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## Literary Text Use in Algerian Secondary Education English Testing (Bechar)

استعمال النص الادبي في التقييم في التعليم الثانوي الجزائري (بشار)

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## Abstract

Recent researches, conducted in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, have pleaded for the usage of literature as 'an alternative' to the traditional and communicative approaches to language teaching. Similarly, testing students' outcomes may be based on literary texts particularly in the formal examinations. This study is aiming at investigating the use of literary text, in its different forms, genres and/or styles in the Algerian Secondary Education Testing. Interviews with English teachers of secondary school at Bechar are used for data collection. The study shows that literary texts have not yet been the basis of English language Testing in the Algerian Secondary Education .

Keywords: Literary text, testing, secondary education textbook.

## ملخص

لقد دعت عدة دراسات حديثة في مجال تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة اجنبية الى استعمال الادب كبديل لطرائق التدريس التواصلية التقليدية في حقل تعليم اللغات. في الوقت ذاته ومن اجل توافق التدريس مع التقويم يمكن الاعتماد على النصوص الأدبية كأرضية لتقييم مخرجات عملية التعليم والتعلم لا سيما في الامتحانات الرسمية. هذه الدراسة هي محاولة للبحث في استعمال النص الادبي بكل اشكاله واجناسه المختلفة في عملية التقويم في التعليم الثانوي الجزائري. تم الاعتماد على استجواب أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية للتعليم الثانوي في بشار كوسيلة لجمع المعطيات قصد تحليلها. افضت الدراسة الى ان النص الادبي غير مستعمل في عملية التقويم في التعليم الثانوي الجزائري.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النص الادبي-التقييم-التعليم الثانوي-الكتاب المدرسي

## INTRODUCTION:

Reaching successful teaching and learning in general and foreign languages in particular bargain neither on the successful application of best methods, efficient selection of instructional materials nor on the teachers' experience and training. Therefore, the notion of testing is playing a paramount importance to come out with adequate and reliable results about how successful the method is and how well the teachers teach...etc. Testing, if carefully

tackled, provides practitioners of the teaching field with the opportunity to be aware of the different pedagogical constraints and assists in its remedy. Does the use of literary texts in their different forms and genres in language testing respond to the criteria of a good test? Do they successfully lead to achieve the different pedagogical purposes?

## 2. Literature teaching:

Since testing stands as the last phase of teaching and the learning process, teaching, then is considered the constructing factor that should be valued. Literature-based approach to language teaching is highly considered in this context. It is an outcome of post-method era's there is no best method to language teaching. « It may be tedious to describe here all possible uses of literature in an EFL situation. Thus, if implemented adequately, literature offers a wide range of possibilities: whether it is used as an historical, social or political document, as an authentic language sample, as a developer of the students skills, linguistic / discourse competence, literary appreciation, motivation and/or vision of the world. » (Benzaoui & Miliani, 2003, p. 40). Collie and Slater put it clear that "...the criteria of suitability clearly depend ultimately on each particular group of students, their needs, interests, cultural background and language level."(Collie & Slater, 1990, p. 08).

Sandra Mackey (1982) pointed out: "literature can be useful in developing linguistic knowledge both on a usage and use level. What is more, to the extent that the students enjoy reading literature, it may increase their motivation to interact with a text and thus, ultimately increase their reading proficiency. It may also enhance students' understanding of a foreign culture and perhaps spur their own creation of imaginative works » (p 06), that is if language learners are tested based on literary texts; they will be pushed to respond positively when they are taught through the different literary texts proposed by their teachers. This is one of the benefits of final testing especially administered ones; i.e teachers who get use of literary texts in

language teaching should associate this process by literary text-based testing.

### 3. Language testing:

“Language testing almost never takes place in isolation. It is done for a particular purpose and in specific context “ (Bachman, 1990, p. 02.)

In fact, tests are tackled to reach different purposes. As divided by Tim McNamara (2000, p. 45), there are achievement and proficiency tests. In order to achieve ‘good’ results, tests must respond to certain criteria (Heaton, 1988). The latter includes validity, reliability, discrimination, and administration and wash back effects.

Language teachers often get use of texts when they test their learners both in formal or informal testing. The choice of text is up to the teacher who can choose historical, scientific or literary text. The latter also differs in its form and genre. Literary text can be a short story, an extract of a novel, a poem, a folk tale, a play...etc.

