature competences).

This book gives its readers a brief and reader-friendly introduction to a new field of study. A didactically-reflected structure, several graphical elements, concentration on the essential aspects, and a — hopefully — clear style and of giving the reader a quick and comprehensive survey of this new field. It is written for university students (and their teachers), practising teachers and everybody interested in helping young people to want to read.

In this book, every chapter starts with an awareness-raising, pre-reading question, which often makes readers reflect on their own personal experiences, since further development and reflective learning need to take the (future) teacher's learning biography into account. Moreover, this book contains a lot of sample texts, which illustrate the argumentation and may stimulate the reader, to try some out in their classes. The Section plans for selected levels are meant to have the same purpose.

1 Literature: What?

1.1 Definitions

How would you distinguish between a literary and a non-literary text?

"What is literature?" This question by the great French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre has not been answered satisfactorily yet, although countless literary theorists have tried to do so. Everybody seems to have an intuitive understanding of the term *literature*. Yet to be able to make a distinction between literary and non-literary texts, one needs some reliable categories.

A good starting-point may be the outstanding Russian linguist ROMAN JAKOBSON. Based on the six dimensions he postulates for the communication process, he distinguishes between six functions of language.

Functions of language		
Dimension	Function	Explanation
Addresser	Emotive, expressive	To convey one's attitude towards the addressee (self-expression)
Addressee	Conative	To influence the attitudes of the addressee (persuasive addressing of recipient)
Message	Poetic	To refer reflexively to the form of the message (autotelic: having itself as its purpose)
Subject	Referential	To relate the message to reality (contextual information)
Contact	Phatic	to establish contact between addresser and addressee (channel of communication)
Code	Metalingual	To refer to the linguistic code (checking code working)

Based on Jakobson's communication model, Nünning/Nünning developed a model of literary communication (2004:13). An author (addresser) produces a literary text (message), using the medium of writing (channel), and sending it to the reader (addressee, recipient). To understand the text, which – in aesthetically mediated form – refers to the historical and contemporary reality (context), the reader and the author must share a common language and some background knowledge (code). Several institutions (publishers, media, critics) act as mediators of literary works.

institution
(mediation)

medium (channel)

author
(addresser)

literary text
(message)

reader
(addresser)

code

reality
context

Models like this put the literary text into a wider communicative context, but do not define what constitutes literature. Descriptive and normative definitions of literature can be found in encyclopaedia, e.g. the Random House Dictionary lists seven different aspects:

1. writings in which expression and form, in connection with ideas of permanent and universal interest, are characteristic or essential features, such as poetry, novels, history, biography, and essays
2. the entire body of writings of a specific language, period, people, etc.: *the literature of England*

3. the writings dealing with a particular subject: *the literature of ornithology*
4. the profession of a writer or author
5. literary work or production
6. any kind of printed material, such as circulars, leaflets, or handbills: *literature describing company products*
7. *Archaic.*polite learning; literary culture; appreciation of letters and books

Broad and narrow definitions

This definition already suggests that one can distinguish between broad and narrow definitions of literature (GRABES 1981). In the broadest sense, literature comprises all forms of written communication, i.e. written, printed works. British literary histories such as the The Oxford History of English Literature, for example, also include essays, travel literature, pamphlets as well as semi-fictional or non-fictional text types like biographies and works of philosophy. Narrower definitions reduce the scope by focussing on various criteria, very often referring to the poetic and imaginative quality of literary texts. The criteria used, however, are subject to historic change and vary from one cultural context to another.

Literature with a capital *L* and a small *l*

Against the background of broad and narrow definitions, McRae (1997) made a distinction between *Literature with a capital L* and *literature with a small l*. Whereas the former consists of the classical texts of English literatures, such as those by Shakespeare, Dickens, Austen, the latter includes jokes, puns, graffiti, advertisements, newspaper headlines and other short forms not commonly cherished as 'great' works. McRae's distinction encourages the teacher to use texts which may not be of outstanding aesthetic quality ('high-brow' literature), but are motivating because they are short, easy or funny.

