Challenges in Enforcing "Linguocultural Aspect of Fictional Literature" in Uzbekistan Higher Education

Dilnoza Ruzmatova, Uzbekistan State University of World Languages, Uzbekistan

Abstract

Teaching the Linguocultural Aspect of foreign literature is a new branch in Uzbekistan, and it has been a crucial part of the discussion in the education system. Considering the process of a student-centered classroom, learning English literature through the lingual and cultural factors can be the most perspective part of the involvement. In Uzbekistan, Linguocultural Aspect of Fictional Literature has yet to be researched thoroughly, focusing on texts written in English. There are reasonable changes in how literary studies have been practiced over the last century regarding interconnections between literature and other fields. As researchers have already indicated, there is a need to rename the field "literary and cultural studies" (Segal, 2015). Z.N. Patil (2002) argues that developing intercultural communicative competence can be achieved through international literature. Applying Hanauer's (2001) method of reading literary texts Focus-on-Cultural Understanding in developing cultural awareness, specifically gender perception (Wasikiewicz-Firlej, 2012) might result in the effectiveness of foreign literature classes. Concerning these issues, we designed our syllabus for a one-term optional subject entitled "Linguocultural Aspect of Literature" for the specialty of literary studies in the Masters' Department at Uzbekistan State University of World Languages (UzSWLU). The results showed that the subject helped students develop a positive attitude toward foreign literature through lingual and cultural means.

Keywords: Foreign Literature, Literary Analysis, Culture-Language-Literature Interconnections, Higher Education, Research

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

Fictional literature serves as a powerful medium for storytelling, enabling authors to create intricate worlds and narratives that captivate readers. Within these literary creations, the linguocultural aspect plays a crucial role in shaping fictional societies, their values, and their interactions. This research explores the interplay between language and culture in fictional literature, highlighting the significant role they play in constructing rich and immersive imaginary worlds.

Drawing from various literary works, it is always interesting to observe how authors employ language to depict and convey cultural aspects within their fictional realms. Language, as a reflection of culture, is utilized to establish distinct linguistic features, dialects, and languages unique to different societies. These linguistic variations not only add depth and authenticity to the narrative but also serve as a means to delineate social hierarchies, power dynamics, and intercultural relationships within the fictional world. Linguocultural aspect of fictional literature influences character development and reader engagement. Characters' linguistic choices, accents, and idiosyncrasies are often intricately linked to their cultural backgrounds, providing insights into their identities, beliefs, and social roles. The manner in which characters communicate, both verbally and non-verbally, reflects the cultural norms and values woven into the fabric of the fictional society. Such linguistic representations allow readers to empathize with characters, fostering a deeper connection and understanding of their experiences. The linguocultural aspect of fictional literature extends beyond the textual realm. Adaptations of literary works into audiovisual formats, such as films or TV series, bring an added dimension to the interplay of language and culture. Casting decisions, accents, and language choices in these adaptations contribute to the construction of a linguocultural landscape that complements and enhances the original written work, providing a multi-sensory experience for audiences. Hence, the linguocultural aspect of fictional literature serves as a vital tool for authors to create immersive and authentic imaginary worlds. By skillfully weaving language and culture together, authors can craft narratives that not only entertain but also explore complex themes, challenge societal norms, and foster cross-cultural understanding. Understanding and analyzing the linguocultural aspects of fictional literature provide insights into the intricate dynamics between language, culture, and storytelling, opening avenues for further exploration in this captivating field of study.

