

Using Literary Texts as a Pedagogical Tool in the Algerian Universities: Case of 3rd Year EFL Learners at the University of Tlemcen

استخدام النصوص الأدبية كأداة تربوية في الجامعات الجزائرية: حالة متعلمي السنة الثالثة للغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية في جامعة تلمسان

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ABSTRACT:

ملخص البحث

The present paper provides vital data about the benefits of using literary Texts in EFL classrooms at the University of Tlemcen. It also explores the characteristics, aims, and objectives behind integrating literature in an EFL classes based on evidence from questionnaire and interview. Therefore, this study is particularly served to report and discuss the findings gathered through the data collection procedures. It is supposed to provide answers to the already stated hypothesis and research enquiry. Therefore, it is also devoted to sorting, reviewing, and interpreting the results aiming to reveal data about the gain of incorporating literature component in EFL teaching classes.

Keywords: EFL Learners; Reading Skill; Literary Texts; University of Tlemcen, Algerian Context.

تقدم هذه الدراسة بيانات حيوية حول فوائد استخدام النصوص الأدبية في أقسام الدراسة للغة الإنجليزية في جامعة تلمسان ، حيث تستكشف الخصائص والأهداف الكامنة وراء دمج النصوص الأدبية في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية بناءً على الأدلة من الاستبيان ومقابلة . لذلك ، يتم تقديم هذه الدراسة بشكل خاص إلى تقرير ومناقشة النتائج التي تم جمعها من خلال إجراءات جمع البيانات. من المفترض أن تقدم إجابات على الفرضية المذكورة بالفعل والاستفسار البحثي. لذلك فهو مكرس أيضاً لفرز ومراجعة وتفسير النتائج بهدف الكشف عن بيانات حول مكامب دمج مكون النصوص الأدبية في فصول تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية. مهارة القراءة، نصوص أدبية، جامعة تلمسان

1. Introduction

Language skills and literature teaching may express a number of benefits to language teaching. Therefore, one should purposefully consider why language teachers should use literary texts in the language classroom, what sort of literature language teachers should use with language learners. In other terms, consider the role of literature as a tool rather than an end in teaching English as a second or foreign language. They offer a rich source of linguistic input; develop the learners' four skills and exemplifying grammatical structures and presenting new vocabulary. Furthermore, Literature can also increase the learners' awareness and help them to understand different cultures. Literary texts are representational rather than referential (McRae, 1994). Referential language communicates at only one level and tends to be informational.

The representational language of literary texts involves the learners and engages their emotions, as well as their cognitive faculties. Literature lessons can lead to public displays of student output through posters of student creations e.g. poems, stories or through performances of plays. So for a variety of linguistic, cultural and personal growth reasons, literary texts can be more motivating than the referential ones often used in classrooms. Therefore, these may hypothesize the following:

- Reading Literary Texts Seems to gradually promote our EFL learners' reading skill;
- Reading Literary Texts seems to develop the learners' awareness.

2. Methodology

This study has taken place in the English department; it was based on a Case Study where a mixed-method approach has been adopted. Thus, the focus has been put on both qualitative and quantitative methods. In this sense, Godwin *et al* (1996, p.161-168) examine the similarities and complementarities between qualitative and quantitative research. From their point of view, the knowledge generated by each approach and the measurement methods of each approach are complementary.

They also suggest that each approach can inform and assist the other approach. It is also said that qualitative research produces knowledge that emphasizes process, extrapolation, understanding, and illumination and quantitative research produces knowledge that focuses on outcomes, generalisations, predictions and casual explanations.

This mixed-method approach is characterized by its ability to increase concurrent and construct the validity of the research questions. It also permits the researcher to reduce prejudice (Perlesz and Lindsay, 2003). Arguing in a similar way, Dörnyei (2007) asserts the following advantages:

- Increasing the strengths while minimizing the weakness of each paradigm;
- Allowing for several -layer of analysis;
- improving the validity of the research outcomes;
- claiming the generalizability of the results.

3. Data Collection Process

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes. Data collection starts with determining what kind of data required followed by the selection of a sample from a certain population. After that, you need to use a certain instrument to collect the data from the selected sample. The methodology of a quantitative research maintains the assumption of an empiricist paradigm

(Creswell, 2003) Quantitative research begins with a problem statement and involves the formation of a hypothesis, a literature review, and a quantitative data analysis.