Reality and ambiguity

Two recurring criteria for differentiating between literary and non-literary texts are the relation of a text to reality and its ambiguity (polyvalence). In contrast to 'referential texts', "literature makes no claim to convey or represent 'facts'" (Nünning/Nünning 2004: 16). The 'fictionality' (Latin *fingere*, to invent, form) of a text means that the setting (time, place, circumstances) and characters have been fabricated in the author's mind. Therefore literary texts cannot be judged as 'true' or 'false', but rather ask the reader to accept this invented world (*willing suspension of disbelief*: Samuel Taylor Coleridge). And contrary to the explicitness and clarity of non-fic-

tional texts, literary texts "allow for various interpretations, thanks to their internal ambiguities" (Nünning/Nünning 2004: 18). If a text has several potential meanings, teachers cannot insist on a single, binding interpretation, and readers / pupils are offered enough freedom to construct their own meanings and interpretations.

1.2 Classifications

What genres of literature do you know?

Criteria for classifications

Classifications are a helpful tool to structure and order the vast amount of texts. Some of the most important criteria for categorising literature in English (and other languages) are listed in the table below. It goes without saying that the boundaries between the various categories are fluid.

Literature in the English language	
Nation	English, Scottish, Irish, American, US-American, Canadian, Australian, Indian, African etc.
Historical period	Medieval, Elizabethan, Augustan, Romantic, Victorian etc.
Sociological	Working-class, women's literature
Age	Children's literature, young adult fiction
Genre	Lyric, narrative, dramatic texts
Aesthetic evaluation	High-brow vs low-brow literature, avant-garde, popular literature, pulp fiction
Sense of production	Written, oral
Mode of writing	Narrative, descriptive, argumentative, expository, dramatic, satirical
Media	Printed text, oral literature, audio books, audiovisual, interactive formats, web-based
Relation to reality	Realistic (mimetic) vs fantasy (anti-mimetic) literature
Conventionality	Traditional, experimental, innovative literature

Genres One of the most influential and helpful categories of these is genre. Genres are "constructs based on socio-cultural, literary and social consensus" (VOSSKAMP 1992: 256) and are characterized by "generic features", i.e. special characteristics to do with content, form, and function. An overview of literary genres with two levels, starting with the three main types (lyric, narrative, dramatic genres), is suggested by the following tree diagram.
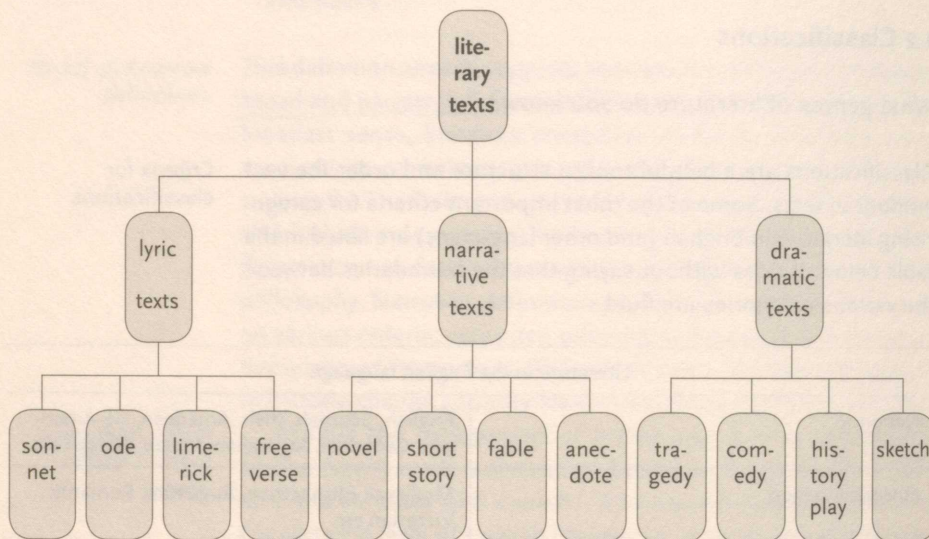
1.3 Selection

According to what criteria are you going to choose a text for your class?