The language is used as a powerful tool in fictional literature to depict cultural aspects, reinforcing the authenticity of the fictional world, and providing readers with a deeper understanding of the characters and their societies. The main factors of how language is used to depict cultural aspects in fictional literature can be as followings:

- *Dialects and Accents:* Authors often utilize dialects and accents to convey cultural diversity and regional identities within their fictional worlds. For instance, in J.K. Rowling's *"Harry Potter"* series, characters like Hagrid and Luna Lovegood speak with distinct dialects and accents that reflect their respective backgrounds, adding depth to their characters and emphasizing their cultural origins;

- *Naming Conventions:* Authors employ naming conventions to reflect cultural traditions, beliefs, and social structures. In J.R.R. Tolkien's *"The Lord of the Rings,"* the Elven language is characterized by melodious and ethereal names like Legolas, Arwen, and Galadriel, which evoke a sense of grace and otherworldliness associated with Elven culture;

- *Rituals and Ceremonies:* Language is often intricately woven into rituals and ceremonies within fictional cultures. In Ursula K. Le Guin's *"A Wizard of Earthsea,"* the protagonist Ged undergoes a naming ceremony where his true name is revealed, symbolizing his cultural identity and his connection to the magical world he inhabits;

- *Code-Switching:* Characters in fictional literature may engage in code-switching, the practice of switching between languages or dialects depending on the context or interlocutors. This reflects the multilingual reality of certain cultures and adds authenticity to the narrative. An example can be found in Junot Díaz's novel *"The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao,"* where characters seamlessly shift between English and Spanish, reflecting the bilingual and bicultural experiences of Dominican-Americans;

- *Taboo Language:* Taboo language and profanity can also be employed to reflect cultural attitudes, values, and social norms. In Anthony Burgess's *"A Clockwork Orange,"* the protagonist and his peers use a unique slang called "Nadsat" to express rebellion and their disassociation from mainstream society, highlighting the counter-cultural aspect of their dystopian world;

- *Politeness and Honorifics:* The use of politeness markers and honorifics in language can reveal hierarchical structures and cultural norms. In many East Asian cultures, such as in the works of Haruki Murakami, there is a strong emphasis on honorifics and polite language to reflect social hierarchies and respect. The choice of pronouns and forms of address can indicate the status and relationships between characters, providing insights into the cultural values of respect and deference;

- *Proverbs, Sayings, and Idioms:* Fictional cultures often have their own set of proverbs, sayings, and idiomatic expressions that reflect their unique beliefs, wisdom, and cultural perspectives. These linguistic elements provide glimpses into the cultural heritage, folklore, and moral values of the fictional society. In George R.R. Martin's *"A Song of Ice and Fire"* series, for example, each region and culture within the fantasy world of Westeros has its own distinct set of idioms and proverbs that reflect their histories and ways of life;

- *Taboos and Censorship:* The presence or absence of certain words or topics in a fictional society can indicate cultural taboos and censorship. For instance, in Ray Bradbury's *"Fahrenheit 451,"* the dystopian society has strict control over language and literature, and books are banned and burned. The absence of certain words and ideas within the narrative reflects the suppression of knowledge and the control over cultural expression;

- *Language Evolution and Change:* Authors may incorporate language evolution and change over time as a reflection of cultural shifts and historical developments within their fictional worlds. This can be seen in the works of Tolkien, where the Elven languages evolve and change as the narrative progresses, mirroring the passage of time and the transformation of Elven cultures;

- *Non-Verbal Communication:* Beyond verbal language, non-verbal communication, such as gestures, body language, and symbolic actions, can also convey cultural aspects. In Frank Herbert's *"Dune,"* for example, the fictional Fremen culture has a complex system of hand gestures and rituals that are deeply rooted in their desert environment and cultural

practices. These non-verbal cues add depth to the cultural portrayal and enrich the reader's understanding of the society.

By utilizing these linguistic techniques, authors can create fictional cultures that are richly textured, authentic, and immersive. The language used in fictional literature becomes a vehicle for cultural expression, enabling readers to explore and appreciate the nuances of diverse imaginary worlds.

