

CHALLENGES OF TEACHING LITERATURE AS A TOOL TO EFL LEARNERS IN PRINCE SATTAM BIN ABDULAZIZ UNIVERSITY –THE CASE OF WADI-ADDAWASIR

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the challenges of teaching literature as a tool of teaching English to university students and the difficulties that teachers experience. It highlights and discusses the challenges faced by both students and instructors in the universities of Saudi Arabia in general and the University of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz (college of Arts and Science – Wadi addawasir) in particular. A descriptive approach was used in this study, and the form data collection includes a questionnaire and the students' responses were analyzed. The results showed that students had negative attitudes towards the subject, one of the reasons might be the below par quality of teaching literature as a tool of teaching English. The teaching practice had negative impacts on the students' experience; apart from the cultural background and the traditional pedagogical atmosphere. A successful process of teaching literature needs pedagogical solutions keeping in mind the interest and the cultural environment of the students. The findings necessitate remedies and modification of the process of teaching literature.

Keywords: Challenges, Culture, Literary Competence, Pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

All over the world literature is considered a fine art that entertains and moves the readers to another world of fantasy. When students are motivated to read literature they are motivated to read it for the life time. In addition to developing the skills, Literature develops learners' critical thinking skills. Exposing learners to different texts to analyse and evaluate and help them, also explore not only the literary styles or sort out the relationships between the elements of literature but also vocabulary, language structure and cultural context.

The courses taught at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, College of Arts and Science, department of English language and literature, Wadi Addawasir, include literature, linguistics and translation. Literature covers different genres and eras from Elizabethan to modern contemporary literature. Courses of literature consist of introductory course, Rise of the Novel, Appreciating Drama, Appreciating poetry, Romantic poetry, 19th Century Novel, Literary Criticism 1 and 2 Victorian poetry, Modern drama, and Modern poetry and Modern British novel. As a matter of fact the courses of literature taught at the college of Arts and Science, have little influence on the students' performance. This can be proved by the students' scores in the language and linguistic courses as teachers do not apply the effective techniques to the teaching and learning of literature.

Teaching literature as a tool of English language teaching to EFL learners is not new and has been a subject to a long discussion. To enhance the four learning skills (LRSW) in English through the teaching of literature, Abu Nagi & Karaigi (2019) focused on the new trends of teaching English through literature; they refer to activities such as *Role plays, songs, library and Audio-visual aids*. They add that literature enhances the learner's vocabulary. According to them teaching a language is

more interesting because of amusement brought by literature with special respect to dramatization. And that brings liveliness to teaching and learning by deviating from the traditional methods of teaching. The study suggests the communicative method in the teaching and learning of English. It needs to make use of technology available as well.

Shahid (2016) discussed the integration of the skills in using literature as a tool. He wrote "All four skills are employed while studying literary works." According to him "A story can be the starting point for various activities; for example, reading, writing, drama, handwork, etc." Shahid believes that the teachers' aim in their teaching should be made to cover the basic oral and written language skills integrally. He added that vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation will also be improved. Teachers, students and the literary texts are the dimensions to be put under consideration for effective output.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Literature constitutes about 70 percent of the syllabus of English department in Wadi-Addawasir. Still students are not taking it as an effective language learning tool. A random survey has shown that the majority of the students (90%) translate to comprehend the literary texts especially 'novels' and this becomes an obstacle in exploring their world and the world around them and develop their skills and views towards learning English. Moreover, traditional teaching methods have ignored one of the main reasons of using literature in language learning; which is language awareness.

HYPOTHESES

1. Different factors contribute to determining the quality of students' literary competence in Prince Sattam University.
2. Pedagogical factors can be of great influence in helping the students benefit from the literary texts they learn.

For a long time, the process of literary analysis has been a hot topic. Many researchers have concentrated on the different types of literary genres, discourse analysis and literary criticism. Suggestions on how to interpret and analyze the texts have been made and studies with different views have been conducted on the pedagogical implications to improve the teaching quality by applying effective techniques and strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ferradas (2009) and others claim that literature "has little practical application, is often closely connected with a specific cultural context, and it can be idiosyncratic, even subversive" The vision of Carter & Long (1991) clarified:

It is better perhaps that the text 'should stay with learners' for a long period, and that they remember it as one of their favorite poems, plays or novels. The teacher for whom the text is also a favorite will be aiming for a sharing of interest; with possible additional long-term benefits in words acquired, and the language skills. This seldom happens instantly. Over-detailed explanation in the interests of an instant pay-off may obscure the more lengthy process by which a hard-earned text is remembered and enjoyed well after the learner has finished his or her literature classes.