The 3 C's When reading literature in class, the first and foremost task is to select a suitable work of literature for one's learners. The students' motivation and the efficiency of the learning process depend to a large extent on the right choice of literature. The three C's – catalogue, canon, criteria – can help in this important matter of selection.

Catalogues All publishing companies offer catalogues and brochures in which they inform the reading public about the books they have in stock. The publishers specialising in English language titles

catalogue, canon, criteria

usually list their books according to age or reading ability. They include short descriptions about the book, and browsing through these pages can give the teacher a lot of new ideas.

A canon is a list of books which are generally recognized as being the most important pieces of literature – artistically superior examples known as classics. The English and American departments of many universities offer such canons on their homepages (e.g. Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München: http://www.anglistik.uni-muenchen.de). In England, Education Secretary Alan Johnson and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) issued a list of recommended authors for the secondary curriculum in 2007:

Canon = *list of books recognised as being the most important works (= classics)*

QCA list of classic authors

Jane Austen, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, William Blake, Charlotte Bronte, Robert Burns, Geoffrey Chaucer, Kate Chopin, John Clare, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, George Eliot, Thomas Gray, Thomas Hardy, John Keats, John Masefield, Alexander Pope, Christina Rossetti, William Shakespeare (sonnets), Mary Shelley, Robert Louis Stevenson, Jonathan Swift, Alfred Lord Tennyson, HG Wells, Oscar Wilde, Dorothy Wordsworth and William Wordsworth.

Such canons may serve as a guideline and a contribution to a well-rounded (British) education, but they also pose problems because it is hard to find a consensus on which works to include, and some people reject its prescriptive, imperative quality. Moreover, the QCA list met with sharp criticism from teachers' organisations, who argued that teaching texts of such linguistic complexity to 11-14-year-olds, who are not yet ready for them, would be counter-productive and turn them off from classic authors. How much more complex must those classics seem to teenagers who learn English as a foreign language?

A third source of selection can be used by looking at certain criteria. The following list contains some of the most important guidelines grouped around school, teacher, learner and text.

Criteria

Criteria of Selection	
school	• type of school • level (primary, secondary)
learner	• age • level of proficiency • subjective valence (*Betroffenheit*) • interests • background
teacher	• personal favourites • study background • competences
text	• availability of text • linguistic difficulty • thematic complexity • literary genre • curricular conformity • length • aesthetic quality • topicality • popularity • methodological material (lesson plans, worksheets, analyses) • text-related media (film adaptations, audio books, websites) • exploitability for language learning (skills, competences)

Children's literature

Taking the age and the limited language proficiency of our students into consideration, the process of selection should pay special attention to three genres. As TEFL has been extended into the primary classroom, children's literature is a suitable genre for our young learners (Hunt 1996, Huck 2001). Fairy tales and other stories with strong repetitive elements are text types which our children are familiar with from their L1, and so they can focus on the language features more easily.

Young adult fiction

Young adult fiction has experienced a boom since the 1960s. The protagonists are teenage boys and girls, with whom young adults or adolescents can identify, and the stories are centred around issues that are relevant during puberty. In contrast to so-called *simplified readers*, they are authentic novels or plays, but language and style are not too elaborate so that they can be

read from lower secondary classes (Bushman/Bushman 1997, Hesse 2002).

If we take modern approaches like reader response theory seriously, we also have to include the learners' own texts. Whether they write e-mail texts, add a stanza to a pop song, review a film, or create their own poem – not only the great works of the classical authors are worth studying in a truly learner-centred classroom. *(learner texts)* *(learners' own texts deserve analysis as well)*

A good approach to selecting a literary work is to combine teacher initiative and student decision. The teacher pre-selects a certain number of books (3 – 6), which he regards as suitable for his group. Each book is introduced briefly, so that the learners know what to expect – without giving away too much. This can be done in a student-centred way by asking student groups (or single students) to prepare a short presentation. Finally the vote is taken, and the majority in class decide which book to read in detail. *(teacher and students as co-decision-makers)*

Tasks

1. Decide whether the following examples belong to *Literature with a capital L* or *literature with a small l*.

| – Shakespeare drama
– pop song lyrics
– sketch
– Dickens novel
– Beckett play
– graffiti
– limerick
– Wordsworth poem
– joke
– Hemingway short story
– anecdote
– simplified/graded reader
– young adult fiction
– hard-boiled detective story
– Bukovsky poem | **Literature with a capital *L***
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literature with a small *l*
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2. Have a look at the tree diagram of genres and find one example of English literature each for the 12 sub-genres on the second level.