Research instruments are often used in the fields of social sciences. A good research instrument is one that has been validated and has proven reliability. It should be one that can collect data in a way that's appropriate to the research question and must be able to assist in answering the research aims, objectives and research questions, as well as prove or disprove the hypothesis of the study. It should not have any bias in the way that data is collect and it should be clear as to how the research instrument should be used appropriately. Creswell (2003) states ,quantitative research employ strategies of inquiry such experimental and surveys , and collect data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data (p .18) Quantitative research involves the collection of data so that information can be quantified and subjected to statistical treatment in order to support or refute "alternate knowledge claims"(Creswell, 2003, p. 15)

According to Eladio (2006) there are many types of qualitative research tools; however, the researcher must go according to his research objectives, and select the ones must answer the following questions: What are you really planning to find out? How are you going to observe the target population? What's the best tool to observe certain variables or indicators? Among the most used instruments in research are the observation, the survey and the interview. Therefore, for the sake of gathering reliable data, the researcher has recourse to the use of the two following research instruments:

- Questionnaire
- Semi-structured Interview.

The first step used for collecting the data has been done through a students' Questionnaire. The second step refers to the Semi- Structured interview which has been administered to teachers in order to: Elicit useful information about the participant's experiences; Obtain practical knowledge of the interviewees' opinions or impressions.

4. Participants

Sampling is the process of collecting observations (samples) to provide an adequate description and robust inferences of the population, i.e. it is a subset of population and sampling has many types that are tightly related to probability sampling methods and non-probability sampling methods. Sampling allows the researcher to test a hypothesis about the characteristics of the population. This research work is based on probability sampling which contains random sampling, systematic, cluster, and stratified random sampling upon which the study was based.

In this sense, Richards (2001) writes, "Sampling involves asking a partial of the potential population instead of the total population and seeks to create a sample that is representative"(P. 58). Therefore, the sample upon which the study is based i.e. the selection of The English Department of Tlemcen University and the group of individuals who participated in this investigation is third- year EFL students who were about Thirty (30) learners as well as Eight (8) EFL teachers from the same department.

5. Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

After gathering the necessary information, the data has to be analyzed through the use of analytical and logical techniques. Finally, drawing conclusions on the basis of results obtained. According to Marshall and Rossman (1990). Data analysis is seen as a challenging assignment that requires much more effort and skills. It is achieved through making suitable decisions about the purpose and goals of the study, the research questions, and the data collection procedures as explained by Marshall and (Rossman ,1990) "Data analysis is the process of bringing order,

structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a linear fashion; it is not neat” (P.111)

Therefore, the study is mainly based on a combination of both qualitative and quantitative data approaches in an endeavour to manage different sets of facts and make them subject to multilevel of examinations and interpretations and attain what is called an *outright picture of reality*. According to Greene *etal.*(1989), these two approaches “...are used to measure overlapping but also different facets of a phenomenon, yielding an enriched understanding by illustrating, clarifying, or elaborating on certain aspects” (Quoted in Dornyei, 2007p.164)

4.1. Students' Questionnaire Analysis

To gather insightful data about the literature component from the students' points of view, the present research instrument was administered to thirty informants. Its main objectives were to cross-check the results obtained from the teachers' Interview. It also aimed to outline the learners' requirements; their interests and attitudes towards the use of literary texts.

When the students asked about their proffered reading, the results show that the majority of the participants (61%) prefer short stories”. (22%) of the sample prefer to read “novels”. (11%) of the participants stated that they prefer to read “plays”. (6%) prefer reading “poems” of the given choices. The table below illustrates these findings

