



The Impact of Teaching English Literature on improving EFL University Learners' Performance.

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Abstract:

Teaching English Literature is important in learning English language in Universities. In all the English departments in Universities, having an English literature course is a must. Generally speaking, literature has a huge role in enhancing the student's ability in the four skills of learning language. Therefore, in many foreign countries, English literature begins at early stage of education. The idea of teaching literature at early stage is to make learners familiar with the native culture for linguistic purposes.

The aim of this study is to investigate the impact of teaching English literature for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners to perform a better performance in English language. In order to improve EFL learners' English proficiency, the researcher advises teachers to create efficient techniques and approaches for teaching English literature. (128 words)

Keywords: English Literature , Foreign Language , Improve learning, Critical Thinking, EFL.

1. Introduction:

Before showing the impact of studying English literature on improving learning English language as a foreign language, one has to show the importance of learning literature in general and English Literature in specific. Literary studies help its reader to understand the world socially, economically and politically, and it improves the language learning due to its eloquence of language through stories, plays, novels & poems. (Muhammed, 2023). Accordingly, Learning literature gain insights, develop the sense of critical thinking and improves the ability to write in a sophisticated way. There are many of reasons that makes Literature matters:

1. Literature can support for a clear understanding of our world, socially, politically & economically.
2. It is through literature that reading, writing, thinking and text analyzing will be improved.
3. Imagination, identity, and empathy are fostered by literature.
4. The plot of a literary work frequently transforms the characters, and this process exemplifies how literature may influence and modify our own lives.
5. By sharing similar experiences and pain, literature helps readers to understand the world and develop empathy. (Patil, 2021).

Statement of the Problem:

In today's globalised world, mastering the English language is essential, and teachers are always looking for new and efficient ways to help students become more fluent in the language. The incorporation of English literature into language education curriculum is one strategy that is gaining popularity. Nonetheless, little is known about how teaching English literature can enhance students' acquisition of the language. The purpose of this study is to assess the overall effects on university students' language acquisition, linguistic competency, and cultural knowledge as well as the possible advantages and disadvantages of integrating literary texts into language training. Teachers can learn more about the efficacy of this pedagogical strategy and make well-informed choices regarding including English literature as a tool for supporting language development for EFL by filling up this research gap.

1.1. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of a study on the impact of teaching English literature to enhance English language learning for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in universities can be complicated, including both linguistic and cultural aspects. However, in the process, the study will increase students' overall language proficiency in all four learning domains: vocabulary acquisition, vocabulary enrichment, and literary analysis; it will also improve students' cultural competence by offering insights into the history, culture, and values of English-speaking communities; it will evaluate students' comprehension and appreciation of cultural nuances embedded in literary texts; it will foster critical thinking skills in EFL students; it will inspire students to think critically and creatively; and, lastly, it develops the oral and written communication skills due to the variety of literary genres and styles.

1.3. Questions of the Study

1. How does the inclusion of English literature in EFL curriculum enhance language proficiency?
2. What challenges do EFL teachers face in integrating English literature into their instruction?
3. What are the styles and skills that can be more effective in facing the challenges to improve learning English language through literary text?



1. How does the inclusion of English literature in EFL University curriculum enhance English language proficiency?

It wasn't until the 1980s that interest in that field began to manifest its purpose. In addition to helping students learn new cultural vocabulary that provides an insight and depth to notice the culture of the language they want to learn, the goal of using literature in EFL classes to improve English language proficiency truly goes beyond the requirements of the college curriculum (Gustavsson, 2010).

Reading literature gives students access to a wide vocabulary, teaches them when and how to use it, and uses literary texts to depict real-world events and reflect many cultures and situations. To answer the question how English literature improves learning English for EFL, let's shed light on the contribution on including English literature for EFL university learners.

2.1 The Reasons Why EFL Students Should Study English Literature.

It is believed that literature is a helpful aid for language learning. Experts in the field have proposed a number of advantages for including literature into EFL classes. Murat Hişmanoğlu,(2005) in his article "Teaching English Through Literature", also supports the importance of using literature as "... a technique for teaching both basic language skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking) and language areas (i.e. vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation) is very popular within the field of foreign language learning and teaching nowadays. Moreover, in translation courses, many language teachers make their students translate literary texts like drama, poetry and short stories into the mother tongue... (p. 54).