3. Imagine you are a teacher in grade 10 (year 16). Choose a literary text and, guided by the list of selection criteria, decide whether you can use it in your class.

2 Literature: Why? When? Where? What for?

2.1 Rationale

Is it really necessary to use literary texts in class?

Why should people read and study literature? And why should teachers teach literature to EFL students? Various literary scholars and methodologists keep on pointing to the following reasons (e.g. Nuttall 1982, Collie/Slater 1987, Duff/Maley 1990).

6 arguments for teaching literature
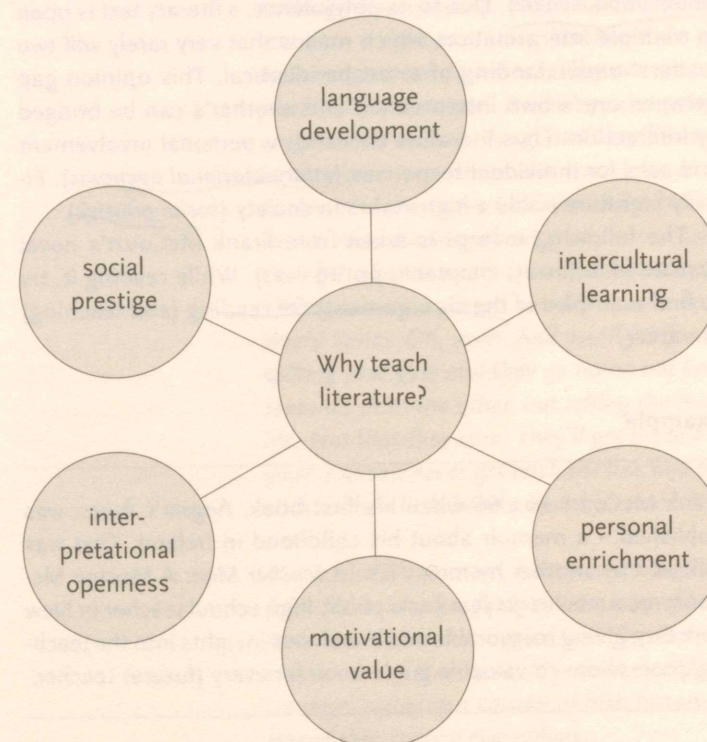
Integrating literature into the EFL classroom supports language learning, as literary texts are genuine samples of a wide range of styles and text types at all levels of difficulty. Thus the basic skills and competences (reading, speaking, writing, listening, mediating) and linguistic domains (lexis, grammar, pragmatics) can be

improved (*language development*). Reading books from other countries opens the window to the world and may contribute to mutual understanding between the members of different cultures (*intercultural learning*). Learners may also profit from books as an individual, as they often touch on themes to which they can bring an individual response from their own experiences. They can open up new horizons, pose vital questions, offer different views of life, provide (positive or negative) role models, sketch possible answers to personally relevant issues (*personal enrichment*). If carefully chosen, a literary text means a welcome change from the everyday classroom routine, raising interest and suspense (*motivational value*). Due to its polyvalence, a literary text is open to multiple interpretation, which means that very rarely will two readers' understanding of a text be identical. This opinion gap between one's own interpreation and another's can be bridged by interaction. Thus literature demands a personal involvement and asks for individual responses (*interpretational openness*). Finally literature holds a high status in society (*social prestige*).

Example   The following excerpt is taken from Frank McCourt's novel *Teacher Man* (2005, chapter 1, pp. 19 – 21). While reading it, try to find examples of the six arguments for reading (and teaching) literature.