Either formally or informally, teachers' selection of testing test is not done at random. Texts should respond to the pedagogical outcomes of the syllabus, which has been already designed to introduce certain text types, forms and genres. This means that the teacher is not totally free to select the testing text. He is restricted by both the syllabus boundaries and testing purposes

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to gather authentic and reliable data, Interviews with teachers of English at Bechar are tackled either directly and/or via the internet. When interviewed, either directly or with the assistance of the internet for some teachers are far from bechar-center, teachers were asked if they used literary text when they test their students, then whether they said yes or no, they were asked to justify.

Out of ninety- eight (98) secondary education teachers of English, according to the department of Education of Bechar (The inspector of English, Bechar (2018), forty-eight (48, 97 %) secondary education teachers of English of different schools and experiences participated in the study. According to their answers, they are divided into two categories, the first part is devoted to teachers of first year classes and the second is for teachers who do not have first year classes. This division is made since the first year secondary education textbook (syllabus) gives importance to literature teaching in one unit (theme) entitled by *Once Upon A Time*. This means that there is place in the official syllabus for literature teaching (literary stream). This category of teachers then ought to teach literature, therefore, their students should be finally tested on literature.

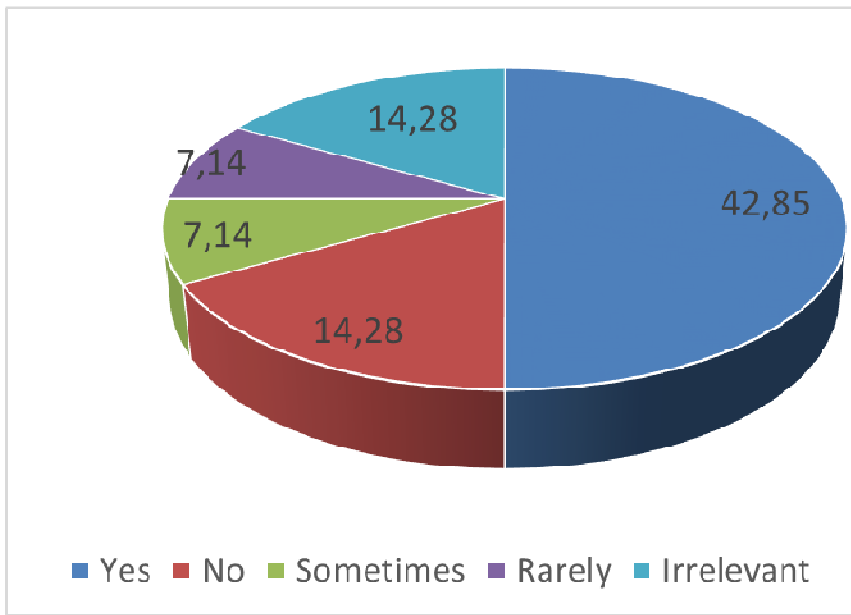
Twenty- four 24 (42.85 %) of teachers interviewed said they used literary texts when they test their students. For them, testing students with literary texts is part of the syllabus (theme-based) since there is a unit (theme) reserved to introduce and teach students literary forms (texts). It is an Eight 08, (14.28%) of the answers were irrelevant.

adequate opportunity not only to test student's vocabulary related to the topic and the different literary texts (registers), but also to acquire new vocabulary items. The use of literary texts in tests particularly the administered ones motivate students for both intrinsic and extrinsic reading for the literary texts offers a space of interest and enjoyment in the phase of teaching.

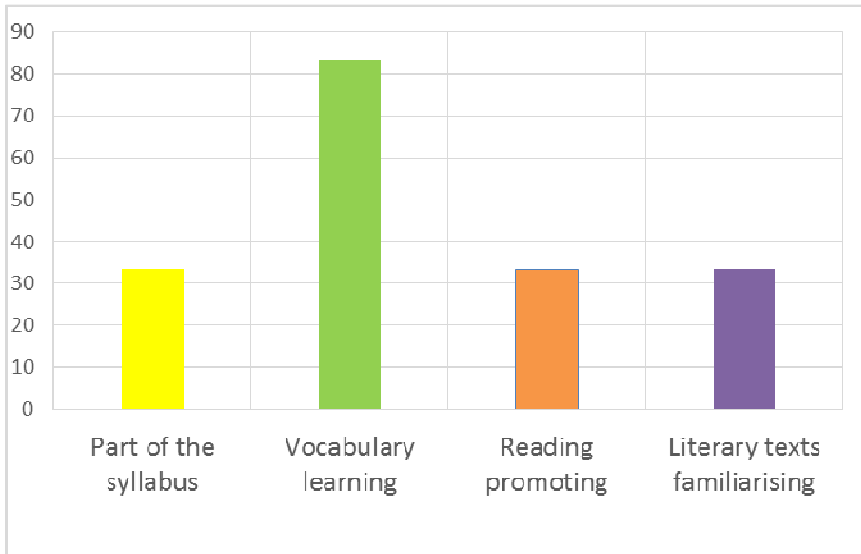
Four 04, (07.14%) said that they sometimes bargain on literary texts when testing student's language outcomes simply because they are not fully introduced throughout the whole textbook of the different streams. This means that students don't grasp the use of literary text in language teaching and learning, therefore they wouldn't serve as a reliable testing support. Accordingly, they are used only in the third trimester testing

