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Promoting Gender Awareness and Intercultural Learning through Utopian Science Fiction Literature: The case of Second Year Master Students of English as a Foreign Language at Mascara University, Algeria

تعزيز الوعي الجنساني والتعلم بين الثقافات من خلال أدب الخيال الطوباوي: حالة طلاب السنة الثانية ماستر لغة إنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة معسكر، الجزائر

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Abstract

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Teaching literature in the EFL classroom has been widely acknowledged to acquaint learners with language development, cultural learning, motivation, and critical thinking skills. This paper aims to examine students' and teachers' perceptions in incorporating utopian science fiction films in the course of literature as a means to promote gender awareness and intercultural learning at the Department of English of Mascara University. The present paper employs a mixed-method approach. Data are collected through students' questionnaire and teachers' interview. Results are quantitatively as well as qualitatively analyzed. The findings of this survey reveal students and teachers' interest in science fiction literature which tends to be the potential to motivate students and enhance learning. However, though it is highly appreciated by students, some teachers do not favour such inclusion in their literature course as their main focus is on providing learners with sufficient knowledge of literature they need after their post-graduation. Thereafter, some recommendations are introduced drawing out ideas from the literature review and the research results.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ملخص

عرف تدريس الأدب في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية أهمية بالغة في تزويد المتعلمين بعدة مهارات منها تنمية اللغة لدى المتعلم، الوعي الثقافي، التحفيز، بالإضافة إلى مهارات التفكير النقدي. يهدف هذا المقال إلى فحص تصورات الطلاب والأساتذة حول دمج أفلام الخيال العلمي الطوباوي في أقسام الأدب الإنجليزي كوسيلة لتعزيز الوعي الجنساني والتعلم بين الثقافات في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة معسكر. وقد أنجزت هذه الدراسة بناء على منهج الطريقة المختلطة. تجمع هذه الدراسة البيانات والمعلومات من خلال استبيان الطلبة ومقابلة الأساتذة، حيث تكشف نتائج هذا الاستطلاع عن اهتمام الطلبة الكبير والأساتذة بأدب الخيال العلمي والذي يميل إلى أن يكون قادرا على تحفيز الطلاب وتعزيز التعلم. على الرغم من أنه يحظى بتقدير كبير من قبل الطلاب إلا أن بعض الأساتذة لا يفضلون مثل هذا التضمين في أقسام الأدب الإنجليزي لأن تركيزهم الرئيسي ينصب على تزويد المتعلمين بالمعرفة الكافية بالأدب الذي يحتاجون إليه بعد التخرج. بعد ذلك، يقدم الباحث بعض التوصيات من خلال الأفكار المستخلصة من استعراض الأدبيات ونتائج البحث.

تعليمية الأدب
الوعي الجنساني
التعلم بين
الثقافات
أدب علم الخيال
الأدب الطوباوي.

1. Introduction

Literature is indisputably understood as fiction, in the sense of the unreal that is reflected to real life facts. The myth averse slogan of the realities of present-day society which is in itself a truism, turned into a myth displayed by fictitious characters. Literature as fiction is, primordially connected to leisure, a leisure that is trapped in the 'lack of time' presupposed claim and frequent response that students give to the question about reading extramural novels and short stories. Most students often relinquish a further question about the way literature influences their life and thought extravagant or worthless. Worse, "I don't read fiction" comes with the development of computer and media technology in which literature is no longer considered as inspiring. Even when literature is accommodated in schooling, the employment of it is often narrow, flat, uncritical and apathetic for students. In this status quo, teachers provide superficial reading practices assessed by high-stake testing that render students to confirm data rather than questioning their own beliefs and perceptions in life. Therefore, the challenge for teaching today is to escape the realm of 'practico-inert' towards a more rehabilitation of critical redirection.