Example

Frank McCourt was 66 when his first book, *Angela's Ashes*, was published – a memoir about his childhood in Ireland. That was followed by another memoir, *'Tis*. In *Teacher Man: A Memoir* McCourt recounts his 30 years as a public high school teacher in New York City, giving memorable and humorous insights into the teaching profession – a valuable guide-book for every (future) teacher.

Mea culpa.

Instead of teaching, I told stories.

Anything to keep them quiet and in their seats.

They thought I was teaching.

I thought I was teaching.

I was learning.

And you called yourself a teacher?

I didn't call myself anything. I was more than a teacher. And less. In the high school classroom you are a drill sergeant, a rabbi, a shoulder to cry on, a disciplinarian, a singer, a low-level scholar, a clerk, a referee, a clown, a counselor, a dress-code enforcer, a conductor, an apologist, a philosopher, a collaborator, a tap dancer, a politician, a therapist, a fool, a traffic cop, a priest, a mother-father-brother-sister-uncle-aunt, a bookkeeper, a critic, a psychologist, the last straw.

In the teacher's cafeteria veterans warned me, Son, tell 'em nothing about yourself, They're kids, goddam it. You're the teacher. You have a right to privacy. You know the game, don't you? The little buggars are diabolical. They are not, repeat not, your natural friends. They can smell it when you're going to teach a real lesson on grammar or something, and they'll head you off at the pass, baby. Watch 'em. Those kids have been at this for years, eleven or twelve, and they have teachers all figured out. They'll know if you're even thinking about grammar or spelling, and they'll raise their little hands and put on that interested expression and ask you what games you played as a kid or who do you like for the goddam World Series. Oh, yeah. And you'll fall for it. Next thing is you're spilling your guts and they go home not knowing one end of a sentence from the other, but telling the moms and dads about your life. Not that they care. They'll get by, but where does that leave you? You can never get back the bits and pieces of your life that stick in their little heads. Your life, man. It's all you have. Tell 'em nothing.

The advice was wasted. I learned through trial and error and paid a price for it. I had to find my own way of being a man and a teacher and that is what I struggled with for thirty years in and out of the classrooms of New York. My students didn't know there was a man up there escaping a cocoon of Irish history and Catholicism, leaving bits of that cocoon everywhere.

My life saved my life. On my second day at McKee a boy asks a question that sends me into the past and colors the way I teach for the next thirty years. I am nudged into the past, the materials of my life.

Jo Santos calls out, Yo, teach...

You are not to call out. You are to raise your hand.

Yeah, yeah, said Joey, but ...
They have a way of saying yeah yeah that tells you they're barely
tolerating you. In the yeah yeah they're saying, We're trying to be
patient, man, giving you a break because you're just a new teacher.
Joey raised his hand. Yo, teacher man....
Call me Mr. McCourt.
Yeah. OK. So, you Scotch or somethin'?
Joey is the mouth. There's one in every class along with the
complainer, the clown, the goody-goody, the beauty queen, the
volunteer for everything, the jock, the intellectual, the momma's
boy, the mystic, the sissy, the lover, the critic, the jerk, the religious
fanatic who sees sin everywhere, the brooding one who sits in the
back staring at the desk, the happy one, the saint who finds good
in all creatures. It's the job of the mouth to ask questions, anything
to keep the teacher from the boring lesson. I may be a new teacher
but I'm on to Joey's delaying game. It's universal. I played the
same game in Ireland. I was the mouth in my class in Leamy's
National School. The master would write an algebra question or
an Irish conjugation on the board and the boys would hiss, Ask him
a question, McCourt. Get him away from the bloody lesson. Go on,
go on.

A discussion of the task posed above may yield some of the following results:

Language development:	Learning new words like *jock* (so. who does lots of sport and is considered to be stupid)
Intercultural learning:	Realizing that playing the delaying game is a universal topic
Personal enrichment:	Comparing oneself with various learner roles (*complainer, clown, jerk*)
Motivational value:	Familiar setting (school), making sense of narrator's experiences
Interpretational openness:	Interpreting teacher roles (*collaborator, tap dancer, politician*), discussing veterans' advice
Social prestige:	Literature: high value, McCourt: Pulitzer Prize winner

2.2 Levels

At what age or level should teaching literature start?

