

## Algerian First-year Secondary Education English Textbook: Literature Credit

\*BOUREGUIG Abdelkrim<sup>1</sup>, NEBBOU Abdelkader <sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1-2</sup> Department of English, Faculty of Letters and Languages,  
University of Bechar (Algeria)

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**Summary:** Language teaching scope has become the field of unceasing study and innovation as far as 'best' teaching methods to language teaching are concerned. The history of language methodology, however, has shown that there is no best 'method' to language teaching and learning. Therefore, language teachers, FLT/SLT in particular, have been pushed to get use of all what they think can lead to successful teaching and learning. In fact, this resulted in the birth of a diversity of teaching ways, amongst is literature-based language teaching. This study is an attempt to analyse the Algerian secondary education first-year English textbook in respect to literature credit. Moreover, it is of vital importance to investigate the pedagogical ends of the use of literature in the textbook. The study shows that literature is not widely used in the textbook. It is found only in one unit (20°/°) out of five units that construct the whole textbook.

**Keywords:** English textbook, literature, short story, skills.

### I. Introduction:

As far as EFL/ESL teaching is concerned, a retrospective glance at language teaching methodology shows that practitioners of the profession come out with the result that there is 'no best method' that can ensure the success of language teaching and learning. Indeed, this has urged language teachers to theorise new ways to teach languages, and practise what they theorise. In 1980s, literature was seen as a valuable solution in ELT classrooms (Hirvela, 1993)

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\* BOUREGUIG Abdelkrim. karimoguer@gmail.com

Literature-based approach to EFL/ESL teaching is considered as an outcome of an alternative to methods that had felt short of expectations. This view to using literary texts in their different forms and genres is based on the belief that language is a socio-cultural phenomenon; and inspired by the belief that literature is the mirror of the society. Literary texts, therefore, provide both teachers and learners with the opportunity of dealing with language in its real-life settings. Authentically, carefully selected literary texts on the grounds of learning environments' analysis, would serve as a platform to enhance learning and often to ensure successful teaching process. This would happen merely because literary texts can stand as fertile instructional materials which facilitate the establishment of a link between learners and language in its functional situations, the use of which differ as long as language's social role spellings differ.

Contextualisation is the first benefit of using literature in language teaching. The second benefit lies in the social factors thanks to the different genres of literary texts. Whereas the third benefit stands in the natural and meaningful application of language in the literary texts (Ruzbah, B., Roselezam, W, Wan Yahya, Bt, 2014)

## **II. Literature and language:**

The definition of literature has been the concern of many thinkers. Many of them, however, have defined it in respect to language. « Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost degree. » (Pound, as cited in Lazar, 1993). Using literature in teaching languages is fruitful simply because it offers authentic materials, cultural enrichment, language advancement and personal growth (Collie and Slater, 1987).

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). According to him, using literature is beneficial on different levels;

developing linguistic knowledge, promoting students' reading proficiency as well as learners' foreign culture enhancing.

Truong Thi My Van (2009) explained the usefulness of literature in language teaching and learning, he thinks that literature use in teaching is advantageous for students. He said that, « ...teaching literature also appeals to their imagination, develops cultural awareness and encourages critical thinking about plots, themes and characters » (p. 02)

Parkinson and Thomas (2000) listed ten reasons for the use of literature in English classroom (As cited in Sell, 2005, p. 87)

1-Cultural enrichment. Reading literature promotes cultural understanding and awareness. 2. Linguistic model. Literature provides examples of “good” writing, linguistic diversity, expressive ranges, and so on. 3. Mental training. Better than any other discipline, literature trains the mind and sensibility. 4. Extension of linguistic competence. Literature stretches the competences of learners who have mastered the linguistic rudiments. 5. Authenticity. Literature is genuine linguistic material, not a linguistically contrived textbook. 6. Memorability. Because literature, especially poetry and songs, is memorable, it can be a memorised archive of linguistic usage. 7. Rhythmic resource. Poems assist the learner in assimilating the rhythms of a language. 8. Motivating material. Literature is more likely to engage with and motivate a learner than artificial teaching inputs because it is generated by some genuine impulse on the part of the writer and deals with subjects and themes, which may be of interest to the learner. 9. Open to interpretation. Because literature is open to interpretation, it can serve as a basis for “genuine interaction” between learners. 10. Convenience. Literature is a handy (photocopiable) resource.

Authenticity, motivation, cultural/intercultural awareness and globalisation, intensive and extensive reading practice, sociolinguistic/ pragmatic knowledge, grammar and vocabulary knowledge, language skills, emotional intelligence and critical thinking are reasons for the integration of literary texts in

language classrooms given by linguists and gathered by Mohamed Khatib (2011).