What we described briefly above as a vision regarding practice more generally reappears here as a fact concerning reading more specifically. If we realize that literature "can teach how to live better", then the genre that concerns images of a better life or a life as it should be seems the most appropriate to suit critical educational aims. The genre in question is the utopian. Apart from offering images of a better life, that is, apart from giving a possible content to teaching about a worthwhile life, literary utopias have another connection to education: both assume the pliability of humanity and operate in virtue of the feasibility of change for the better. Within the utopian genre itself, there have been various themes that tackle in different ways what 'better' might be. The most prevalent and therefore culturally and educationally less neglected literary works are usually science-fiction.

The incorporation of science-fiction texts within the 'Utopian' genre in foreign language teaching of literature aims at contextualizing language learning

and enhancing students' cultural/intercultural learning and critical thinking. In addition to promoting narrative imagination, science fiction texts have the significance of holding moral aspects and tolerance/acceptance of the other within a community or outside of it. In other words, the starting point for students is to question personal beliefs and make self-constructs images of alternative realities and awareness of present societal flaws or empathetic understanding of Otherness.

One of the utopian science fiction themes is gender configurations. The latter introduces some aspects of present society that has the potential to be represented differently in an imagined future or present. Therefore, this paper introduces the possibility to incorporate science fiction literary texts to enhance gender awareness, culture/intercultural learning in the foreign language classroom. This is due to its rich authentic cultural content and its interpretative aspect which helps build critical thinking. The present study undertakes to examine students' and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of this inclusion in the course of literature at the Department of English of Mascara University. It is expected that the research findings would provide insights into how literature courses are taught and learned in the Department, and pave the way for the incorporation of science fiction literature within a utopian genre to promote gender awareness and intercultural learning in Algerian universities.

2. Review of Literature

Teaching Literature through science fiction serves an alternative to traditional teaching pedagogies of reading and writing thanks to media advance during this new century. Science fiction literature is a unique genre that encompasses new modes of postulating ideas within the world of cyborgs and human aliens. In this section, we introduce a body of literature related to this genre within utopian themes and discuss its important contribution to promote gender awareness and intercultural learning.

2.1. Science-Fiction Literature

Science fiction is a genre of literature in which authors postulate new kinds of humans who are the

result of biological, extra-terrestrial, or cybernetic production, cyborgs. The use of science in such a genre is appreciated as a literary device to formulate characters and settings. Characters like robots or zombies are walking scientific experiments and/or technology. Technology appears as a vehicle to get characters move via warp drives, in spacecraft, or by molecular manipulation. Appearance of the science fiction genre in the late twentieth century is assumed to make an imagination of the future, to predict it or to create conceivable plots (Greenland, 1983). In the same vein, Helford argues that science fiction is “about the future, new options and new ways of thinking” (2002, p.131).

In addition to the assumption that much of the future is portrayed in science fiction, some scholars argue that science fiction is about social critic (Moylan, 2003; Haraway, 1991). Science fiction, in this context, is a significant category of literary production that reflects social realities. This literary genre is produced as “an extrapolation of the present” that has “the potential to envision different worlds that can work as a purely imaginative (at worst) or a critical (at best) exploration of our society.” (Baccolini, 2004, p.519). Therefore, by reading about the present set in another time, readers of science fiction can remove themselves from the present, keeping away their society and culture they belong to, then reconnoitering imagination into active critic.

The subject of science fiction is found as an academic subject in literary studies. Due to its analytical potential, science fiction “became an increasingly significant genre for literary study after Darko Suvin’s (1979) epochal publication of *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, which raised the profile of science fiction as a legitimate field of academic enquiry” (Hassler, 1999 quoted in Menadue & Cheer, 2016, p. 1). This genre triggered intense changes in “contemporary culture, especially political aspects of gender, conflict, and freedom of expression.” (Hassler, 1999 quoted in Menadue & Cheer, 2016, p. 1).

2.2. Utopian Literature

Utopia is a word firstly coined by Thomas More in

1516 to name the unknown island described in his book. As the title implies, the word utopia was used to indicate imagination. However, it has been used later to refer to a particular genre of narrative known as Utopian Literature. Utopia, as a literary genre, has been influenced by fiction novels and science fiction. In contrast to dystopia which is “a depressing genre with no space for hope in the story” (Baccolini, 2004, p. 520), utopia imagines ideal worlds full of hope and extreme happiness.