Some people believe that literary texts cannot be integrated into the classroom until students have reached a level that is advanced enough for them to understand linguistic subtleties and grasp the full meaning. Such an attitude seems restricted and one-sided if we take a broad view of literature and believe that understanding and appreciating literature has to be gradually developed in a long process. Literature can be made use of at all levels – from beginners (6-11-year-olds depending on country and school system) to pre-intermediate and intermediate pupils (12-16 years) and finally advanced students (16+). The age and level of a group has to be considered, however, in terms of reading material, teaching goals and classroom procedures.

Beginners in the primary classroom enjoy short and funny texts such as rhymes, songs, stories or picture books. The methods and techniques used must take into account the developmental stage of the learners by resorting to playful learning, which appeals to many senses and is accompanied by movement, music as well as listening to and telling stories. The aim cannot be a critical analysis of texts but providing a first contact with literature, which promotes basic language skills, is fun and enhances the motivation to learn English.

Pre-intermediate and intermediate learners can cope with longer and linguistically more demanding texts. While or after working with the coursebook (which also contains short literary texts), teachers can add a *Begleitlektüre*, which has been written by the authors of the coursebook and is adapted to its lexis and grammar, or go for an *Anschlusslektüre*, which is independent of the coursebook and opens up more options. There are *graded readers*, which are specifically written for a certain language level (scope of words and grammatical structures), and *simplified readers*, which are shorter and linguistically less demanding adaptations of original novels or plays. Most schoolbook publishers now have a great number of titles, which enable teachers to practise different reading techniques and improve their students' understanding of literature, including global and detailed comprehension.

Literature for all ages

Literature for beginners

Intermediate classes

Advanced students

A full understanding and profound analysis of a literary text is usually reserved for advanced levels. At this stage, unabridged original works can be added – with or without annotations (explanations of words and cultural information). All reading techniques can be trained, creative writing and other forms of creating may become more sophisticated.

2.3 Places

Where can you teach and learn literature?

Classroom

The most obvious – but not the only – place for teaching literature is the *classroom*. Reading a book usually takes place at the same desk and on the same chair which are used for all the other classwork. If you are eager to instill in your students an awareness of the value of reading, your classroom should provide an environment in which reading is clearly cherished.

Reading corner

So a reading-ready classroom could contain a *reading corner*. In such a quiet and comfortable place, students can read independently or with a partner or small group. This reading area should include comfortable seating, for example bean bag chairs, pillows, carpet squares or even a small couch, a few plants and, for atmosphere, a couple of lamps. There are even some teachers who go for rather unconventional reading areas, putting up a tent, desgning a milk-jug igloo, or developing a reading garden – with a green carpet, a few lawn chairs, several plants and a piece of white lattice.

Classroom library

If you want to encourage independent reading, a *classroom library* is a must. It is advisable to set up your library in an area of the classroom which your students frequently pass by during the day. The classroom collection, which is usually stored in a bookcase with a display area, need not only consist of fictional materials but may offer a number of non-fiction and reference books. You should provide a wide range of genres, include a variety of topics, and look for titles which reflect student interests. Such a collection, presented in appropriate conditions, can create an atmosphere which is conducive to reading. So do not hide your books in closed shelves, but display as many of them as possible with covers visible at students' eye level. One of the weaknesses of a classroom library, of course, is that its collection is limited. If you are on a tight budget, you may set your hopes on the generosity of parents and friends or check out libraries (regular sales of used books), bargain areas of large bookstores, used book stores, flea sales, WWW auction sites, *remainder* sites carrying publishers' overstocks (www.bookcloseouts.com).

School library

Even if there is no classroom library, a *central library*, which constitutes an inclusive resource centre and serves all grades and subjects, is housed in most schools. It is inside the school premises, but outside the classroom, which is the problem. Students are not confronted with the store of books on a regular basis and so often forget about its existence. Therefore teachers should walk their students round the library and draw their attention to the supply of foreign language titles.

Home study

Reading literature can also be done *at home*, in one's study or favourite place in the house. Readers are free to choose when, where and how long to read. Moreover reading assignments for private study are many teachers' favourite pet as they save time for classroom discussion.