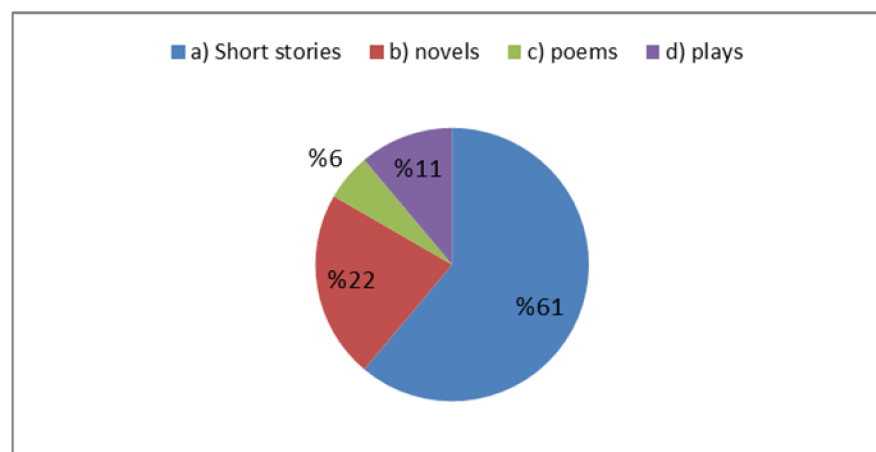


Fig .1: Students' Preference

Concerning reasons from reading the literary work, six students (30%) said that they read the short story expand language awareness. Six students (30%) stated that they read it to gain access to cultural background. Four students (20%) wanted to strengthen their imagination, while the same number of students read the short story just to pass the exam. The results are better illustrated in the following table

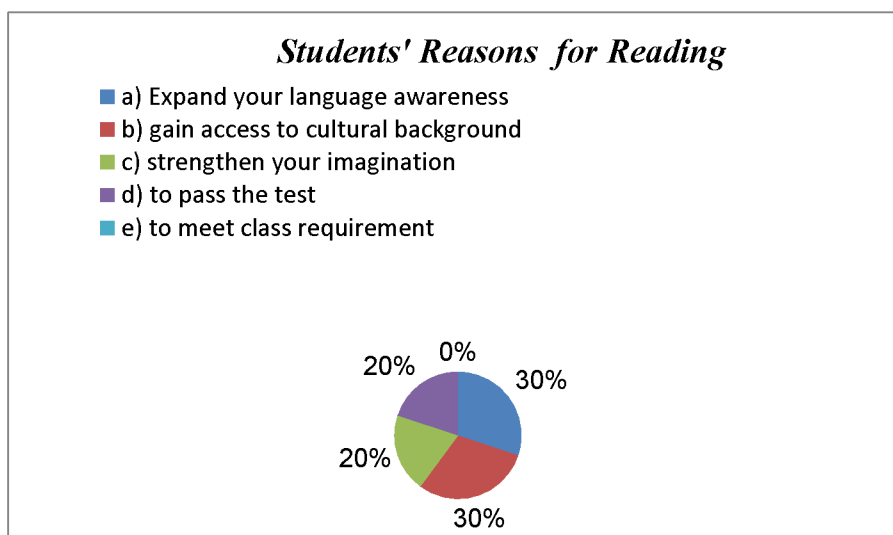


Figure: 2: Students' Reasons for Reading Literary Texts

The participants when they asked about the contribution of Literary texts in language skills, the majority of them agree on the fact that literary texts highly recommended for the development of reading skill with 69% of participant saying 'yes'. This is well presented in the table and the pie-chart below