Culture, Language and Literature

Considering the issues regarding culture and literature through linguistic means, in Uzbekistan State University of World Languages implemented a new subject named "Linguocultural Aspect of Fictional Literature" for second-year Master students during the autumn term. The duration of the course was from September 15, 2022 to December 19, 2022 and lasted for 15 weeks. The participants of the course were 22 students: 20 females and 2 males. It is a new subject in Uzbekistan and no alternative in World Education System. Th instructor preferred the student-centered classroom by applying Hanauer's (2001) method of reading literary texts Focus-on-Cultural Understanding. As it was a new subject in the education system, Linguaculturology could be associated with the following criteria.

- ✓ Newly emerged linguistic discipline developed within the framework of the anthropocentric paradigm;
- ✓ Interface among linguistics, cultural studies, cognitive linguistics, ethnolinguistics and sociolinguistics;
- ✓ Its own integral aspect of studying language and culture;
- ✓ Deals with the deep level of semantics of linguistic units;
- ✓ Brings into correlation linguistic meanings and the concepts of universal and national cultures.

The whole course consists of 15 lectures and 15 seminars were conducted in relative 2 classes per week. Here given the topics for lectures and the short abstracts per lecture content:

Lecture 1. From Literature to Cultural Literacy
Reading materials focuses on four academic fields—cultural memory, migration and translation, electronic textuality, and biopolitics and the body—and four concepts: textuality, fictionality, rhetoricity and historicity. It stresses multilingualism and is part of the movement of interdisciplinarity within the humanities and between the humanities and other disciplines, but remains a distinctive activity within that larger movement. Cultural literacy, textuality, rhetoricity, fictionality, cultural memory, electronic textuality, migration, interdisciplinarity, multilingualism, comparative studies.

Lecture 2. Developing Cultural Awareness Through Reading Literary Texts
The use of literary texts and ways of reading them in foreign language education, Hanauer's (2001) method of reading literary texts Focus-on-Cultural Understanding in developing cultural awareness, focusing on gender perception as one of the fundamental aspects of culture, attitudes and motivation before and after the controlled reading activity of a culturally loaded text, cultural awareness, intercultural education, gender across cultures, intercultural literature.

Lecture 3. Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence through International Literature

The multiplicity of cultures and plurality of norms of verbal and non-verbal behavior necessitate training in intercultural communication and literature can be used as a rich resource to develop the ability to communicate appropriately in alien cultural settings, types of culture, varieties of English, politeness, principle of power, the principle of solidarity, intelligibility, comprehensibility, acceptability, appropriateness, intercultural communicative competence.

Lecture 4. The Study of Folklore in Literature and Culture: Identification and Interpretation

Two basic steps in the study of folklore in literature and in culture: Empirical (objective-identification) and Speculative (subjective-interpretation). Identification essentially consists of a search for similarities; interpretation depends on delineation of differences. The basic methodology of studying folklore in literature and studying folklore in culture is almost the same. The discipline of folklore has its own methodology applying equally well to literary and cultural problems.

Lecture 5. East-West Literary and Cultural Relations

Is the concept of literature the same in radically different cultures? Does it remain the same within the development of one culture? Are the basic genres (the lyric, epic, and dramatic) comparable? Are certain analogous phenomena in Indian and Western literature indicative of basic similarities between these literatures? Is at least the theory deduced from these literatures similar? Is a unified theory of literature desirable? Are literary canons established mainly according to perceived aesthetic values in the selected works? Analogous tendencies, differences between East and West, New Poetics and Politics of Thinking Latin America / India. West and Different Orientalism.

Lecture 6. British Literature and Culture: British Literary Culture and the Emergence of Postcolonial Aesthetics

Transatlantic Modernism and the Emergence of Postcolonial Literature is a study of midcentury literary institutions integral to the formation of both modernism and postcolonial writing. Modernist Literature, Postcolonial Literature, African Literature, British Literature, Caribbean Literature, Globalization, Race, Book Publishing, History of Radio Broadcasting.