Four 04, (07.14%) said that they rarely get use of literary text in testing their students. Literature is credited only in one unit for students of first year literary stream, which is not enough. That is why students could not be tested based on literary texts.

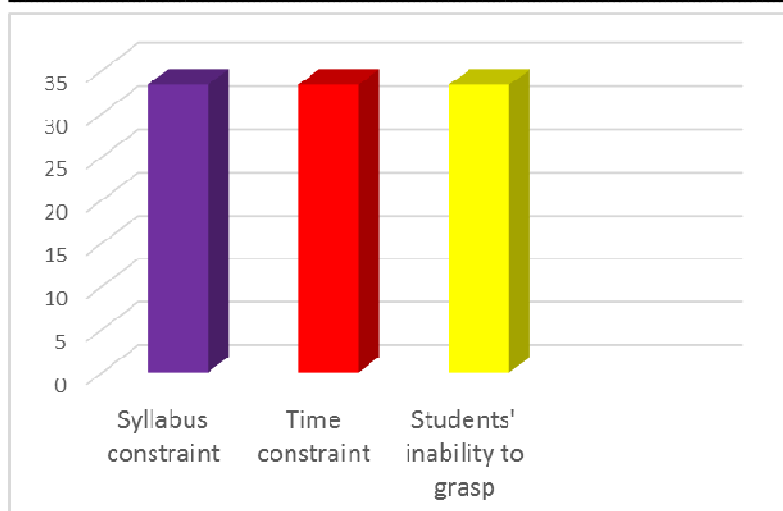
Eight 08, (14.28%) reacted negatively towards the use of literary texts whatever their forms are in testing students. They do not use them because of syllabus and time constraints which couldn't allow them use literary texts in testing. Besides, literary texts are difficult to deal with by foreign language learners especially when they are of external cultures since the textbook does not contain any literary work of Algerian culture.



**Figure 01:** Teachers' answers about how often they use literary texts in testing



**Figure 02:** Reasons of the use of literary text in testing



**Figure 03:** Reasons of the non-use of literary texts in testing.

## 5. CONCLUSION

A closer look at the reactions of teachers interviewed about the use of literary texts in testing English language learners in Algerian Secondary Education reveals that teachers are not highly interested to construct their tests on the grounds of literary texts. Some do as a response to the syllabus requirement only. Thus, teaching based on literature is viewed only to address the first year classes' literary stream in one opportunity only *Once Upon A Time*. Despite the fact that most teachers do not get use of literary texts when they test their students, they are not totally against; they join their colleagues who believe in the effectiveness of literary texts in testing.

In fact, literary text-based testing would result in vital pedagogical and non-pedagogical ends. For the former, literary texts stand as a motivating element for both intrinsic and extrinsic readings promotion. The literary text is an authentic instructional material in that it provides the learner with functional-situational real life language; since literature is a mirror that reflects

societies. Accordingly, registers and new vocabulary items are smoothly required.

Secondary Education teachers who are not highly interested to use literary texts in testing their students' outcomes justify their attitudes by the administrative requirements in unifying the final exams for both streams literary and scientific. Besides, using literary texts with difficult vocabulary could lead to unreliable results, since literature-based teaching/learning is only occasional, the fact that does not help build valid output.

Teachers suggest an implementation of a literature-based approach to foreign languages teaching in order to be able to test students on the grounds of literary texts merely because teaching should go hand in hand with testing. One unit (theme) in the first year for one stream can not lead to the pedagogical expectations designed by Algerian syllabus designers. By doing this, (implementing literature-based approach to ELT teaching) Official Final Secondary Education Exam would be built up upon a literary text.

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