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CONTEMPORARY CHILDREN'S WRITERS FOR CONTEMPORARY ELT – THE USE OF M. MORPURGO'S AND D. WALLIAMS' LITERARY WORKS FOR MORE ADVANCED AND PURPOSEFUL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Abstract: The paper will explore the opportunities of teaching English to children and young people by implementing contemporary literature works of famous children's writers. Namely, it will delve into the importance of teaching ELT students through the study of literature that, due to the importance of providing the variety of materials and ways in which students can make improvements in their English skills, should be included more often in regular study programs. This being important can be observed also through the necessity to provide the materials with the content interesting and appealing enough so that young people can truly enjoy reading it while acquiring and improving their English skills. In other words, we will study the literary impact on the ELT methodology that can be recognized in the works of two children's writers – Michael Morpurgo's and David Walliams'. These two authors cannot be anything other but different considering their way of writing – style, form, genres, topics explored. However, their books are also very closely related to the topics children and young people can find interesting and relevant enough to reach for them and start reading. We will also explore the challenges teachers can face within these attempts, but moreover, the possible solutions that could lead to more dynamic and purposeful lessons. The abundance of the topics they explore and the richness of the language they use can truly be an important milestone in changing the methodology of teaching English to non-native students.

Keywords: contemporary children literature, ELT methodology, English language, Anglophone children's writers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, and due to the overgrowing use of social media and digital technology, it has become immensely challenging to motivate students to take a book into their hands and start reading. For teachers, it is even more

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challenging, considering the fact that they have a very important role of educating young minds, precisely through reading and writing, practicing comprehension and engaging imagination. In this regard, the question is being asked – what could be done in this changing world in order to motivate children to read more and not to dread the books as such. What is the solution for school systems and teachers to change the perspective of learning but not to give up the materials that are aimed to be educational and necessary for young minds? This being said, the aim of this paper is to explore the variety of literary resources that could be more implemented into the English language teaching, for the purpose of developing better students' involvement, boosting their motivation and making the materials used for language learning more relevant and purposeful, while at the same time nurturing their reading habits.

2. THEORETICAL APPROACH

Namely, if we turn our attention to a lot of theories that so far have been exploring the importance of implementing literature in the teaching of English language, it is evident that they all imply that this implementation of literary works could help learners adopt the language in a better and more successful way through several factors that can refer to different aspects of ELT. This can also be observed through the importance of not only developing reading skills, but also through better acquiring and improving various language skills, considering the fact that the language is being taught through the real-life context, and topics in which they can recognize their own thoughts, attitudes, interests, thus often relatable to young minds.

Gillian Lazar (1993) exploits this topic through a careful elaboration of several approaches and aspects. Among the ones that are the most important she emphasizes the following: encouraging language acquisition, expanding student's awareness, developing students' interpretative abilities, and educating the whole person. In this regard, she further describes several approaches that can be implemented while using literature as a methodological approach in language learning:

- **A language based-approach** – studying the language of the literary text that can help integrating the language and literature syllabi more closely, allowing students to make meaningful interpretations, increase their overall awareness and understanding, and draw on their knowledge of familiar grammatical, lexical and/or discourse categories for the purpose of making aesthetic judgments of the text (Lazar 1993: 23);

- **Literature as content** – most traditional one, literature taught by itself, teaching social, political, historical and cultural background to a text, literary genres and rhetorical devices, etc.;

– **Literature for personal enrichment** – used to encourage students to draw on their own personal experiences, feelings and opinions. This enables them to become more actively involved – intellectually and emotionally in learning English, while helping acquisition (Lazar 1993: 23).

In our experience insofar, the ideal way would be to combine all three approaches in order to achieve best possible results, which will be described in detail later on.

3. THE EXAMPLE OF GOOD PRACTICE

The motivation and idea for this paper's topic came from my own experience of teaching English as the first language, thus experiencing the opportunity to implement language theory through the context of everyday life found in literature, and not simply implementing grammar rules on the example sentences and ready-made textbook resources. What we achieved through this practice was to explore the language use, rules and patterns through reading comprehension, conversation, discussion on the variety of topics we found in different literary works. In many (international) schools all over the world, where English is taught as the first language, most resources, students' books and curricula are focused on teaching/learning English in the context of various literary texts, fictional and non-fictional, where grammar or linguistic rules are given within the material, not separately, so the main idea is to learn English in its natural flow, varying the types and genres of texts, allowing students to feel its nature and "behavior", rather than making students learn the theory outside the practice and everydayness, disabling them to get the opportunity to really know and understand the language.

Through our practice, while observing the results, it has been shown to us that this way of teaching provides better overall results and positive feedback. Generally speaking, at some point, it has become obvious that in most cases you can notice that most students can be excellent at theoretical part, but lacking knowledge and confidence to communicate actively in English, due to not having enough practice and the contact with a real-life language. In this way, when they learn the language through literary works as well, they are allowed to "feel" the real language, to get to know its various aspects and, at the same time, those rules necessary for a fluent language use are taught indirectly, without imposing strict compliance with it. In other words, they acquire the theory in indirect way, while focusing on reading, interpreting, exploring the variety of language aspects.