Lecture 7. "Culture" and Literature in American Studies: Multiculturalism

The "End" of American Literature, Multicultural Literature, Comparative Black, Native, Latino/a, and Asian American Fictions, in the United States, Ishmael Reed, Leslie Marmon Silko, Ralph Ellison, N. Scott Momaday, Toni Morrison, Rudolfo Anaya, Sandra Cisneros, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Jessica Hagedorn are among the notable writers of color who have emerged since World War II. All-Americans in their collective mixture of African American, Native American, Asian American, and Hispanic strains.

Lecture 8. Nature and Human in East Literature and Culture

Literature, Culture and the Environment: A Cross-Disciplinary Conversation, human culture and environment provide the material basis and aesthetic reference for literary creation in the perspective of eco-criticism, works should reflect the world while returning to nature and landing on the objective laws of nature.

Lecture 9. Class Structure and Gentleman/Lady in English Victorian Era
Social class, Critical realism, Historical realism, Examining the role of class or social status in the lives of characters and in their society as portrayed in Victorian literature, Charles Dickens's Great Expectations, Jane Austin's Pride and Prejudice, Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Ernest, the Figure of the Gentleman in 19th century Victorian England : The re-Fashioning of a Manhood Ideal, Gentleman Versus Dandy, Domestic Ideology and Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Novel.

Lecture 10. Security and Hospitality in Literature and Culture: Modern and Contemporary Perspectives
Risking hospitality, approaching hospitality, Security and Hospitality in Dialogue, Hospitality, Nostalgia, and the Itinerant Hero(ine) in Dorothy Richardson's "Pilgrimage" and Ford Madox Ford's "Parade's End," Security, Hospitality, and Perversion in Muriel Spark's "Robinson," baiting hospitality.

Lecture 11. Birth, Death, Rebirth in East and West Literature and Culture
Birth, death, and re-birth: The trope of eternal rejuvenation in Isidore Diala's The Lure of Ash, Birth, Death and Rebirth of a Word - Emily Dickson's poem" A word is dead," Who Killed the World? How Can It Be Reborn? The Image of Rebirth in Mad Max: Fury Road, Rebirth Denied: Destruction and Loss in W. G. Sebald's Austerlitz, The Rebirth of the Female Superhero: Kamala Khan's Ms. Marvel.

Lecture 12. Colors: Meaning, Affects, Significance, and Symbolism in World Literature and Culture
Color symbolism in "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Scarlet Letter" by Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Snow White" by the Brothers Grimm, the meaning of colors in literary-and-cultural-studies, Color of Love-Life-Happiness/Loneliness-Death-Sadness, "best" color in the world, magic realism.

Lecture 13. Gender Perspective as a Representation of Culture in Literature
The distinction between female and male writers, feminist perspective, masculine perspective, he/she approach of writing, writing style, life experience, gender significance, inner and outer portrait of the personages, rational versus spiritual, factual versus emotional, Feminist, Gender, Equality.

Lecture 14. Diaspora Culture Depiction and Major Characteristics in Literature
Diaspora literature, major characteristics, language and culture clash, biographic method application, time and space correlation, Asian-American literature, Asian-European literature, Diaspora versus Expatriate, "The Kite Runner" by Khaled Hosseini, "White Teeth" by Zadie Smith, "Midnight's Children" by Salman Rushdie.

Lecture 15. Correlation between Literature and Popular Culture: High Level/ Low Level
Harry Potter series, Popular literature versus Serious literature, graphic novel, people and popular, culture and cultural, Sources, Transmission, Popular versus Folk, Created By the People/Created For the People, popular literature and mass media.

Research articles related to each lecture topic were read, discussed and analyzed by the students. It helped to get familiar with nature of research papers in the filed of literature while the participants had opportunity to compare the outcomes with their own MA thesis.

Choosing the specific assessment methods became the most challenging part of the course and used the following types:

1) *Literary Analysis Essays:* Students can be assigned essays where they analyze a specific work of fiction from a linguocultural perspective. They may be required to explore the cultural themes, symbolism, language use, and narrative techniques employed by the author. The essays can assess students' ability to critically analyze and interpret fictional texts within their cultural context.