Public places

Learning from literature may not only take place at school or at home, but also in *public places*. Local libraries have English language titles as well as big bookstores, which provide similar sections and sometimes even a reading chair. In addition, there are several beyond-the-classroom programmes, which focus on encouraging reading in nonacademic settings. These innovative programmes take place in camps, libraries, clinics, and after-school settings – and in some cases it might be a good idea for a school teacher to cooperate with these institutions.

Internet reading

With the advent of the World Wide Web, *Internet reading* has become an alternative to print-based literature classes. Access to a web browser guarantees the availability of round-the-clock literature sources, and as more and more websites offer full-text options, reading a whole novel is just a mouse click away. Furthermore the hypertext structure allows a non-linear way of jumping across pages, and background study is supported by additional online material. However, this new medium is suitable for reading for information rather than reading for enjoyment. Scrolling down the pages, with your exes fixed on a small screen for hours, makes it hard to get lost in the world of a book – to be with it.
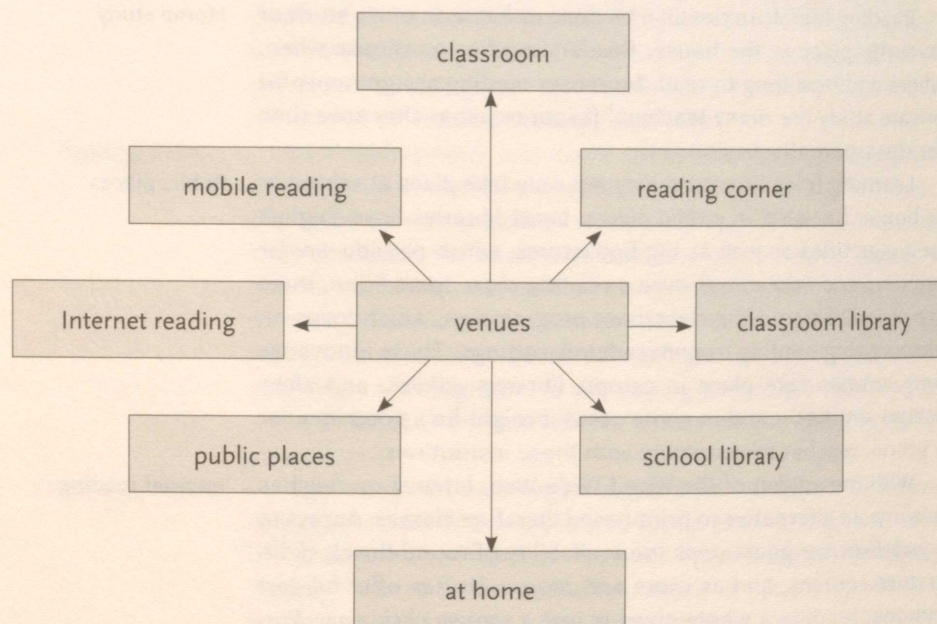
Mobile reading

The permanent availability of Internet literature also makes us aware that *mobile reading* is a modern-day option. Wireless LAN opens up immediate access to online texts, a short story may be stored on the notebook and read on the bus, audio fiction can be listened to via discman in the park, and a whole novel may even be read on one's private mobile phone.

In and out of the classroom

This short survey of venues makes clear that teaching literature is not confined to the classroom. Reading outside the formal classroom setting definitely helps children discover the pleasure of reading. However, to pass on the philosophy that reading is of high value it must not be compeletely 'outsourced' to places beyond the classroom, but has to remain an integral part of classroom time.

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                        classroom
                            |
   mobile reading       reading corner
        \                   /
Internet reading --- venues --- classroom library
        /                   \
   public places        school library
                            |
                         at home
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2.4 Objectives

What should students in our literature classes aim to achieve?