In fact, the utopian genre has been closely associated with science fiction. Utopian science fiction “made a clear investment in the imagination of a fantastic world brought about by scientific technological progress” (Vieira, 2010, p. 7). It was in the late twentieth century that science fiction imagined mostly utopian futures. The peaceful future was an account for what was happening during and after World War I and II leading to international conflicts. Utopia made up most of the content of short stories and novels where authors wrote of peace reached all over the universe. Science fiction within a utopian genre was deemed credible because of its textual relationship with practical and theoretical science. Peace was imagined in cybernetic worlds, robot communities and in extraterrestrial life.

In addition to its political facets, utopian science fiction imagines alternative social realities. Still, this genre has been permeated by social and, inevitably, cultural concerns. In this context, Vieira (2010, p. 8) claims that one of the features of utopian sci-fi genre is “its relationship with reality” where “utopists depart from the observation of the society they live in, note down the aspects that need to be changed and imagine a place where those problems have been solved.” In the same vein, Donna Haraway (1991, p. 150) states, “the cyborg is our ontology”. Meaning, such imaginative creatures in a post-world construct our experiences and social relations.

2.3. Gender Awareness in the EFL Classroom

In its general term, gender awareness is the ability to view society from the perspective of gender roles, differences, and stereotypes. As a cognitive process, it is our critical understandings and analytical abilities

in questioning gender differences in society. Gender awareness is the ability to identify problems arising from gender inequality and discrimination. Volkman and Schiller assert that gender awareness “consists of insights into how gender is socially acquired, contingent and ambivalent. (2016, p. 119). In the field of literature didactics, they define the term as the awareness of “how concepts of gender are highly influenced by film, literature, narrative, and visual texts.” (Volkman & Schiller, 2016, p. 119)

In the context of teaching literature in foreign language classes, Volkman & Schiller (2016, p.119-120) suggest ten elements to promote gender awareness for learners summarized as follows:

- ▶ Learners should be aware about the extent to which women’s lives have been ‘visible’ nowadays. Such awareness can be enhanced by incorporating literary texts from earlier centuries to contrast them with women’s lives today.
- ▶ Learners should be aware about how gender is constructed in different societies and in different periods. Here, gender is seen as “a community of practice” (Volkman, 2007, p.)
- ▶ Learners come to see gender as “multiple and fluid”. This aspect of gender formations can take part in their intercultural learning.
- ▶ Gender needs to be seen as a social representation.
- ▶ Learners study gender as a linguistic construction. This can be employed through analysis of the language used by male and female characters in a literary text such as the use of adjectives.
- ▶ Learners also tend to see gender about individual agency and contestation. Meaning, they ought to be aware about how one finds his ‘gender role’ when growing up. In this context, teachers incorporate growing up stories as Hemingway’s ‘Nick-Adams stories’.
- ▶ Gender as “a performative act” (Butler, 1990) can be stressed through analysis of every-day interaction as a result of culture-defined discourse (Konig, 2015, p. 168)
- ▶ Learners are encouraged to discuss literary texts by criticizing or passing judgments to characters, either from a male or female perspective. Here gender is seen as an issue of ‘entitlement’.
- ▶ Concepts related to ‘male identities’ can also be presented in the EFL classroom by addressing critical studies of men and masculinities.
- ▶ Learners can be exposed to analyze gender stereotypes and clichés which result in hostile sexism in literary texts, marked by antipathy and discrimination.