2) *Oral Presentations:* Students can be asked to deliver oral presentations on a selected topic related to the linguocultural aspect of fictional literature. They might present their findings on a specific author, literary movement, or cultural influence on literature. This assessment method evaluates students' research skills, presentation abilities, and their understanding of the subject matter.

3) *Research Papers*: Assigning research papers allows students to delve deeper into specific aspects of the linguocultural dimension of fictional literature. Students can explore topics such as the representation of cultural identities, the impact of language on narrative structure, or the role of translation in cross-cultural literary exchanges. Research papers assess students' ability to conduct independent research, analyze scholarly sources, and synthesize information.

4) *Critical Reviews:* Students can be asked to write critical reviews of literary works, focusing on the linguocultural elements employed by the author. They may analyze the use of language, cultural references, or the portrayal of cultural values in the text. This assessment method evaluates students' critical thinking skills, their ability to articulate their opinions, and their understanding of the relationship between language and culture in literature.

5) *Group Discussions*: Group discussions provide an opportunity for students to engage in dialogue and exchange ideas about the linguocultural aspect of fictional literature. They can be assigned specific texts or topics for discussion, allowing students to analyze and interpret the linguistic and cultural elements together. Group discussions assess students' communication skills, collaborative abilities, and their capacity to express and defend their viewpoints.

6) *Creative Projects:* Students can be encouraged to create their own fictional works that incorporate linguocultural aspects. For example, they might write short stories or poems that reflect the cultural values and linguistic choices of a specific community. This assessment method allows students to apply their understanding of the subject matter creatively.

It's important to note that the choice of assessment methods should align with the learning outcomes of the course and provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities in relation to the linguocultural aspect of fictional literature. The specific assessment methods may vary depending on the teaching approach, resources available, and the desired learning objectives of the course. Here an example of a creative project that incorporates linguocultural aspects in the context of fictional literature:

Project Title: "Cultural Tapestry: Linguocultural Short Story Collection"

Description: In this creative project, students are tasked with creating a collection of short stories that showcase the linguocultural aspects of different communities or regions. The goal is to explore how language, culture, and identity intertwine in fictional narratives.

Instructions:

- *Research*: Students are required to select a specific culture, community, or region that they find intriguing. They should conduct in-depth research on the language, customs, traditions, values, and historical context of the chosen culture.

- *Conceptualization:* Based on their research, students develop a set of fictional characters and scenarios that reflect the linguocultural nuances of the chosen culture. They should consider aspects such as language use, dialects, idioms, storytelling traditions, and cultural symbolism.

- *Short Story Writing*: Students write a series of short stories that revolve around the chosen culture or community. Each story should highlight different linguistic and cultural elements, while also exploring universal themes and narratives. The stories can be interconnected or stand-alone pieces.

- *Linguocultural* Integration: Students are encouraged to incorporate linguistic elements specific to the chosen culture throughout their stories. This can include the use of culturally significant words, phrases, idioms, or even incorporating a specific dialect or linguistic style. The linguistic choices should contribute to the authenticity and richness of the fictional world.

- *Reflection and Analysis:* Alongside the short stories, students provide a reflective analysis of the linguocultural aspects they integrated into their narratives. They discuss the significance of these elements and explain how they contribute to the overall understanding and appreciation of the culture being portrayed. They can also reflect on any challenges or insights gained during the creative process.

- *Presentation:* Students present their short story collection to their peers, showcasing their creative work and sharing their insights into the linguocultural aspects explored. This can be done through a reading, a multimedia presentation, or a poster display that highlights key linguistic and cultural elements.

Assessment Criteria:

- *Creativity and Originality:* The extent to which students demonstrate innovative and imaginative storytelling techniques that effectively convey the linguocultural aspects.

- *Linguocultural Integration:* The successful incorporation of linguistic and cultural elements into the short stories, showcasing an understanding of their significance and impact on the narratives.