4. WHY INCLUDING LITERATURE IN ELT?

If we consider the reasons for introducing literature into language learning process, apart from the above mentioned aspects, we also have to observe some additional aspects that could make difference and help in understanding this necessity. Collie and Slater explore (1990) four main reasons which can motivate a language teacher to use literature in their classrooms (Collie, Slater 1990, in Hişmanoğlu 2005: 55). These could be described as:

1. **Authentic material that provides valuable language and artistic insight.** – Literature by itself is undoubtedly authentic material, and even though it is not primarily aimed for the use in language learning classroom, it can be a complementary resource to usual materials used for ESL, as it provides artistic and communicative functions and meanings of a language used by native speakers;
2. **Cultural enrichment.** – Literary works can give a specific cultural insight into the language and its cultural features, making it closer to non-native learners. It can allow learners to discover and learn more about one's history, language, customs and traditions, being a specific window into the unknown, or less known, which can further nourish their interest, knowledge and cultural reference;
3. **Language enrichment.** – It provides learners with a wide range of lexical and syntactic items, written and spoken language, jargon, colloquial expressions, discourse functions of sentences, variety of structures, connecting ideas. It allows students more productivity and diversity of language, better communicative and cultural competence, along with the naturalness of the authentic texts;
4. **Personal involvement.** – This might be the most important aspect in the entire process. While reading, learners get the opportunity to be the part of a text, they become personally involved and invested into the plot, characters' relations; understanding and empathy develop more profoundly and it can truly impact entire personality development of a learner/reader (Hişmanoğlu 2005: 55).

Furthermore, apart from these four main reasons, Maley (1989: 12) also sets out universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy, suggestive power, ambiguity, and some other factors requiring the use of literature as a powerful resource in the classroom context (Maley 1989, in Hişmanoğlu 2005: 55).

Although we will not go into detail regarding these additional reasons, we will still emphasize that literature itself, as seen above, can offer a numerous aspects

through which it can be observed – much more than one could assume at first. In this regard, we could specifically set out the impact of being non-trivial as most of the usual texts that are being explored in ESL classrooms are, providing the readers the ability to connect on the grounds of personal experience, being relatable, which we will specifically discuss later on. Let alone the aspects of being various in its topics and genres, interesting enough to potentially find its audience in all the groups, the fact is that literature is by itself highly suggestive and associative. Getting closer to a specific cultural aspect, the use of language by a certain group can immensely impact the entire learning process, as we, the teachers, in this way, not only provide the additional material for learning the language, but also the opportunity to expand knowledge, understanding of differences and cultural awareness, and simply be informed. Finally, readers are able to develop their cognitive and analytical skills, and in this regard, literature opens entirely new world for them. If they want to fully understand it, they need to engage themselves, include their past and future experience, engage themselves in cultural exchange of opinion, develop critical thinking and learn how to be active participants (Sage 1987: 43). After all, implementing literature in ESL classroom means shifting from teacher-based to student-centered approach, which should be the main aim of our teaching endeavors.

5. THE CHOICE OF LITERATURE

The choice of literature that can be implemented is very important factor for the ones who make decisions about the teaching material, but primarily for the teachers. Thus a lot of different factors have to be taken into account. Some of the factors that could help in the process of deciding are: the relevance of the topics, the type of the language used, the availability online, i.e. the possibility of using their digital versions and accompanying resources, and the level of students' knowledge.

"When selecting the literary texts to be used in language classes, the language teacher should take into account needs, motivation, interests, cultural background and language level of the students" (Collie, Slater 1990, in Hişmanoğlu 2005: 57). If the text provokes the learners' interest and has an overall positive reaction, it can be considered a good choice. Also, reading "a literary text is more likely to have a long-term and valuable effect upon the learners' linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge when it is meaningful and amusing. […] Language difficulty has to be considered as well. If the language of the literary work is simple, this may facilitate the comprehensibility of the literary text […]" (Collie, Slater 1990, in Hişmanoğlu 2005: 57). Other factors, equally important, are those of interest, relevance to real-life experience of a learner, emotions, situations that are presented

differently than usual, getting in touch with art itself and the pure enjoyment that can result from it (Collie, Slater 1990, in Hişmanoğlu 2005: 57).

Therefore, the aim of the paper is to elaborate on the benefits of using the extracts (or the entire novels, if possible) of two children's authors, whose work has been widely acknowledged and recognized as relevant for the educational purposes – the novels/works of Michael Morpurgo and David Walliams cover all the above mentioned criteria.

The first one, Michael Morpurgo, has been used as a main contemporary literature resource for native speakers and the ones that learn English as the first or second language for many years, being highly appreciated by the critics and audience for his topics that often depict the stories of children and young people facing various issues, family and personal drama and their (often) successful dealing with it through personal quest, adventurous moments, exploring nature, different cultures and customs, history, and often using self-reflection. His work is characterized by the use of extraordinary descriptive, lively language, carefully chosen and skilfully used to meet the needs of both his readers and the parents/educators. His dialogues are sharp, witty, dynamic and colorful with the abundance of metaphors, phrases and idioms, yet not too complicated for students to fully grasp the meaning, leading them through the world of English language in its best version, beautiful and not sufficiently explored in the classrooms of our country.