As suggested above, literary texts are emphasized in the EFL classroom to develop gender awareness. In the same vein, this concern has been addressed by a number of foreign language teachers and researchers, including Laurenz Volkman (2007, 2016) and Werner Delanoy (2007). One of the main arguments for incorporating literary texts within the second language classroom and intercultural education in relation to gender issues is concerned with the fact that works of literature enable the reader to observe the world from diverse perspectives and cherish the diversity of individual perception. The power of literature lies in its unique ability to deeply involve the reader both at a cognitive, as well as emotional level. The subjective world of literary characters might not only fascinate and allure the reader, but also transfer them to a different reality. Therefore, instead of reinforcing dominant views of reality and gender roles, a Gender Studies oriented pedagogy would see its main purpose in enabling students to demystify existing gender concepts. On the basis of enlightened insights into the cultural construction of such gendered images, they could then become active reflectors of their own identities.

2.4. Advantages of Incorporating Utopian Science Fiction in the Foreign Language Classroom

Though limited in number, some studies have explored the role of Science Fiction stories within the Utopian genre in the foreign language classroom underlining its positive effects on the process of enhancing gender awareness and intercultural learning, summarized in the following headings:

2.4.1. Creating Gender Awareness

It is worth noting that in science fiction stories and films the most fundamental gender concerns have been hosted. A canon of sci-fi literary works postulates new kinds of humans, create a new gender or eliminate gender. This canon includes Octavia Butler's 'Xenogenesis' trilogy (1989), Carolyn Ives Gilman's 'Halfway Human' (1998) and James Alan Gardner's 'Commitment Hour' (1998) in which they create a third gender alien (Shipley, 2007, p. 227). The theme of gender also plays a role in Ursula le Guin's 'The Left Hand of Darkness' (1969) which pretends a world without gender. Le Guin, a feminist sci-fi writer, argues that her disregard of gender in the novel is "to find out what was left. Whatever was left would be, presumably, simply human." (Le Guin, 1979, p. 162). This canon of gender imaginations "has in fact functioned as an enormously fertile environment for the exploration of sociocultural understandings of gender." (Merrick, 2003, p.241)

In the EFL classroom, the incorporation of gender themes through science fiction texts can extensively create gender awareness. Learners can be introduced to the way gender is tackled and represented in science fiction stories and films which differ from a male dominance perspective to feminine challenge of 'gendered hierarchies'. 'Superman', for example, is a gendered-bias science fiction film that represents masculine super power qualities though it is considered a utopian convention (Merrick, 2003, p.241). In contrary, some sci-fi works mostly "hint at the vision of a more equal gendered social order" (Shipley, 2007, p. 229). Subsequently, learners critically investigate the motives that pushed writers to imagine these worlds. As an example, consider the utopian science fiction novel "The Left Hand of Darkness" by Ursula Le Guin which "provides a unique opportunity to question gender configurations" and "addresses the relationship between gender and society" (Shipley, 2007, p. 229). Le Guin imagines the human beings of the planet Gethen as not having sexuality and without a gender identity except in *Kemmer* (a specific

period). Gender roles in the novel are equal to all the Gethenians as no one has the power to determine whether he/she is male or female during *Kemmer*. The novel interestingly presents the need for 'Women Liberation' or the possibility of figuring female desire for greater equality. Le Guin, as a feminist science fiction writer, argues,

"if men and women were completely and genuinely equal in their social roles, equal legally and economically, equal in freedom, in responsibility, and in self-esteem, then society would be a very different thing." (Le Guin, 1979, p. 169)

Therefore, the novel provides challenging material for the foreign language classroom as does much of the genre of science fiction as a whole as the text "interweaves the Otherness of gender with other aspects of culture" (Shipley,2007, p. 229). In light of this situation, in a text like 'The Disappearance' by Philip Wylie, who may have a different perception of gender, women mystifyingly disappear from men's lives. As a utopian science fiction masterpiece, the novel shows that women "have dealt rather better with the separation than the men." (Merrick, 2003, p.245). At last, the male and female worlds are united. Therefore, the controversy of themes related to gender creates in learners a sense of reflection and critical thinking.