Literature is also one of the vehicles that transfer knowledge, ideas, beliefs, attitudes culture and development across nation and cultures. Literatures in general and English literature in specific have had much importance in language teaching around the globe. University specialized courses of

literature were designed to convey the different aspects of cultures and help improving the language skills.

In Saudi Arabia, courses of literature are considered of great importance to help language fluency and accuracy in the target language. English language is the world's lingua franca and Saudi Arabia hosts people from all over the world, in addition to its the Islamic, strategic and economic situation that require people to speak English alongside Arabic.

Students are generally influenced by many factors that affect their performance positively or negatively. On the other hand, various researchers and practitioners appear to encourage some methods to minimize the linguistic gap and neglect others not related to teaching literature. Some of the related researches traced in this paper include - Al-Mahrooqi & Roscoe (2015); Sharma (2019); Chouhan (2016); Hişmanoglu (2005); Chen (2014); Gangola (2015) investigated the nature of the factors and the dimensions of teaching literature to EFL Learners. They mentioned that literature is an effective tool in teaching. Literature equips the learners with the overall knowledge of the language. Al-Mahrooqi & Roscoe (2015) in the book, "Voices from the Classroom", describe the experience of using literature in EFL classes. They provide a broad theoretical introduction, proposes EFL literature and "reading classes as forums for engaging students in meaningful communicative activities". Some chapters "demonstrate how literature (mainly stories, short stories, novels and oral storytelling) can develop the four language skills to enhance communicative competence and critical thinking". Baker in "Voices from the Classroom",

chooses to emphasize motivational activities that enable students to enjoy learning with literature, while Chandella shows how even the great classics, such as Shakespearean plays, can be brought to life and made meaningful for students. Marielle Risse demonstrates how she attempted to make literary texts appealing to Omani students by emphasizing how they could be related to their own lives. Reflecting a practice of growing global interest, Olearski engagingly describes a book club she set up on the women's campus of an engineering university in the United Arab Emirates. She views this as a long-term project that that is already producing such positive learning outcomes as enhanced critical thinking and linguistic skills.

In other chapters; Latheef and Kolanchery state ideas on the usage of technology in their classes. "Web tools were introduced into the literature classroom and blogs with poems turned classes into creative and amusing sessions of foreign language learning"

Sharma (2019) highlighted the basic elements of literature that can help promoting readers understanding and intuitive capability to naturally learn a language, skillfully use it in communication and in creative writing. The job of teaching language through literature becomes challenging for the modern teachers. He stated that learning English through literature is a different exciting approach. He investigated the role of literature in the English second language teaching/learning process. Sharma concluded, one cannot overcome the use of modern technology, it "promotes the basic virtues of literature which blossoms with 'beauty' and 'pleasure'".

Chouhan (2016) states that unlike the traditional methods literature motivates the learners and becomes more popular. The role of literature in the classroom has been re-assessed and many views have been discussed. His paper was an attempt to analyze the effective use of literature in EFL classroom and to find out if learning English Language was feasible through using Literature as a tool for language learning.

Hişmanoglu (2005) explores the use of suitable literary texts as a technique for teaching the basic language skills and language areas. While different genres of literature are beneficial. Language teachers face some problems such as those related to preparation, defining the objectives

in relation to teaching English through literature, teacher training, and lack of appropriate materials designed for classroom in relation to pedagogy. To be successful in the mission of teaching literature to EFL students these problems and others are to be taken into consideration.

Chen (2014) emphasizes that for children and students of all ages language acquisition through literature can be of an effective use. 'Students benefit from being challenged with language input that is slightly beyond their independent level of comprehension. This comprehensible input can be provided by listening to the reading or the telling of a story'. For language acquisition and learning principles, Chen included a five category activities for practical applications in using literature in EFL context. These are - story selection, listening, shared reading, independent reading, and drama.

Gangola (2015) focused on Literature as a rich source of 'authentic material' as it covers the feature 'language in use,' and the 'aesthetic representation of the spoken language'. Language through literature can help to develop teachers own competence and understanding of language as a 'social phenomenon', and not as an exclusive branch of learning. In addition, there is a real communicative side among the students. It also helps teachers to move classroom language to outside world. When linguistic competence is developed, communicative competence is also developed; as a result the basic function of learning a language is achieved. This study has reached innovative activities and pedagogical insights that can develop student's language by learning English through literature.