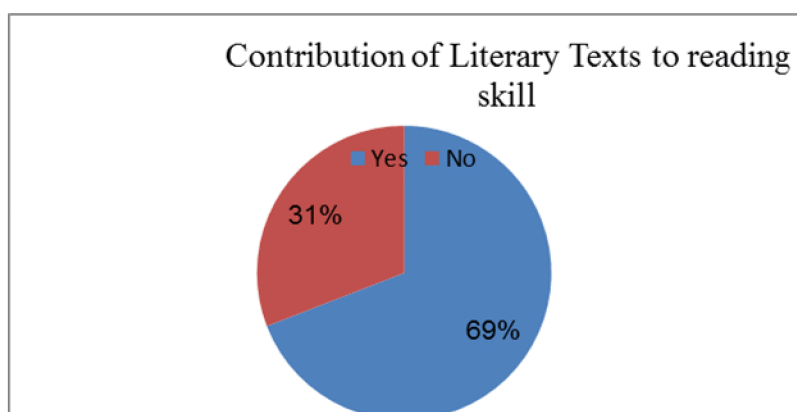


Figure: 3. Contribution of Literary Texts

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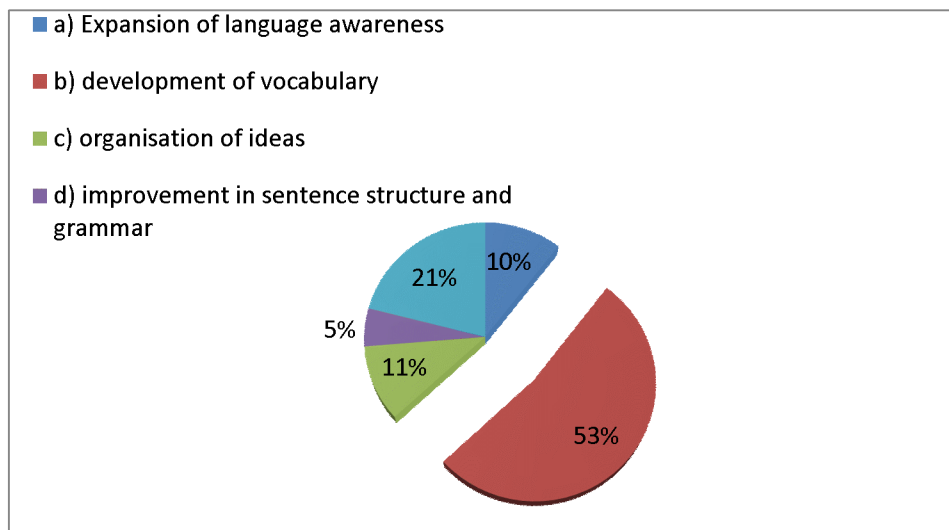


Figure: 4: Students' Benefit from Reading Story

From the result obtained (10%) of students revealed that the short story helped them expand their language awareness. (53%) of students stated that it improved their vocabulary. Furthermore, (21 %) gained access to the cultural background of the story. While (11%) declared that the short story helped them organize their ideas. Finally, only three of the participants (5%) respond that the literary text improved their sentences.

According to the main results of students' questionnaire, the results can be summarized in the following points:

- ✓ Reading opens their minds through the expansion of ideas and thoughts.
- ✓ Some difficulties in terms of implicit meaning and linguistic difficulties.
- ✓ The lack of vocabulary posed problems will reduce their Development of ideas.

4.2. Teachers' Interview Analysis

Most of the interviewed teachers agree on the fact that literature is believed to be a helpful class material, because they are authentic, and should be used as visual supports · literary texts would certainly allow learners to learn both culture and vocabulary;

They said that they prefer to deal with texts that represent a wide range of literary genre and working of close study, texts that are appropriate to the age group to sustain appropriate and intensive study...

The teacher when they are asked to know about how they perceive using literary texts as resource in our EFL classes their answers were as follow: all the teachers pointed out those literary texts are helpful, because they are authentic, and authenticity is important in learning the language. Teacher stated that literary texts should be used as models and as visual supports. He added that students will learn about vocabulary, style, idiomatic expressions...etc through reading literary text. Then, he moves on to assert that he uses some excerpts from literary texts in his writing classroom, in order to teach descriptive and narrative writing.

- literary texts would certainly allow learners to learn both culture and vocabulary;
- Literary texts can be as a source for language learning;
- literary texts as an informal resource are highly recommended;
- They are considered as essential resource.

They argue that literary texts are rich in multiple layers of meaning and can be effectively mind for discussions and sharing feelings and opinions which help students interact and develop attitude towards the world outside.....

Concerning the competence do our learners to develop when reading a literary text Thisquestionin in fact, can be summarized in the following steps depending on the interviewees and most of them agree on:

- Developing competence in reading skills
- Developing competence in own reflection
- Develop the analytical skill

Among them one maintained that learners should develop critical thinking and reading skill that help them understand other cultures, religion philosophies etc...and how to foster

- Vocabulary extension
- Incite imagination
- Be creative
- Be tasteful
- Comprehension through reading skill
- Critical thinking
- Reading skill development

All of these results together with the teachers' responses to the semi-structured interview questions, not only validated the existence of the previously stated problems in EFL literature class but also revealed once again the fact that to bombard the students with dry knowledge without providing them with analytical tools that will deepen their understanding and therefore lead to a greater pleasure, never seems to work. Analyses of the participants' responses to a questionnaire and semi-structured interview showed that most of them held positive attitudes toward literary texts.

One may conclude that what is significantly related to their attitudes toward literature study is explicitly the preferred learning styles, such as being given opportunities to express their personal opinions, to look for the underlying meaning of the text, and to read about people and experiences different from their own. In other words, students' attitude toward literature may be influenced not only by their own reading habits but also by the teachers' instructional methods.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, from the results obtained in the present study, one may conclude that teaching literature in EFL context is a rich area. Hence, the present study has examined the importance of reading literary texts to EFL students in an Algerian context and has reported on the feedbacks of only a small number of students. More studies using different literary genres, implementing different strategies and methods, or student populations, are expected and as many EFL teachers use literature in their classes, more EFL learners will develop interests in literature in particular and learning the language through literature in general.

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