> I think a lot about Lucky, and I wish I didn't, because Lucky's dead. It makes me so sad. It was me that chose his name, too. But Lucky turned out to be not so lucky after all. I want to cry, but I can't. What's worse is I don't know why I can't cry. I just can't.
>
> Sometimes I tell myself that maybe I'm in the middle of a bad dream, a terrible nightmare, that soon I'll wake up and Lucky will be alive and everything will be just as it was. But dreams and nightmares only end when you wake up, and I can't wake up. I try. I try all the time, but I can't. So then I know it can't be a dream, that what happened to me and to Lucky was real and true, that Lucky is dead and I'm locked inside my head and can't get out.
>
> I can't wake up. But I can hear. I can feel, too. I can smell. And I can remember. I remember it all, every moment of how it happened. It was Saturday, just after breakfast. I had the whole weekend ahead of me. Footie in the park with Marty and the others. Then I'd be going out with Dad on Sunday. We'd be going sailing again at Salcombe. I couldn't wait.
>
> The phone rang. Dad. It would be Dad. He always rang on Saturday mornings. As usual, Mum didn't pick it up at once. She just let it ring and ring. And when she did pick it up she wasn't at all friendly. It was a long time now since she'd been friendly with Dad. Lucky yapped at the phone. Lucky yapped like a puppy at just about everything – the postman, the milkman, a fly on the window, a dog on TV. He wasn't actually a puppy at all. He was even older than me. He'd just never grown up, that's

> all. Always busy, always bouncy.
>
> Mum had the phone in her hand now, and I could hear Dad saying, "Hello? Hello?"
>
> "Take him for a walk, Robbie", said Mum, ignoring Dad on the phone. "I want a word with your father." She was always 'having a word' with Dad, but they never sorted things out between them. I sat where I was because I wanted to hear what was going on. "Robbie! Do as I say. Take Lucky for a walk!" I pretended I hadn't heard her. "Robbie, please take that dog for a walk. All right you can get yourself an ice-cream."
>
> "Cool", I said.
>
> Then she got really mad. "Don't say 'cool'. You know how I hate it. Out!"
>
> "OK. Cool", I said, just to irritate her. "Come on, Lucky. Walkies." (Morpurgo 2007: 5–6)

The beginning of the novel *Cool!* (2007) can be easily introduced by itself in class with several options of what kind of practice we could aim for. The one that stands out would be the use of narrative tenses in this introductory passage. Simple, yet effective way of unravelling the story provides a more profound and logical example of the past tenses used, through a personal story of a young boy who is in coma, reminiscing the events that led to the accident.

> Lucky was out of the gate and into the road before I could stop him. I ran after him. I heard the car, heard the squeal of brakes, saw Lucky disappear underneath the wheels. But I never saw the car that hit me. I felt it though. I even heard my own scream. I was flying through the air, and falling, tumbling, rolling.
>
> Then I was in the ambulance. But somehow I couldn't wake up. Nothing seemed to work. I couldn't move anything, not my fingers, not my legs. But inside my head I had woken up. Inside I was wide awake.
>
> I remember thinking in the ambulance, "Maybe I'm dead. Maybe this is what being dead really feels like." I've thought a lot about that ever since, and it doesn't worry me any more, not often anyway. I know I can't be dead because my leg hurts all the time, so does my head. I feel like I've been walked all over by a herd of elephants. I mean, you can't hurt if you're dead, can you? (Morpurgo 2007: 5–6)

On the other hand, there are the works of a contemporary, well-known children's writer and comedian David Walliams, whose novels have become very popular throughout past few years. The author of novels such as *Gangsta Granny*, *Demon Dentist*, *The World's Worst Children*, *The World's Worst Parents*, etc. Walliams does not use Standard English in his novels, but exploits more colloquial, informal, jargon-like language, often filled with made-up words and phrases, for the purpose of achieving higher level of humor and wittiness, and in his own

words – for children to have fun (Walliams 2024)[1]. Often referred to as a contemporary successor of Roald Dahl (whose books he read passionately as a child), his books, even by titles and images themselves imply a different world of literature, providing abundance of topics appealing to children in an interesting and fun way. While depicting a unique sense of humor, irony and play with words, they also deal with everyday topics and issues of growing up, getting accepted, understood and seen by peers and grownups, portraying certain "types" of children, parents and teachers present all around us, hence enable teachers and students to enjoy this reading process more, finding the examples relatable. "Stories encourage children to believe in change. It might be for them to change, progress, grow. Or for the world to change. And young people are now setting the agenda" (Walliams 2024).

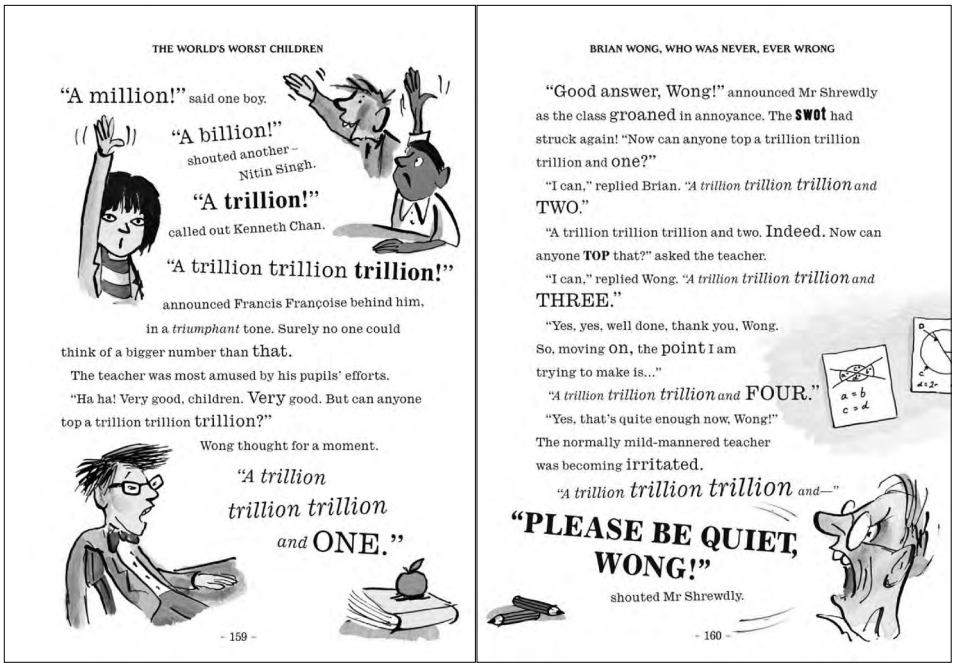
He, for example, starts his book *The World's Worst Children* (2016) in the following way:

> Introduction by Raj, a newsagent.
>
> Please, please, please, a thousand pleases, and yet one more please
>
> DO NOT READ THIS BOOK!
>
> If you have already bought it, destroy it. If you are browsing through it in your local librarium, take it outside, tear it up, stamp on it, tear it up again, just to be sure and then bury the pieces DEEP underground. TO BE TOTALLY SAFE.
>
> This AWFUL book, and it is awful, especially the speling, will have a very bad influence on young minds. It will give children lots and lots of ideas about how to be even naughtier than they already are, and some of them are already EXTREMELY naughty. It is an outrage and I for one will be calling for this book to be banned (Walliams 2016 : 9).

He plays with graphic aspects of the book, equally as with the syntax, semantics, symbols, etc. He purposefully uses a wrong spelling, while at the same time pointing out that the book has a bad spelling. On many pages, he also points out that you can find some bad words in the book, while using them himself, acting in the form of reverse psychology for his readers. If he says that you should not read the book, you will be curious enough to read it (especially if you are a child). The way he treats his readers (children) is to the level of sympathy and empathy, emphasizing that he understands them, knows what they think about reading, thus tries to appeal to their preferences, opinion, attitude, validating the common notion that children do not really like reading. This is a good way to introduce the book in class as well, as it might seem more as a game/fun rather than as a necessity to learn something. And through such kind of work, teachers

[1] https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/authors/david-walliams-children-reading-astrochimp/

can almost stealthily present the topic, the lesson, making students participate in this learning process without being fully aware that this is a book they will learn something from. Walliams himself claims that he writes books particularly for those who don't like reading, as he wants to make books appealing to this part of audience, acknowledging the importance of reading for children. "So why is it so important that every child reads? It's important for children to read for pleasure as a child, or chances are they will never read as an adult" (Walliams 2024).



Picture 1: The example of the graphic and fonts used to align with the topic and main characters of the novel *World Worst Children*.

Although often criticized for the use of blatant language and inappropriate (more childish-like associations), he is undoubtedly "ideal" for those children who don't really like reading. "If our books don't capture children's imaginations, they will stop reading, never read as an adult, and books will eventually die out. And everyone will be glued to their screens. Scrolling. Scrolling. Scrolling. Not knowing what they are looking for and never ever finding it" (Walliams 2024).

Being energetic, vast in topics and humor, "easy to digest" and often silly, with interesting and colorful graphics, that often depict the story and atmosphere in a more appealing way for the young, many chapters of his novels can be used

as a good base for language learning and reading comprehension.[2] What could be used from these resources is, e.g. correcting bad spelling, analysis of onomatopoeic words, symbolism of some characters and their behavior, the use of adjectives and descriptive language, as well as speech practice of discussing prototypes of certain characters.

This being said, we could observe the two examples as the perfect grounds for exploring *pros and cons* of having literature as the part of ESL teaching. Although we can advocate for only one of the sides, especially if we had explored the impact of literature in the classroom before, the truth is that nowadays, with all the innovations and constant need for changes and classroom dynamics, literature can provide abundance of resources and opportunities to teach the language in a non-standard form.

6. IDEAS AND ADVANTAGES

The advantages of using literature resources are numerous. Apart from providing the variety of topics that can be explored and thus used for the language practice, literature is a unique way of introducing language parts without having to insist on theory and reiterating grammar rules and out-of-context phrases and language bits. Nowadays, this could be helped out through the use of digital resources that can provide more options for teachers to plan the lessons and for students to have an easy access to them. Namely, having digital books, excerpts and practice sheet of these two authors at hand, you can easily download, copy, plan and conduct the lesson, providing innovative and dynamic manner for students to learn English through reading and analyzing for specific context. Also, students can be motivated and encouraged to practice not only reading, but writing and speaking more often. Working on the variety of literary texts in class, teachers can nourish learners' skills in multitude of ways. One excerpt can serve for several purposes – reading, understanding, interpreting (through speaking activities), critical thinking, and writing. In this way, introducing more diverse resources can also be seen as economical, in terms of time-management and availability of materials. Especially when it comes to writing, that can be especially challenging for many students, if you provide good and interesting examples, these activities can encourage them to try writing on their own, in a stress-free manner (Stern 1991: 332).

The challenge here is to be creative and confident enough to choose the corresponding material, (considering the level of students' knowledge and its availability), but it is also important to know the options and where to look for them.

[2] https://www.mrmsmusings.com/2021/07/i-read-david-walliams-books-shocking.html

With a plethora of resources and opportunities to choose from, especially online, the teachers can, with a clear objective and willingness to step out of the ordinary, out of the safe zone, allow themselves creativity and inventiveness that could impact the overall perspective of ELT. It can bring about success and amazing long-lasting results.

In this regard, the works of these two authors can be found in numerous digital editions, in the form of audio-books and extracts, as well as free available online chapters that could be used in class along with the corresponding resources to practice. Hence, the possible argument that it is hardly manageable to find and use some of these resources is almost implausible. For many of them, you don't need a special subscription programme, nor is it necessary to spend hours and hours searching for them. For example, there are very detailed and well-organized official sites of both Michael Morpurgo[3] and David Walliams[4] that not only provide basic information about the authors and their novels, but also offer a lot of free resources to be used in class by simply downloading them. In this case, you can even use the resources with excerpts only, while motivating and encouraging learners to read the entire novels by themselves if they want.