The Context of Literature in Prince Sattam University

In the context of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, literature is taught as a part of a curriculum drawn by universities in which some selected books related to English and American literature are taught. English literature related to Jane Austin, Dickens, The Bronte sisters, Thomas Hardy, Virginia Woolf, Henrik Ibsen, William Shakespeare, Eliot, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Shelley and others are delivered in terms of short stories, novels, drama or poetry. The researcher noticed that teachers separate the teaching of literature from the skills and usually concentrate on genres and elements rather than having literature as a tool to build students' knowledge and improve their skills. This study discusses the learners' opinions; the pedagogical implication and teaching philosophy. These elements work together to improve the process of teaching language through literature to EFL learners.

This study deals with the process of teaching literature in general and the process of teaching Novel to students from the second level (first year semester 2) until their graduation in the eighth level in particular. For Arab students who study literature, the cultural background and behavior of each language exhibits its own identity and this may necessitate some pedagogical remedies. Literature needs the interaction of many skills with the cultural and interpersonal background. Teachers have different methods for teaching the courses of literature. Some courses receive less methodological consideration, as a result; students' output generally lacks the competence level which can be referred back to linguistic and cultural differences between English and Arabic. Literature, throughout, has been a tool for transferring knowledge, skills and culture, which is one reason that this research is conducted to improve the pedagogical implications. The present research is of great importance in an environment like Saudi Arabia's one.

The present study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the factors that determine the quality of students' literary competence in University of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz?
2. What are the measures that can improve the quality of teaching literary texts in University of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To investigate the research problem, a questionnaire was administered to sixth level students, at the University of Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz. The major specialization of the students is English language and literature. The students have good command on both English and Arabic languages.

Results establish the platform for a scale for the factors to help using literature as a tool for improving English language knowledge and skills. Pedagogical remedies and actions to improve the teaching process were also discussed. This study is the first of its kind being carried out in Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University.

Sample

The sample for this research was the students of the department of English, College of Arts and Science (Girls' wing) at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University-Wadi- addawasir. A random sample from the students enrolled in the third level to eighth level was selected to respond to a questionnaire. The questionnaire investigates about the English courses of literature that students attend. The courses include various trends and types of literature.

The sample has main specialization in English language, literature and translation and as a part of the academic program students need to study theoretical and applied linguistics. The final sample comprised 70 students, aged between 21-25 years, whose level of English proficiency ranged from pre-intermediate to post intermediate. These students were individually assigned a questionnaire to respond.

Research Tools

They students carefully and seriously responded to the questionnaire on the impact on the overall subject evaluation. The questionnaire contained two parts; the first part was devoted to elicit students' feelings and attitudes towards the study of literature. It contains (10) items. The second part –also contains (10) items- and was devoted to subject evaluation and the skills and abilities they gained from their study of literature.

Procedure

To find answers to the research questions, the questionnaires were analyzed statistically. Students' responses were analyzed from five main perspectives, strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree and strongly disagree.

The researcher was able to determine the personal and pedagogical influencing factors that affect students' linguistic/literary abilities. The responses of the students to the questionnaire were sorted, discussed and analyzed. This enabled the researcher to adopt appropriate analysis to find out the influence of literature as a teaching tool upon the knowledge and linguistic skills.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The data for this study were collected from the questionnaire designed to determine the quality of teaching literature as a tool for EFL. They were used to elicit responses from the students; reflected their personal interests and opinions towards the study of literature in general. Table (1) shows key to analysis to the questionnaire. The responses of the students' are shown in the Table (1 and 2).

No.	Key	Percentage	
		from -	to
1	The vast majority	80	100
2	The majority	60	79
3	About half	40	59
4	The minority	20	39
5	The least minority	00	19

No.	Item	Response					
		Yes		No		Total	
		F	P	F	P	F	P
1	Have you ever read a whole novel in Arabic before?	59	84.3	11	15.7	70	100
2	Have you ever studied a whole novel in English before?	02	02.9	68	97.1	70	100
3	Can you find out the theme of any novel?	20	28.6	50	71.4	70	100
4	Do you translate the literary text to understand it?	45	64.3	25	35.7	70	100
5	Can you write your own point of view on a literary text?	10	14.2	60	85.8	70	100
6	Do you apply your linguistic knowledge to literature?	30	42.9	40	57.1	70	100
7	For the tests: Can you analyze the literary texts?	07	10.0	63	90.0	70	100
8	For the tests: do you memorize the texts?	07	90.0	63	10.0	70	100
9	For the tests: do you prefer subjective questions?	12	17.1	58	82.9	70	100
10	Do you like to study literature?	35	50.0	35	50.0	70	100

Table (2) above discusses the general assessment of students' personal interests of literature and opinions towards the courses of literature they are studying.

Items (1) and (2) are related to the novel. Responses of the students to item (1) show that the vast majority of students (84.3%) have already read a whole novel in Arabic. This means that the students can be encouraged to read novels in the target language.