2.4.2. Promoting Intercultural Learning

One of the most challenges of teaching Intercultural Communication in an EFL context is that it is not taught in the natural setting in which it is used, as is the case with teaching English in Algeria. Supposedly, science fiction stories and films may have the potential to introduce the different phases to a successful intercultural competence. The latter is the ability to understand, cope, adapt or adopt others' cultural perspectives. Congruently, language learners must learn what language forms and behaviours are culturally appropriate to address people, express gratitude, agree or disagree with others. They ought to know that behaviours and intonation patterns that are appropriate in their own community may be perceived differently by members of the target discourse

community. In this context, Elizabeth Shipley (2007, p.232) claims,

The learning experience results from their willingness to suspend their own cultural expectations and to change their own patterns of behavior when they understand the way they are misinterpreted by the other. The process of understanding the Other ... involves a preparedness to question one's own presuppositions and behavior as a learned cultural expression, a process which may lead to a change of perspective

'The Left Hand of Darkness' further explores the theme of Intercultural Communication. The novel tells the story of Genly Ai, an inhabitant from the Earth planet, who goes to another planet for a mission. Genly finds out that the Gethenians' social structure and lifestyle are totally different and, hence, experiences a 'culture shock' as a result of other-genderedness (Shipley, 2007, p. 230). In turn, Genly's other-genderedness makes him in a threat from the Gethenians' political leaders. This phase resembles an 'absolute rejection of the Other' (Hermes, 1997, p. 121 cited in Shipley, 2007, p.232). The novel, then, shows a kind of engagement with the Other throughout Genly's journey with Estraven, a Gethenian inhabitant who rescued him from prison. Lastly, the book reveals Genly's complete intercultural understanding when his ship arrives with the Other bi-gendered humans. Shipley (idem. 232) further adds, "we accompany Genly (and Estraven) on a journey of intercultural communication through the vehicle of gender perception and experience the stages of rejection, engagement and acknowledgement of the Other."

Reading literature and science fiction in particular brings to the classroom the "insight that reading is an interactive process and that meaning is not found in the text but created by the reader responding to the text." (Delanoy & Lothar, 1996, p.vii). All in all, teachers encourage learners to read and interact with science fiction texts rather than incorporating intensive information which may maximize learners' discomfort. Thus, teachers should develop effective supporting teaching materials that stimulate learners'

enjoyment to engage in intercultural learning.

3. Methodology

The current research work opts for a mixed- method approach in which quantitative as well as qualitative data are collected and analyzed. The following sections further explores the research procedure.

3.1. Aim of the Study

This study was designed to examine students' and teachers' perceptions about integrating science fiction stories or films in the course of literature as a means to create gender awareness and promote intercultural learning at the Department of English of Mascara University.

3.2. Participants

The study used the teachers of literature and 20 second year Master students enrolled in the specialty of Foreign Language Literature as informants. The choice of second year Master students was based on the assumption that they might have language proficiency and a sufficient cultural knowledge. The number of the teachers of literature in the Department is five. Three of them were interviewed for this study. One of the interviewed teachers holds Es-Sciences Doctorate degree and the other two teachers hold a Magister Degree. They all taught American and British Literature with an experience which varies from 4 years to 13 years.

3.3. Procedure

In order to examine students and teachers' perception towards science fiction stories in teaching literature to second year Master Students, a mixed-method approach was adopted. Data was collected using two research instruments namely a students' questionnaire and teachers' interview.

3.3.1. Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to get information about the learners' opinions and attitudes towards studying literature. It also aims to know about their learning preferences and their perception of integrating science fiction stories to their literature classes.

The questionnaire includes 7 items which are

divided into two sections; each one is intended to elicit a specific set of information. The first section is concerned with students' motivation, attitudes and interests in the course of literature. The second section targets their learning preferences as well as their familiarity with science fiction stories and the possibility of incorporating them in the classroom. The twenty students who filled in the questionnaire were randomly selected. We explained the instructions to the students encouraging them to fairly answer the questions as part of a study.

Data analysis of the students' questionnaire is quantitatively and qualitatively treated. Students' answers to close-ended items were subjected to statistical analysis. As for the open-ended type questions provided more detailed information about students' attitudes and opinions.