According to Duff and Malley (1990), literary texts offer genuine samples of a very big amount of styles, registers and text-types of different levels of difficulty. Moreover, the use of literary texts can stand as an adequate opportunity for an interaction merely since language learners cannot interpret them identically. Furthermore, literary texts are regarded to have ‘a genuine feel’ in the sense that they are powerful motivators, more particularly when they target themes in which learners can bring personal response from their own experience. (p. 6)

### **III. 3-Criteria of literary text selection:**

The success of teaching and learning processes with the use of literature to language classroom is highly associated with teachers’ success in carefully selecting the literary text. The latter serves as a motivating adequate support to meet the language classroom ends, and not to stand as a pedagogical constraint that interrupts the learning mission.

Firstly, teachers should take appropriateness in terms of the difficulty of lexis, grammar and style into account. Second, cultural specifications of the literary text can stand as a barrier; therefore, teachers ought to associate the literary text with learners’ schemata whereby learners should be informed by the specificity of the selected literary text. Third, enjoyment and pleasure that certain literary texts offer are of paramount importance in motivating learners to take part in language classroom, and , then, to enhance not only intrinsic and extrinsic reading but also all four skills : listening, speaking, reading and writing. (Tran Thi Nga as cited in Truong Thi My Van. 2009).

### **IV. Findings:**

In respect to the Algerian Secondary Education, literature credit in the first secondary textbook will be analysed. As a practical study, the textbook will be studied to look for whether or not the Algerian syllabus-designer has integrated, fully or partially, literature in teaching and learning of English language being a foreign language to Algerians. Besides, if literature is taken into account in the textbook, how much importance, then, it

has been given, and which literary forms and/or genres have been chosen to be integrated. What skills are addressed with the use of literature as well as the activities being bargained on will be searched for in this respect.

**IV- 1.Textbook Format:**

At the Crossroads, the Algerian first secondary education textbook is designed on the grounds of CBLT principles, responding to the reform launched by the Ministry of Education, and learner-centred approach as an alternative to teacher-centred approach that fell short of expectations. Secondary Education, Year one, English textbook is composed of five units. Twenty (20) hours are approximately the average timing for each unit. The latter is divided into four sequences, listening and speaking, reading and writing, developing skills and consolidation and extension.

In addition to the four sequences that construct each unit, the textbook also contains three other sections, Stop and Consider, Project Workshop and Check your Progress.

**IV- 2.Content:**

As mentioned earlier, the textbook is mainly built up of units, sequences, and sections. Now, this account is given to highlight the content and objectives of each of the textbook component.

Table 01: Units of the textbook

Unit Number	Unit Name
Unit one	<i>Getting Through</i>
Unit two	<i>Once upon a time</i>
Unit three	<i>Our findings show</i>
Unit four:	<i>Eureka!</i>
Unit five	<i>Back to nature</i>

Each unit is composed of the following sequences:

Table 02: Unit's Sequences

Sequence	Title
Sequence one	Listening and Speaking. It is also divided into rubrics, <i>Anticipate, Listen and Check, Say it clear and it's your Turn.</i>
Sequence two	Reading and writing. This sequence starts with Anticipate, read and check, discover the language and finally write it right.
Sequence three	Developing skills
/	Stop and consider. This section is concerned mainly with grammar points.
Sequence four	Consolidation and Extension. It is built up of two rubrics, Write it out and Work it out.
/	Project Workshop Section
/	Check Your Progress Section

**IV- 3.Literature-based Unit:**  
**Unit two: Once Upon a Time**

This unit is the only unit, among five units constructing the textbook that is concerned with the use of literature to EFL teaching

**Sequence one: Listening and Speaking**

In the first phase of the sequence, Anticipate, students are given pictures that represent the tale of the Arabian Nights, The Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor. Whereas the second rubric is an opportunity for the students to speak about their reading preferences as they respond to titles of given books.

**Sequence two: Reading and Writing**

**Anticipate:** Students are given a book cover (blurb) of Chinwa Achebe's Things Fall Apart, then, a chain of questions about the blurb is launched to discuss the content of the blurb.

**Read and Check:** This rubric is an opportunity for learners to read a passage of three paragraphs extracted from Things Fall Apart in which they ought to read and discuss the principal character's traits (physical appearance, personality, likes and dislikes of OKONKHO and UNOKA)

**Sequence three: Developing Skills**

'Guided story telling', a short story of the lion is presented to the students after having practised a writing activity of a short story in order to enhance writing ability of the students. Another book cover is given to them. Now, it is Charles Dickens' Hard Times novel book cover, in addition to an adapted text from the same novel. Moreover, an adaption from Lowis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in wonderland is presented to the students in four paragraphs.