The right choice of literary materials and worksheet used can be a useful tool in the further advancement of language learning, as they do not explore isolated grammar or vocabulary units, but provide the opportunity for exploring a vivid everyday language, which is more likely to be heard in reality, outside the classroom, with a variety of topics and perspectives, that can suit many different learners and be relatable to a certain extent.

This has been proven to be much more successful method that could facilitate lesson planning and getting appropriate and desirable feedback. Moreover, being placed into the world of literature, English language teaching can also show advancement and keeping up the pace with the contemporary trends and needs, by using digital resources that could make the learning process much more attractive and dynamic, emphasizing learners active role in it.

One of the arguments against the use of literature in ESL classrooms would be that "literature involves a special, or unusual, use of language" (Lazar 1993: 5). Meaning, it could be said that literature language is "difficult", often "out of ordinary" and not easily applied with everyone in ESL classroom. While this might be true to a certain extent, the right choice of literary work could do more wonders for a learner than a regular, usual text sample used in English learning textbooks. The suggested authors, therefore, are a good example of getting closer to the young learners and making the resources meaningful and rich with language items that

[3] https://www.michaelmorpurgo.com/

[4] https://www.worldofdavidwalliams.com/

could be learned. If the right choice is made – the lesson(s) could be conducted more easily. As Lazar further implies: "Perhaps it is difficult deciding which texts are literary because one of the hallmarks of literature is that it feeds creatively on every possible style and register – it has become the one form of discourse in which any use of language is permissible. At the same time, many linguists have pointed out that there are a number of features of literary language which can be isolated. Many of these features occur in other forms of discourse as well, but in many literary texts they combine to form a highly unified and consistent effect, which strongly reinforces the message of the text" (Lazar 1993: 6). Thus, learning the language and about it involves many different aspects, that together can do a lot in the course of language acquisition and better understanding. Many could argue that some of these features can be easily taught through standard text forms in various students' books, but what stands out in literature is the perfect combination of linguistic, semantic, metaphorical and stylistic items that, being brought together, can form the ideal language forms that exist not only in books, but in real life as well. "[L]iterature does not constitute a particular type of language in itself, but […] it may reveal a higher incidence of certain kinds of linguistic features which are tightly patterned in the text. […] On the other hand, we have also seen that they can be found in other forms of discourse as well, for example:

– metaphors and similes are used in everyday colloquial speech;

– assonance and alliteration can be found in children's rhymes and advertising jingles.

[…] Literary language is therefore not completely separate from other forms of language. This obviously has some implications for the use of literature in the language classroom" (Lazar 1993: 7–8).

For example, you can explore the use of idioms, metaphors and other stylistic figures through the exploration of Morpurgo's novels. There is the abundance of resources that could help a teacher in planning and conducting the lesson. Teaching narrative tenses, for instance, or reported speech, could be done through preparing an excerpt from the novels *Toro!Toro!* or *War Horse*. Considering the amazing storytelling technique this author has, the abundance of materials is undeniable, since in each of his novels you could find even a short section that could provide enough resources for exploring either narrative tenses, narration styles or sequence of tenses, the use of similes and metaphors, etc. Also, the great example of how an inner monologue applies the tenses out of the usually taught aspects is given in the novel *Cool!*, the book in which you can choose any of the chapters and there could be numerous resources. In our own experience, we provided an audio-book version for the students to first listen to certain chapters, one by one, discuss, introduce themselves with the topic, and then work on specific activities that involve not only reading comprehension questions, but also investigating

certain style of narration and getting to know more on inner monologue technique. Since the whole story is told from the point of view of a boy who is in coma after a horrible car accident, while he is in hospital – he can hear them all, remembers everything, but cannot move or react – although claustrophobic at first, the story grabs the attention of the learners, as they (while listening the unwinding of the story) can feel the connection with the narrator, can sense what he is sensing; they are being dragged into a story and hence the impact and understanding is better.

michael morpurgo

War Horse



War Horse – Joey

'In the old school they use now for the Village Hall, below the clock that has stood always at one minute past ten, hangs a small dusty painting of a horse. He stands, splendid red bay with a remarkable white cross emblazoned on his forehead and with four perfectly matched white socks. He looks wistfully out of the picture, his ears pricked forward, his head turned as if he has just noticed us standing there.

To many who glance up at it casually, as they might do when the hall is opened up for Parish meetings, for harvest suppers or evening socials, it is merely a tarnished old oil painting of some unknown horse by a competent but anonymous artist. To them the picture is so familiar that it commands little attention. But those who look more closely will see, written in fading black copperplate writing across the bottom of the bronze frame:

Joey

Painted by Captain James Nicholls, autumn 1914.

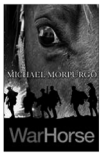
Some in the village, only a very few now and fewer as each year goes by, remember Joey as he was. His story is written so that neither he nor those who knew him, not the war they lived and died in, will be forgotten.'

(*War Horse*, Author's Note, page 1)

Read War Horse and make a note of any significant events in Joey's life.
Who did he meet in his story?
What work did he have to do?
How did he get back home?
Using your notes to help you, create a timeline to represent Joey's life.
Include the names of any people or horses that were important at that time and include an explanation about what events took place during his life.

michael morpurgo

War Horse



War Horse – Zoey

'And he walked away from me leading Zoey behind him. His head was lowered and he looked suddenly a shrunken man.