In the 1970s, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emerged as the dominant approach to teaching and learning a foreign language – if not at classroom level, then at least in academic discourse. CLT stresses the interactive nature of communication, i.e. people cooperate to negotiate meaning when communicating with each other, and it aims at *communicative competence* (CC). This goal comprises four competences: grammatical, discourse, sociocultural and strategic competence (Savignon 2001: 17). The first refers to phonological, lexical, morphological and syntactical language features on the sentence level; the second concerns the ability to form a meaningful oral and written text; the third deals with the social rules and culturally loaded meanings of language (politeness, turn-taking, appropriate content etc.), the fourth reminds us of the necessity of coping strategies (e.g. paraphrasing when you do not know a word).

In the field of intercultural learning, Michael Byram's model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC, 1997) has gained much prominence. ICC here comprises skills, knowledge, attitudes and education and consists of five competences or *savoirs*: skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovering and/or interacting (*savoir apprendre/faire*), knowledge of self and other (*savoirs*), attitudes of relativising self and valuing other (*savoir être*), and political education/critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*).

Drawing on those two models, i.e. CLT and ICC, the goal when teaching and learning literature in class may be found in LCC: Literary Communicative Competence. Such a target also comprises knowledge, attitudes and various skills, i.e. reading, understanding (analysing, interpreting), and creating. The three domains of knowledge, skills and attitudes as well as the three skills just mentioned must be seen against the background of communication. They should not be dealt with as separate dimensions, but foster literature-based communication and negotiation of meaning.

CC

communicative competence

ICC

intercultural communicative competence

LCC

literary communicative competence

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        ┌─────────────────┐
        │     Literary    │
        │  Communicative  │
        │    Competence   │
        │      (LCC)      │
        └─────────────────┘
                 │
     ┌───────────┼───────────┐
┌─────────┐ ┌─────────┐ ┌──────────┐
│knowledge│ │ skills  │ │attitudes │
└─────────┘ └─────────┘ └──────────┘
     │           │            │
┌─────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────┐
│ reading │ │understanding │ │ creating │
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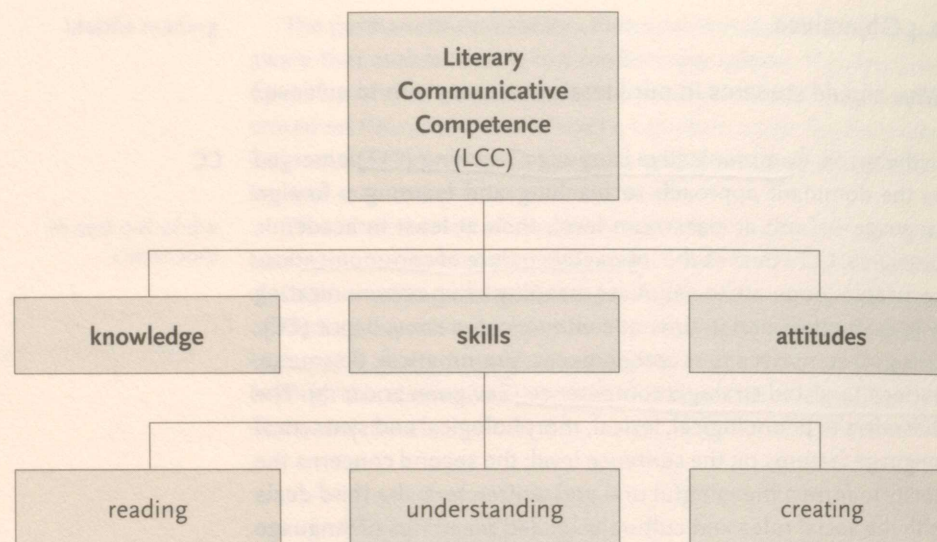
Tasks

1. Choose one play or novel, and check whether it is suitable for an advanced class by applying the various criteria of selection.
2. Show that one piece of literature, e.g. R.L. Stevenson's novel *Treasure Island*, can be used at all levels – for beginners, intermediate and advanced students.
3. Research what literature in digital form can be studied via the Gutenberg project: www.gutenberg.com.
4. Re-read the excerpt from Frank McCourt's *Teacher Man* and illustrate how the four dimensions of *communicative competence* – according to Savignon – can be encouraged by giving one example each.

GOALS