**Sequence four: Consolidation and Extension**

A different form of literary text is presented Shakespeare's Biography and other very short stories (folktales) for further reading and extension (Fables adaptation)

**Project Workshop:**

**Project Round up:**

My country (by Dorothea Mackeller) is a poem given with an illustrating image that gathers enjoyment, nationalism raising and invitation for extrinsic reading at once.

**Objectives:**

Sequence one: Students will be able to:

- ✚ Listen and respond orally and in writing to a tale

- + Express likes and dislikes about literary works
- + Recognise stress in three-syllable words
- + Recognise and pronounce inflected endings (verb + ed)

**Sequence two:**

- + Read and interpret a blurb
- + Read and interpret a literary portrait
- + Describe people's physical appearance and personality features
- + Recognise corrective stress

**Sequence three:**

- + Read and interpret a street map
- + Read and respond to a short narrative
- + Ask for and give directions and locate places

**Stop and Consider:**

- + Use the past continuous and the past simple + 'when' and 'while'
- + Use 'besides' and 'beside'
- + Use relative pronouns 'who', 'whom' and 'which'

**Sequence four:**

- + Read and write a short biography
- + Read and interpret a short poem/ a folktale
- + Read and use a street map
- + Write a folktale

**For Your Project**

Students will write:

- + A book review, a writers' sketchbook, a family history project or a storybook. (textbook p 47)

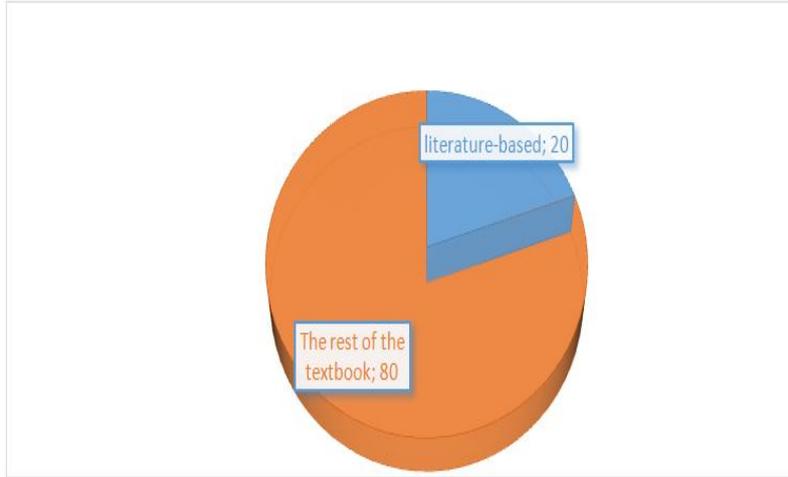
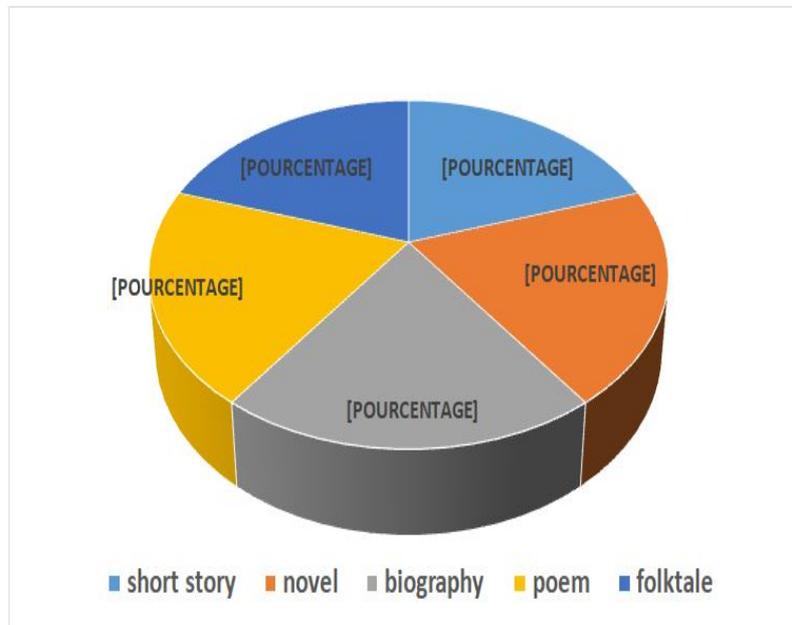


Figure 01: It shows Literature-based content in the textbook



## V. Discussion:

The textbook Analysis has shown that literature is partly used in the Algerian first secondary education. Only twenty percent (20%) of the textbook content is literature-based. So far, it has been proved that literature can be pedagogically bargained on as a locomotive to enhance language learning. This enhancement is shaped in the diversity of the literary texts, in its different forms, contents, purposes and skills they target.