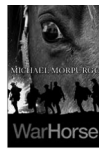
It was then that I fully realised I was being abandoned and I began to neigh, a high-pitched cry of pain and anxiety that I shrieked out through the village. Even old Zoey, obedient and placid as she always was, stopped and would not be moved on no matter how hard Albert's father pulled her. She turned, tossed up her head and shouted her farewell. But her cries became weaker and she was finally dragged away and out of my sight…'

(*War Horse*, Chapter 4, Page 32)

War Horse is written from the perspective of Joey, about his life as a military animal.
Try to imagine you are Zoey, thinking from her perspective instead of Joey's.
Her companion and friend has been taken away and she has to return alone to work on a farm where life is hard, food is rationed and the young men, including Albert are going to war.
Write a paragraph as though you are Zoey.
Joey has returned with Albert from France and you are telling Joey about your own experiences of life whilst he was away.

michael morpurgo

War Horse



War Horse – Military Animals

'Begging your pardon, sir,' he said. 'But I remembers you telling us when we first come here that a horse's life is p'rap even more important than a man's, 'cos an horse hasn't got no evil in him 'capting any that's put there by men. I remembers you saying that our job in the veterinary corps was to work night and day, twenty-six hours a day if need be to save and help every horse that we could, that every horse was valuable in hisself and valuable to the war effort. No horse, no guns. No horse, no ammunition. No horse, no cavalry. No horse, no ambulances. No horse, no water to the troops at the front. Lifeline of the whole army, you said, sir. We must never give up, you said, 'cos where there's life there's still hope. That's all what you said, sir, begging your pardon, sir.'

(*War Horse*, Chapter 18, Page 151)



War Horse by Michael Morpurgo, gives us a wonderful insight into the realities of the war, not just for the soldiers but also for all of the brave horses who worked tirelessly on our behalf.
Horses are not the only animals that have been used to help fight wars.
Using books and the internet to help you, research other animals that have either been used in the past or are still used today to support the military.
Create a factsheet about 'Military Animals.'

Picture 2: Tasks that could provide some general language practice, even applying CLIL method


michael morpurgo

Cool!

Cool! – Dr Smellybreath

'Cool. It's such a lovely word. It's the best word in the world, the coolest.'
(*Cool!*, Chapter 6, Page 103)

'Doctor Smellybreath's always saying it, to everyone who comes to visit me. He says anything could wake me up at any time – a voice I recognise, a book I know, a song I like or some big surprise. He says everyone's got to try to find a way through to me, and one of the best ways is by jogging my memory.'
(*Cool!*, Chapter 2, Page 23)

In the book *Cool!*, Robbie is in a car accident and ends up in a coma. He can hear everything but he cannot open his eyes or speak. To help bring him out of his coma, his family are encouraged to remind him of his favourite things – the things he finds cool.

Make a list of your favourite things. Can you explain why they are your favourites?

1. Favourite book

2. Favourite song

3. Favourite television programme or film

4. Favourite toy

5. Favourite food

6. Favourite band

7. Favourite activity


michael morpurgo

Cool!

Cool! – Lucky

'Normally, I put Lucky's lead on and he jumps up and down while I open our front gate. But the gate was open already. Someone had left it open. Then I saw the cat – Mrs Chilton's big tabby cat. She was sitting on the wall in the sunshine, licking herself – on the far side of the road. It all happened so fast after that. Lucky was gone, skittering down the path, his little legs going crazy underneath him, growling and yapping all at the same time. And I was laughing because he looked so funny. Suddenly I stopped laughing because I saw the danger I should have seen in the first place. I shouted, but it was too late.

Lucky was out of the gate and into the road before I could stop him. I ran after him. I heard the car, heard the squeal of brakes, saw Lucky disappear underneath the wheels. But I never saw the car that hit me. I felt it though. I even heard my own scream. I was flying through the air, and falling, tumbling, rolling.

Then I was in the ambulance. But somehow I couldn't wake up.'
(*Cool!*, Chapter 1, Page 10-12)

Do you know your Green Cross Code?
Design a road safety poster to put up in school so that other children will be safe on the roads.

morpurgo

Cool!

Cool! – Gianfranco Zola

'ZOLA IN MERCY DASH TO SAVE ROBBIE'

Lying in a coma, 10-year-old accident victim Robbie Ainsley had a visit today from his great hero, Chelsea and Italy superstar, Gianfranco Zola. Zola said afterwards: "When I heard about Robbie, that he might wake up from his coma if I came to see him, I didn't have to think about it. I came to do what I can. I am a father too."'
(*Cool!*, Chapter 4, Page 71)

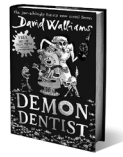
READ CHAPTER 4 TO THE CLASS.
Imagine you are in hospital with a broken leg.
You get a surprise visitor.
It is a celebrity that you have always wanted to meet.

Write a paragraph describing his or her visit. How do you feel? What do you say?

Picture 3: Tasks that could focus on writing and speaking exercises

As far as Walliams' work is in question, there could be a variety of ways to explore the ESL topics, remaining relevant and age appropriate. In several images, we presented some ways to explore and work on the extract from one of his books, and by doing so, you could easily have couple of lessons planned.

David Walliams
DEMON DENTIST



ACTIVITY ONE

I am an active reader. I can make predictions by reading pictures and text

The opening of *Demon Dentist*:
The reader is introduced to a menacing first picture:



a) Why do you think all the doors and shutters are closed?