The analysis of item (2) shows that the vast majority of the students (97.1%) have not read or studied a whole novel English. They are given only parts of the required novel. This means that there is a language barrier which affects negatively the understanding of the students of the outside world and limits them their own culture.

In the analysis of item (3) the majority of the students (71.4%) cannot find out the theme of a novel and this reflects a weak performance and lack of the basic literary knowledge.

Item (4) shows that the majority of the students (64.3%) translate the literary texts to understand them. This can be referred to the limited vocabulary of the students. Translation affects the understanding of the authentic text and spoils the amusement by breaking the suspense and continuity every now and then.

Item (5) shows that the vast majority of the students (85.8%) cannot write their own point of view of a literary text, which means they haven't had enough practice on the elements of literature. This is referred to the limited number of literary works they have gone through in addition to the teaching process – according to the researcher's limited knowledge most of the teachers are not trained in teaching literature.

Responses to item (6) show that about half of the students (57.1%) do not apply their linguistic knowledge to understand literature. They separate studying literature from studying the other areas and skills of the language. Students should be encouraged to take language as a whole unit and use literature to serve linguistic knowledge and vice versa.

Statistics of item (7) show that the vast majority of the students (90.0%) in the test of literature cannot analyse the literary texts. The students do not benefit from their study of literature. They have to apply their knowledge of language to literature in order to feel confident and this can be achieved by applying the suitable pedagogy in the classroom.

Concerning all subjective questions in the exam of literature, it is noticed that students' answers for the tests seem to be the same copy.

Item (8) is also concerned with the test. It shows that the vast majority of the students (90.0%) memorize the texts for the test. Teachers should encourage their students to understand the text because memorization without understanding leaves the memory after the test and it will not improve the vocabulary or support the language skills.

Concerning the test, item (9) shows that the vast majority of the students (82.9%) do not prefer to be tested by subjective questions *i.e.*, they prefer objective. Objective questions are easy to answer because the students rely on memorization but subjective questions need the knowledge of language and application of the skills.

Item (10) shows that students are divided into two equal groups, half of the them (50.0%) like to study literature while the other half (50.0) mention that they do not like to study literature. This reveals the lack of enjoyment and interest examined by those who understand literature.

The success in using literature to teach EFL students lies in the student's interest and their enthusiasm for the literary material as a source of authentic material that can move the language from classroom to the external world.

The second part of the questionnaire is concerned with students' personal ideas and attitudes towards the syllabus of literature. It asks the students to respond to the following items.

For each item in the Table (3), students complete the following statements using the items from the table.

Table 3 STUDENTS ATTITUDES TOWARD LITERATURE													
The Study Of Literature													
No	Items	Frequencies and percentages											
		SA		A		NS		D		SD		T	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Promotes my interactive skills	12	17.1	08	11.4	37	52.9	13	18.6	00	00.0	70	100
2	Activates my memory	02	02.9	10	14.3	43	61.4	10	14.3	05	07.1	70	100
3	Motivates me	06	08.6	05	07.1	20	28.6	34	48.6	05	07.1	70	100
4	Contradicts with my culture	60	85.7	01	01.4	04	05.7	03	04.3	02	02.9	70	100
5	Provides me with new vocabulary	33	47.1	30	42.9	03	4.3	04	05.7	00	00.0	70	100
6	Supports my grammar	01	01.4	06	08.6	17	24.3	43	61.4	03	04.3	70	100
7	Develops my reading skills	00	00.0	13	18.6	20	28.6	05	07.1	32	45.7	70	100
8	Develops my writing skills	04	05.7	11	15.7	18	25.7	25	35.7	12	17.2	70	100
9	Promotes my intercultural skills	04	05.7	08	11.4	11	15.7	44	62.9	03	04.3	70	100
10	Promotes my interpersonal skills	05	07.1	06	08.6	45	64.3	12	17.1	02	02.9	70	100

Key: SA=strongly agree, A=agree, NS=Not sure, D=Disagree, SD=strongly disagree, T=total, F=frequency

In table (3) above, item (1) asks students to state opinions if literature promotes their interactive skills. About half of the students are 'not sure' (52.9%), agree, (18.6%) agree, (17.1%) strongly agree. The percentages reflect that students are not sure if the study of literature will

promote their interactive skills. They cannot feel it and this deficiency is pedagogical and related to lack of language awareness.

Students can recall lexical items and structures they stored from the study of literature. It is also natural for literature to activate the students' memory as vocabulary and structures are recycled. Item (2) asks the students if literature activates their memories. The majority of responses (61.4%) are not sure while the least minority (02.9%) strongly disagrees. This means students do not have enough exposure to state an opinion and one of the major hindrances is the way they study literature.