3.3.2. Teachers' Interview

Teachers' interview includes 6 questions focused on the teachers' experiences and perceptions about the teaching and learning of literature in general and integrating science fiction texts in particular. The interview aims to get information about their current practices in teaching literature and to see whether science fiction texts are integrated into their literature courses. The interview also aims to get the teachers' opinion about the pedagogical value of science fiction as one of the teaching materials in creating gender awareness and intercultural learning.

We conducted a face-to-face interview with the teachers. We explained to the participants the purpose of the interview. Then, the interviews were analyzed using content analysis.

4. Data Analysis and Results

The purpose of this study is to examine students' and teachers' perceptions about integrating science fiction texts in the course of literature as a means to underpin the course objectives in terms of gender awareness and intercultural learning. Students' questionnaire and teachers' interview were used to collect the required data.

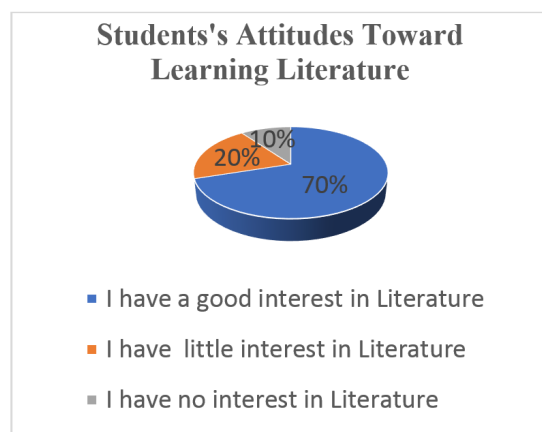
4.1. Analysis of the Students' Questionnaire

The questions target to gather students' attitudes and

interests in studying literature in general and Science-fiction literature in particular.

4.1.1. Students' Attitudes Toward Learning Literature

The first question of the questionnaire aims to check students' appreciation of the courses of Literature. The data obtained from the respondents' answers reveals that the majority of students appreciate literature courses. 20% of the students show little interest in studying literature while 10% ignore their full interest in literature.



4.1.2. Students' Objectives of Studying Literature

As for the second question, students reveal their interests in studying literature as follow:

Table1

Students' Objectives of Studying Literature

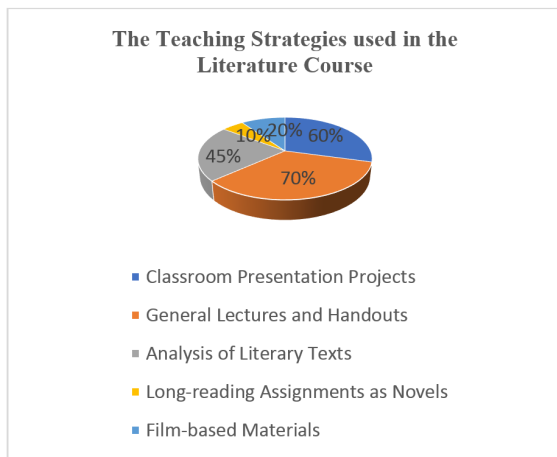
<i>Students' interest in studying literature</i>	<i>Absolute frequency</i>	<i>Relative frequency (percent)</i>
Learn the English Language	4	20%
Acquire general knowledge about literature, literary genres, movements, writers, etc.	6	30%
Learn about different societies and cultures	17	85%
Master literary analysis	7	35%

As it is shown in the table, most of the students revealed their interest about other societies and cultures while a few number of students show little concern in learning the English Language through

literature, acquiring general knowledge and master literary analysis.