Answer: _____

b) What effect does the shadow have on you?

Answer: _____

This warning follows:

BEWARE.
THIS IS A
HORROR STORY.

Now read the Prologue

Darkness had come to the town. Strange things were happening in the dead of night. Children would put a tooth under their pillow at bedtime, excitedly waiting for the tooth fairy to leave a coin. In the morning they would wake up to find something unspeakable under there. A dead slug. A live spider. Hundreds and hundreds of earwigs creeping and crawling beneath their pillow. Or worse. Much worse… Someone or something had come into their bedrooms in the hours of darkness, snatched the tooth and left a blood-curdling calling card behind.

Evil was at work.

But who or what was behind it?

How could they sneak into children's bedrooms without being seen?

And what could they possibly want with all those teeth…?

We read in the Prologue:

'Strange things are happening'

'They … find **something unspeakable'**

'Someone or something had come into their bedrooms'

Why do **these particular phrases** add more mystery to what is happening in the town?

_____

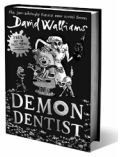
Task: Think about this early build up to the story you are about to read. Then write six sentences predicting what you think may happen in this story.

_____

Top Tip! You may want to ask the class why the film title 'The Thing' seems more scary than 'The Fly' (mystery, suspense, fear of the unknown etc)

Illustrations © Tony Ross, 2013

David Walliams
DEMON DENTIST



ACTIVITY TWO

I can respond imaginatively to what I have read and write imaginatively, focusing on creative uses of language and on how to interest the reader



The madcap chase
While reading the delicious madcap pursuit of Alfie on pages 180-187, your teacher might download and play the 'Yakety Sax' music associated with such chases to add to the sense of movement and the increasing size of the crowd.

Questions:
In the line of chasers, who do you think is:

1) the most bizarre?_____
2) the most unexpected? _____
3) the most threatening? _____
4) the most agile? _____
5) the least agile? _____

Other Chases
In the book *The Great Gracie Chase: Stop that Dog*, painters, neighbours and garbage men chase Gracie and ultimately the whole town joins in.

In the book *Burger Boy*, Benny is chased across the countryside by a mob of hungry dogs, boys and angry cows. The painters, the neighbours, and the garbage man all run after her.

In the film 'A Town called Panic' there is a madcap chase that sees Cowboys, Indians and horses chasing thieves into forests, under the earth and across the arctic wastes.

_____

Task: Beginning at the first stage of a chase that tells your reader who or what is being chased and why, describe a really madcap chase in no more than 300 words. Think carefully about who joins in. The following words used by David Walliams in *Demon Dentist* could be useful:

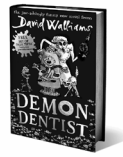
trampled **commotion** **brandishing**
stampede **pursued**

Use a Thesaurus to find even more useful words.

My Madcap Chase

Illustrations © Tony Ross, 2013

David Walliams
DEMON DENTIST



ACTIVITY FOUR: MAKING COMPARISONS

continued

Task: Work on one text at a time and complete the lines of movement below by adding each object that the author draws the readers' attention to.

Text A: **The whole room > the wall > the cabinets**
Text B: **The long table > the chairs > the plate and goblets**

Question: See how many contrasts and how many similarities you can find between Text A and Text B.

Similarities	Contrasts
Both rooms had wall hangings - mosaics and the dental certificate	The dental chair is reclining so it lies low, whereas the ultra-tall throne reaches the ceiling.

1. Both passages end with a shock for Alfie

'In an instant, metal cuffs emerged, holding Alfie's hands and feet in place'

&

'Was this some kind of temple? Or a tomb?'

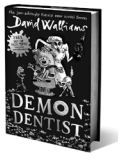
The first is a physical shock and the second is a shocking idea he has that he had strayed into a hidden burial chamber housing the remains of the dead.

2. Which do you think is the worst and most scary shock? Give a reason for your choice.

Which of these two very good descriptions do you like the best? Make a list of all the things that appeal to you in your chosen description with examples, whether it is certain words, images you like, how the writer appeals to your senses, the build up of tension or anything else you can think of.

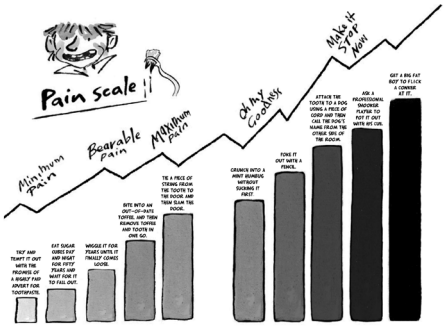
Illustrations © Tony Ross, 2013

David Walliams
DEMON DENTIST



ACTIVITY FIVE

David Walliams offers a sliding scale of pain for removing a tooth.