Motivation is one of the most important factors to learning literature. Item (3) collects opinions on the motivation. About half of the responses (48.6%) disagree that literature motivates them. The minority (28.6%) are not sure while (08.6%) strongly agree that literature motivates them. (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991: 29-32) believe that students' interest and enthusiasm is the key factor to the success in the acquisition and to the concentration and enjoyment. The interest can be achieved by making the students use to the study of literature.

It is clear that responses to item (4), there is a cultural resistance to foreign culture brought by literature. The vast majority of students (85.7%) strongly agree that the study of literature contradicts with their culture. The least minority (02.9%) strongly disagree with idea of cultural contradiction. This cultural resistance hinders the use of literature as a teaching tool.

Item (5) is concerned with vocabulary. About half of the students (47.1%) strongly agree that literature provides them with new vocabulary. The other half (42.9%) agree and the least minority, (05.7%) strongly disagree but no one (0.00%) disagree with the idea. A plan for teaching literature can make the difference. The language acquired through literature goes to the subconscious, as a result, students access spontaneously to that storehouse and naturally use the language.

Item (6) seeks their opinion about the support of literature to the grammar knowledge. The majority of respondents (61.4%) disagree, the minority (24.3%) not sure, the least minority (04.3%) strongly disagree. Responses show that students take the language components separately. They take grammar as something different from literature and this influences the teaching/learning process negatively so pedagogical remedies are needed to solve the problem.

Item (7) derives responses on 'if the students believe that the study of literature develops their reading skills'. About half (45.7%) strongly disagree the other responses scattered between the minorities (28.6%) not sure and (18.6%) agree and none (00.0) strongly disagree. When literature is used as a tool in EFL learning, all reading skills – scanning- skimming – extensive – and intensive) can be applied to the literary text and that through the process of teaching, teachers can succeed in their mission.

Item (8) Item investigates the development in writing skills the students gain from their study of literature. All responses are divided into the minorities (35.7%) disagree, and (17.2%) strongly disagree, the least minority (05.7%) strongly agree. As for reading and grammar skills the students do not feel that literature supports their writing skills. If taken seriously students' writing skills can be improved through the study of literature. This pedagogical issue can be solved by training.

Item (9) investigates the promotion of students' inter cultural skills. The majority of the students (62.9%) disagree, the minorities (15.7%) not sure and while the least minorities (04.3%) strongly disagree and (05.7%) strongly agree. Cultural and intercultural skills are complementary to each other. Students feel that literature contradict with their culture so that intercultural promotion cannot take place. Students' need orientation and teachers need training to persuade the students about the benefit from the study of literature and how they can be culturally influential.

Item (10) elicits responses on 'The study of literature promotes my interpersonal skills'. The majority (64.3%) of the respondents are not sure. The minorities (17.1%) disagree; the least

minority (02.9%) strongly disagrees. As literature feed the subconscious with the target language vocabulary and the skills which students can use that intuitively then it is the job of literature to promote the students interpersonal skills but it is the job of the teacher to motivate students to do that.

Using literature in in EFL context is very important for learners who need to improve their skills, vocabulary and grammar. Literature can help them acquire English structures which find their way directly to the sub-conscious. Literature is the main source of vocabulary and the linguistic structure that make competent language users. Literature is one of the best tools for teaching English language as it brings the learner to the language in a real authentic social context, and makes them appreciate the world around them. It improves all the basic language and communicative skills; in addition, it reinforces learners' knowledge of vocabulary and linguistic structure. Literature is so authentic and interesting that it enriches the required competencies and expands the learner's linguistic awareness. It encourages learners to explore their own and other people's cultures around them.

CONCLUSION

The majority of the students of college of Arts and Science little benefit little from their study of literature. They resist it because they think it contradicts with their culture so that none of them have studied a complete novel in English. They translate the parts of the literary works they study to understand them and as a result their suspense and interest is lost and the purpose of teaching literature is lost. They lack vocabulary, the basic linguistic knowledge and awareness. They have limited intercultural and intra-cultural abilities to interpret and understand the literary work. The solution relies on the teacher and the teaching process. Teachers need to minimize the gap between the students and the literary work through the perfect selection of the text and draw clear teaching objectives and handle it pedagogically and creatively. Teachers should play crucial roles in determining students' interests and attitudes towards teaching literature. The pedagogical knowledge constitutes the corner stone for selecting the appropriate techniques and methods and creates the ideal environment for teaching English through literature.

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