- Cultural Understanding and Research: The depth and accuracy of the research conducted on the chosen culture, as well as the clear understanding and portrayal of its linguistic and cultural aspects.

- Writing Skills: The quality of writing, including narrative structure, character development, dialogue, and descriptive elements.

- Reflection and Analysis: The depth of reflection and critical analysis provided in the accompanying reflections, demonstrating insights into the linguocultural aspects explored.

This creative project allows students to engage with the linguocultural aspects of fictional literature in a hands-on and imaginative manner. It encourages them to explore the relationship between language, culture, and storytelling while fostering their creativity and understanding of diverse cultures.

When working on a creative project that incorporates linguocultural aspects, students may encounter several potential challenges.

Cultural Understanding and Research: Gaining a deep and accurate understanding of a specific culture or community can be challenging, especially if the students are not familiar with it. Conducting thorough research to grasp the linguistic and cultural nuances is essential but may require significant effort and access to reliable resources.

- Linguistic Accuracy: Incorporating authentic linguistic elements specific to a particular culture or dialect can be challenging, particularly if students are not native speakers or have limited exposure to the language. Maintaining linguistic accuracy while creating engaging fictional narratives may require extra research, consultation with experts, or seeking feedback from individuals familiar with the language.

- Balancing Authenticity and Stereotypes: Students need to be mindful of avoiding stereotypes or misrepresentations while portraying cultural elements in their stories. Striking a balance between authenticity and respectful representation is crucial to ensure that the project does not perpetuate harmful or inaccurate cultural narratives.

- Creative Expression and Narrative Structure: Crafting compelling fictional narratives that effectively convey the linguocultural aspects can be a creative challenge. Students may face difficulties in integrating cultural elements seamlessly into the storylines, maintaining cohesive narratives, and engaging readers while conveying the intended messages.

- Sensitivity and Appropriateness: It is crucial for students to approach the project with cultural sensitivity and respect. They need to be aware of potential cultural sensitivities or taboos and ensure that their creative work does not offend or misrepresent the chosen culture or community.

Conclusion

Based on the information provided, here's a breakdown of the 15-week subject schedule for the 22 students conducting research in foreign literature:

Week 1:
- Lecture: Introduction to the subject and its goals, overview of research methodologies in foreign literature.

Week 2-14:
- Lecture: Each week, cover a specific topic related to foreign literature research, such as literary theories, comparative analysis, translation studies, or specific genres or periods in foreign literature.

- Seminar: Held immediately after each lecture, where students discuss and engage in activities related to the lecture topic. This can include analyzing literary texts, sharing research progress, discussing challenges and strategies, and receiving feedback from peers and the instructor.

Week 15:
- Lecture: Recap of the subject, highlighting key takeaways, and providing guidance for future research in foreign literature.

- Seminar: Final seminar session for students to present their research findings, share insights, and receive feedback from their peers and the instructor.

Throughout the 15 weeks, students also worked on their individual research projects outside of the lecture and seminar hours. The instructor could provide guidance, resources, and regular check-ins to monitor the students' progress and offer support as needed. It's important to note that the specific topics and activities within each lecture and seminar may vary based on the subject's curriculum and the students' research interests. This breakdown provides a general framework to allocate time for lectures, seminars, and independent research over the 15-week period.

References

Jay, G. (2001). The End of 'American' Literature: Toward a Multicultural Practice. College English 53, 264–81.

Moretti, F. (2000). Conjectures on world literature. New Left Review 1, 54–68.

Patil, Z.N. (2008). Culture, Language and Literature: Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence through International Literature. English Scholarship Beyond Borders.

Rezaei, S. & Naghibian, M. (2018). Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence through Short Stories: A Qualitative Inquiry.

Segal, N. (2015). From Literature to Cultural Studies. Humanities, 4, 68–79.

Contact email: dishemu2017@gmail.com