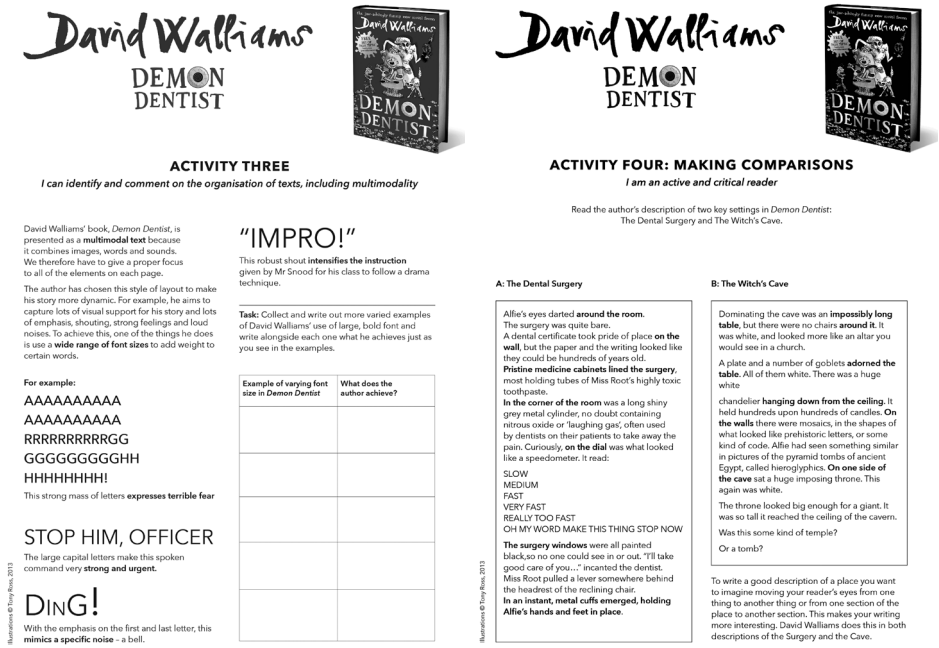
Task: Can you add in your own ideas to David Walliams' sliding scale of pain? Can you make your ideas funny like the author does? Think of more and more bizarre and interesting injuries!

Top tip! Think about paper cuts, a bitten lip, grazes, bruises, all the way up to a broken leg(!) and then try to make the circumstances funny.

For example: I fell over my cat onto a folded newspaper and got a really bad paper cut on my nose!

Illustrations © Tony Ross, 2013

Picture 4: Tasks that could encourage the practice of indefinite pronouns, building up tension, making comparisons



Picture 5: Tasks that could encourage the practice of onomatopoeic words and description of places and people – the use of adjectives

7. CONCLUSION

Taking everything into consideration, we could state that it is crucial to start changing our perspective on language acquisition in schools and place greater emphasis on practical language skills that can be more naturally and effectively developed through engagement with literary works, and later on used in real life. As presented in the paper, literature, rich with themes of growing up, overcoming challenges, navigating personal struggles, seeking acceptance, and understanding social dynamics, offers students an authentic and relatable context for learning. By identifying with characters, their experiences, and their journeys, learners absorb language organically, without being overwhelmed by abstract definitions or decontextualized examples.

Although some may argue against incorporating literature, citing limited resources, logistical challenges, or assumed impracticality, the advantages of using literary works for a broader purpose far outweigh the disadvantages. The aim of the paper was to present the approach that fosters dynamic, engaging lessons and provides relevant, meaningful content that captures students' interest. It also makes a good foundation for good reading habits, encourages cultural awareness

and cultivates critical thinking – skills that extend well beyond language learning alone.

With the abundance of digital resources now available to support lesson planning and classroom implementation, and with growing recognition of the need for the change in the perspective, we can more effectively advocate for this shift. Encouraging decision-makers, educators, and all involved in educational process to give literature-based instruction a greater role, obtained and carried out through digital resources, could significantly enhance the future of ESL teaching. Ultimately, by rethinking both teaching and learning practices, we can create more enriching opportunities for teachers and students alike, paving the way for meaningful improvement in the field of ELT.

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Самостални истраживач

САВРЕМЕНИ ДЕЧЈИ ПИСЦИ У СЛУЖБИ САВРЕМЕНЕ НАСТАВЕ ЕНГЛЕСКОГ ЈЕЗИКА – УПОТРЕБА КЊИЖЕВНИХ ДЕЛА М. МОРПУРГА И Д. ВАЛИЈАМСА У ЦИЉУ НАПРЕДНИЈЕ И СВРСИСХОДНИЈЕ МЕТОДИКЕ НАСТАВЕ ЕНГЛЕСКОГ ЈЕЗИКА

Резиме: Рад истражује могућности имплементирања савремених књижевних дела познатих дечјих аутора у наставу енглеског језика, како би се олакшало и додатно издиференцирало усвајање нових језичких вештина у контексту живог језика. Наиме, разматрају се могућности и значај већег присуства књижевних дела или њихових одломака у настави енглеског језика кроз њихово проучавање и интерпретацију, како би се омогућила разноврснија понуда материјала и начина на који би они могли бити обрађени. Значај присуства књижевности у овој улози, између осталог, лежи и у чињеници да је неопходност пружања нових, иновативних, младима привлачнијих материјала за учење језика све више присутна, јер, уз неопходно познавање граматичких и лексичких правила, крајње је неизбежно омогућити и практичну примену стеченог знања кроз разне језичке радионице, говорне вежбе, интерпретације, образлагања, итд. Ове могућности се истражују кроз имплементацију књижевних дела Мајкла Морпурга и Дејвида Валијамса, чији рад, иако различит по стилу, жанровима, техници писања и темама, може бити веома привлачан за обраду на часовима енглеског језика. Њихова дела, између осталог, нуде богатство енглеског језика у живој употреби – дијалозима, фразама, стилским фигурама, темама и динамици језичких и жанровских стилова. То је оно што младима (али и наставницима) омогућује искорак из устаљене и уобичајене форме у методици наставе енглеског језика која се тренутно примењује у школама, те нуди потенцијалну прекретницу у начину на који се методика наставе енглеског језика може даље развијати.

Кључне речи: савремена дечија књижевност, ЕЛТ методологија, енглески језик, англофони аутори књижевности за децу.