4.1.3. The Teaching Strategies used in the Literature Course

When asked to identify the methods and materials used by their teachers, the majority of students detected classroom projects and general lectures as the two main methods used in their class. The following table illustrates the frequency of being exposed to some strategies and materials:



4.1.4. Students’ Interests about Cultural Topics in Literature

The following table shows student’s interests about particular cultural topics in the course of literature:

Table 2

Students’ Interests about Cultural Topics in Literature

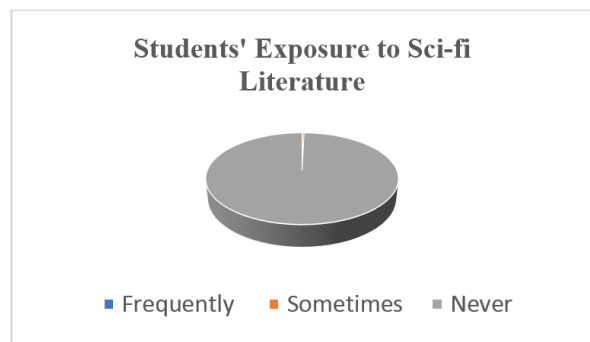
<i>Cultural topics</i>	<i>Absolute Frequency</i>	<i>Relative frequency (percent)</i>
Loveship and Marriage	13	65%
Social beliefs, attitudes, activities and relationships	18	90%
Gender roles, stereotypes and representations	15	75%
The Self and the Other	14	70%
Colonial and Post-Colonial identities	8	40%

As it looks obvious from the table that students’ interests about social issues and knowing about the Other are their main cultural topics in literature.

According to the frequency of answers, students also show their interest about gender roles, stereotypes and representations as well as topics about loveship and marriage.

4.1.5. Students’ Exposure to Science Fiction Literature in the Classroom

In regards to the issue whether learners are exposed to science fiction Literature, 90 % of the informants ignore the incorporation of this genre in the classroom, as it is revealed in the following diagram:



4.1.6. Students’ Perceptions about Science Fiction Literature

Students’ answers show a considerable interest in science fiction literature since it matches this 21st century generation pastime. The majority of the participants (80%) said they watched science fiction films outside the classroom.

4.1.7. Students’ Motivation about Science Fiction Literature

The table below reveals students’ motivation about sci-fi literature.:

Table 3

Students’ Motivation about Science Fiction Literature

<i>Students’ Motivation about sci-fi literature</i>	<i>Absolute Frequency</i>	<i>Relative Frequency</i>
A source of enjoyment	17	85%
Learning aid	13	65%
To be acquainted with the different literary genres	6	30%
Inspire imagination	16	80%

Students’ answers explain their view of sci-fi literature as a source of enjoyment and imagination. This generates a need

to use more motivational as well as enjoyable materials that trigger learners in the course of literature.

4.2. Analysis of Teachers' Interview

The first question of the interview aims at investigating the main objectives in teaching literature for EFL students. One of the interviewed teachers acknowledged that in teaching literature she focuses on a number of elements as literary genres, movements and literary theories. The second teacher commented as follows "my focus depends on the objective of the course". She further adds that she works to make her students practice literary analysis and criticism as well as acquaint them with background knowledge in literature.

As for the teaching strategies and materials, the interviewed teachers said they mostly present general lectures using handouts or ask students to make presentations in the classroom. They also said they rarely use additional materials such as films in the classroom because of their lengthy trial scenes. This fact was confirmed by the students' responses when asked to identify the methods and materials used by their teachers. In addition to this, the interviewees introduce culture by themselves through the method of lecturing. It is clear that this method gives students minimum exposure to the target culture. Consequently, students do not appreciate the real value of exploring and learning about other cultures.

When asked about whether they incorporate science fiction stories or films, the interviewed teachers ignored the idea claiming that it does not take part of their teaching objectives.

However, the three teachers thought about the possibility that science fiction literature suits student's learning style, and can be a medium which motivates them. One of the interviewed teachers said that, "students may enjoy learning this kind of literature in the classroom." Another teacher complemented that the integration of science fiction literature can possibly "motivate the students to learn about a new genre and can even compare it to traditional literature".

Lastly, we tried to elicit the teachers' opinions and insights, based on their experiences in teaching literature, about the pedagogical values in incorporating science fiction literature in the EFL classroom. When asked about science

fiction literature's potential to enhance intercultural learning, the first teacher admits this possibility since such stories or films hold themes about relationships and contact between humans and other extra-terrestrial creatures or robots. She added, "I think the teachers have to see objectives: why they use such literary genre and which sci-fi works are suitable for the assigned learning objectives." She said that: "teaching about science fiction literature is interesting, thought-provoking and motivating".