In fact, literature is not restricted exclusively in one literary form or genre. There is place for short stories, novels, biographies, poems and folktales. The presence of all these literary forms is accounted for by the final goals drawn by the Algerian syllabus-designers. They aim at making learners familiar with all forms and genres of literary texts, as well as the pedagogical implementations that each literary genre can improve as we have seen in the objectives of the different sequences of the unit. In addition, specific literary genre addresses particular skills to enhance. It is quite apparent that literary text whatever their forms can be authentic material not only for the improvement but also the integration of skills. The short story of the Arabian Nights, for example, may be successfully used to integrate listening and speaking skills with the assistance of the carefully selected tasks and activities. Furthermore, literary texts are not only used to enhance listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, but also to teach grammatical notions and items.

Literary texts-based activities amalgamate between picture interpretation, items-reordering, storytelling, discussion (free or guided), role-playing within dialogues, table completion, text scanning, question-answer chains, sentence completion, gap filling which have been utilised along with the whole unit.

The selection of the literary texts is not done at random. It is quite noticeable that they must respond to particular criteria. Authenticity is regarded to be vitally taken into account. The choice of literary texts is due to the simplicity and easiness of the lexicon items so that learners at this level could grasp the content and to be motivated to interact with the teacher about the text.

Cultural enrichment is clearly observed. Algerian students are at the crossroads of Arab African and Universal cultures. This accounts for the use of Arabian Nights tale that belongs genuinely to the Arab and universal literature. Things Fall Apart novel belongs to the African culture whereas Shakespeare's novels, Charles Dickens' Hard Times and/or Jean de la Fontaine's Fables all belong to the European culture. This mixture of a variety of literary genres belonging to different cultures, local or universal, is a motivating factor that shows the carefully maintained relationship between literature and language, which together build up culture.

Contextual language is another paramount element that a literary text can ensure. Functionally, language is a medium of communication; therefore, the study of language theoretically cannot lead to better language learning. Thanks to literature that linguistic registers are smoothly put at the hands of language learners. The latter get use of linguistic items in their genuinely situational usage either formally or informally.

However, the compression of all the literary forms, with different objectives, in only unique unit can lead to negative effects. The unit lasts approximately for twenty (20) hours; this may be a constraint for both teachers and learners to be able to grasp not only the exploration of the given literary text but also its pedagogical ends. It would be better, then, to expand literature-based approach in more than one unit, or one unit for one literary genre to discover adequately and be practised with the four skills, separated or integrated.

Besides, it is noticed that not all the four skills are addressed with the introduction and use of all literary forms and genres. For instance, The Arabian Nights Tales (Sindbad the Sailor) is used only as an instructional supporting material for listening and speaking skills for it is short and suspicious for learners to reach its end, whereas Things Fall Apart used for reading and writing skills. Furthermore, literary texts are in the form of short stories used as supporting texts to enhance the four basic skills sequenced in listening and speaking and reading and writing parts.

## VI. Conclusion:

The Secondary Education, Year one English textbook (At the crossroads) is analysed to explore literature use to teach/learn English. The analysis shows that literature is slightly found in the textbook. Among five units that form the whole book, only one unit does give an account to literature use, 20% of the textbook is an account to literature. This means that Algerian policy makers and syllabus-designers have not yet recognised the importance of literature in teaching in general and languages (English as a Foreign Language, EFL) in particular. They have not yet thought of literature in its different genres, forms and texts to be the basis of, especially, foreign languages teaching. Nevertheless, English syllabus does have a unit specially designed on literature-based English teaching. This unit (Once upon a time) represents 20% of the textbook, which is composed of five units. It is an introduction of different literary genres. Novel, short story, folktale, biography and poetry are all equally involved in this unit. Five percent (05%) for each literary genre. This is valuable as five literary genres are introduced; however, being all compressed in one unit is not fruitful as far as literature is concerned which needs more time to be successfully grasped. Algerian syllabus-designers had better deliver more space and time for literature account in English textbook. They ought to revalue literary texts usage in languages teaching as they offer different advantages, which may assert successful language teaching and promote learning. As time is a constraint for the free introduction of the different literary genres, which some of them are lengthy like novels, genres like short story can best fits the syllabus size and, then, can be successfully introduced because of its shortness.

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