



Age as a factor in Russian EFL teacher attitudes towards literature in language education

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Younger EFL teachers do not use literature as frequently in their lessons.
- Older EFL teachers encountered literature more often as learners.
- Enjoyment of reading in both the L1 and L2 show declines among younger EFL teachers.
- The majority of teacher participants agreed that literature benefitted language learning.

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1. Introduction

As Maley (2001) points out, the role of literature in the classical, humanist tradition of teaching languages was carried over into the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context in the early 20th century and overall has continued ever since. Gilroy and Parkinson (1996) write, for example, that literature has always occupied a prominent place in EFL for many learners, noting that English textbooks in South Asia are sometimes simply a collection of literary texts. Maley, likewise, observes that literature remains essential to the teaching of language in India. However, as Carter (2007, p. 6) notes, literature “disappeared from the language curriculum” from the 1940s to the 1960s due to, as Maley describes it, a shift in focus from educating a small scholarly elite to mass-producing functionally competent users of English, where literature’s ‘deviant’ language (Gilroy & Parkinson, 1996, p. 213) was deemed unsuitable for language learning. In the last three decades, however, the use of literature in foreign language (FL) education

has seen renewed interest, with the publication of several resource books for teachers both in the UK (e.g. Paran & Robinson, 2016; Carter & Long, 1991; Collie & Slater, 1987; Duff & Maley, 1990; Lazar, 1993) and elsewhere, such as Hong Kong (Kennedy & Falvey, 1999) and Turkey (Inan & Yüksel, 2013). There have also been three state-of-the-art papers (Paran, 2008; Gilroy & Parkinson, 1996; Lott, 1988) and, more recently, the first systematic review of research on literature in language teaching (Fogal, 2015). Carter links this renewed interest to the rise of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the 70s and 80s, which recognized the potential contribution of literature to improving not only vocabulary, but also reading and critical thinking skills, thanks to its more creative and representational use of language. Providing evidence in support of this trend, Tatsuki (2015) notes that literature has been integrated into English language programs in many countries across Europe and Asia. More recently, literature has been accorded greater attention in the updated descriptors for the Council of Europe’s *Common European Framework of Reference for Language: Learning, teaching, assessment* (CEFR) (North, Goodier, & Piccardo, 2017).

In parallel with this growing popularity, several studies have been undertaken across the globe, for example in Western Europe (Bloemert, Paran, Jansen, & van de Grift, 2017; Duncan & Paran, 2017; Bloemert, Jansen, & van de Grift, 2016), the Middle East (Qutub, 2018) and Asia (e.g. the papers in Teranishi, Saito, & Wales, 2015), to research teacher and student attitudes towards literature in language education (LLE), effective teaching methods, and literature’s effects on learner performance. In Russia, the context for the study reported here, a growing number of writers have similarly started to stress the benefits of literature to foreign language learning (Klementsova, 2012; Rogacheva, 2015; Zhuvikina & Feoktistova, 2011), although empirical research on LLE in the country, notably on teacher attitudes and practices, remains

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