The second teacher answered: "it's a good idea to teach this genre". She further stated that "science fiction literature can be the potential material which may enhance students' imagination and creativity. However, she somewhat showed a slight disagreement with the idea, arguing that students may take the entire course in understanding the language of a science fiction story or film.

4.3. Interpretation of the Findings

As a result, the data obtained from the teachers' interview and students' questionnaire show that teaching literature in the EFL classroom relies mainly on printed sources and classroom presentations. The results show teachers' little use of additional materials and insufficient endeavor to incorporate a mixture of literary genres, particularly science fiction. Incorporation of sci-fi genre is not something easy to mess about with. It necessitates sophisticated means like films, videos and selection of appropriate stories that fit the students' level and learning objectives. In addition, the other possible factor lies in the fact that learners should be acquainted with adequate knowledge they need after their graduation.

Furthermore, topics related to gender are occasionally dealt with in the classroom when only issues about feminism are required. Even though the interviewed teachers agreed that with a good selection and teachers' guidance science fiction literature can help build learners' interpretative skills in addition to its pivoting role in promoting intercultural learning. Moreover, this genre is potential to entertain and motivate students and offer exposure to the target culture. The interviewed teachers advised to ask students watch or read science fiction at home so that they develop their imagination and provide interpretation, but in the classroom they preferred something written and discussed.

On the other side, students' questionnaire provided insights

into the main reasons that make them demotivated to study literature. Students found the literature module as a luggage of information including literary movements, writers and history which they ought to learn by heart for their evaluation. Also, the results of the questionnaire reveal students' keen interest in discovering societies and cultures and knowing more about the Other. Data further show their motivation to know more about issues concerning gender in society. Most importantly, the informants reflected positively on incorporating science fiction literature into their literature courses. This interprets the fact that relying on traditional literature solely in the classroom lead to boredom and opportunities for language learning will deteriorate gradually. Therefore, learners need to be introduced to a wide range of literary texts and cultural themes as much as possible.

5. Recommendations

Based on our analysis and interpretation of the research findings, it is recommended that the best way to incorporate science fiction literature is by choosing a short story that can be read over a weekend and providing a representative extract to be introduced beforehand to encourage the reading. Teachers sustain that learners should not focus on every individual word but to engage with the story as much as possible. Teachers can also assign activities and tasks for the sample extracts to enhance understandings of the story.

A teacher incorporating science fiction literature can also use *prediction* activities to promote imagination. Accordingly, as far as science fiction deals with 'projected futures' (McRae, 2007, p. 63) the teacher gets learners to read the opening lines of a story and let them guess and imagine a preliminary profile of characters involved, speculate where actions take place and visualize events according to the language and the tone used. In the light of this situation, the teacher does not consider correct or incorrect answers but let students free "to accept or reject the effects the writer tries to create". (ibid.) Science fiction literature can also be an important source of vocabulary for students and a source of fun for them to create their own.

As for creating gender awareness, teachers may incorporate science fiction literature, as the ones introduced in the literature review, and study the texts from a gender perspective. "Because of the strength of such narratives and metaphors, science fiction highlights the way gender

structures so many of our cultural stories". (Mendlesohn & James, 2003, p. 242).

6. Conclusion

In this paper, a mixed-method approach has been implemented to collect data needed for getting insights and attitudes about the incorporation of science fiction literature in the EFL classroom at the University of Mascara. The findings of the study show students and teachers selected for the study are in favour of introducing science fiction literature into the course of literature. They relatively see that science fiction literature can motivate students and enhance intercultural learning and understanding. Yet, there appears a mismatch between students' high interest in learning about cultures and intercultural issues as well as awareness about gender roles, representations and stereotypes using enjoyable materials with teachers' focus on providing learners with sufficient knowledge about literature.

Conflict of Interest

The author declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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