The importance of literature in learning English language can be listed in the following order:

Validity

Literature is genuine and authentic as Setyowati (2018) asserts that "literature is motivating, authentic, full of educational values, fun and rich in cultural values, provides language input and awareness, and encourage self-reflection." (p.41).

literature is reliable by nature; it offers real input for language development. According to Maley (1989), literature deals with non-trivial things which are personally relevant to them. Authenticity is a measure considered highly essential in literary texts, it exists majorly in drama and novel. Drama involves dialogue, emotional expressions, useful expressions, and determined language. literature deals with significant topics that are closely attached to the reader. Authenticity is a highly necessary principle that is mostly found in novels and plays.

Motivation:

Since motivation is an important aspect that a student need to learn, Literary text is considered the best tool for motivation. Clandfield & Foord (2006) believe that "Literature is really motivational literature offers a bountiful and extremely varied body of written material, which is important because it speaks



about fundamental human issues, which is enduring rather than ephemeral. A literary work can transcend both time and culture to speak directly to a reader in another country or a different time... It is also enjoyable and motivating” (p.16). Literature can exceed both culture and time and it attaches directly to the reader in different places of the world. Accordingly, it develops language responsiveness, inspires communication and discussions, and educates the whole learner's personality.

Globalisation

In the age of globalization, literature promotes intercultural understanding, which is crucial. Learners are in need of such growing experience and concern of universality that they need to understand to grasp the meaning of words and language of the culture that they need to learn its language. Globalization seeks to unite people together socially, economically and politically, that can be achieved through language. Generally speaking, literature generally deals with universal conceptions such as death, love & revenge...etc. such concepts can be seen in all cultures. Making this kind of comparison between the culture of the learner and the culture of the country that the learner wants to learn their language, easier to understand and helps learning quickly. (Long, 1986).

Intensive Reading

The key for a best way to practice reading is through literature. Investigating and understanding literary texts requires close reading skills. Haile (2018) asserts that “it is proved that incorporating literary materials in reading lesson can help students to master literal understanding of the characters, setting, and theme” (p. 43)

Pupils gain the ability to notice details, decipher clues, and extrapolate meaning from the text's language. Novels have fascinating plots that inspire readers to read widely and to use dictionaries because of their large vocabulary, which greatly expands students' understanding. Readers who enjoy novels, short stories, guess numerous English terms and phrases. As a result, they will pick up reading skills quickly and with a wealth of experience. When it comes to poetry, the student will work closely with the text to uncover its profoundly hidden meaning through the use of metaphor, simile, illustration, denotation, allegory, and other literary devices. (Isariyawat, C.; et. al (2020).

Sociolinguistic

Since literature is authentic, it can illustrate pragmatic knowledge. Sociolinguistic and Pragmatic are two - face coin, both needs cognitive awareness to communicate. Such component exists also in literary text whether in drama or novels and even in poetry. Additionally, Literary works offer a wide variety of terminology. By exposing themselves to new words in context, students can expand their vocabulary and gain a better knowledge of word meanings and usage. (Mustofa, A. and Hill, J., 2018).

Grammar

It is through literature that learners notice variety of grammatical structures. Language competency is enhanced by examining sentence structures and comprehending the grammatical usage of writers. According to Angelika Weber (2018):

“language is always found in texts, and concludes that language (including vocabulary and grammar) should therefore also be studied in and learned through texts. Taught and learnt in this fashion, grammar is no longer an abstract phenomenon, detached from its

natural and authentic context, but is observed and studied in its natural setting within a text.” (p. 79)

In addition to the formal language used in the literary work, they occasionally use colloquial language. Poetry mostly uses highly technical language that requires a high level of education to understand, but other literary texts use more colloquial language that gives the reader access to a wider range of conversations and vocabulary that broadens his understanding. All of these gives the student a reliable resource to practise grammatical structure. It is common knowledge that the greatest source of intricate grammatical constructions is literature. (www.ccsenet.org/elt)

Critical Thinking:

Literary texts frequently convey complex viewpoints and concepts. Urge learners to use English to think critically, examine subjects, challenge presumptions, and voice their own viewpoints. Reading literature raises critical thinking, which improves language proficiency. (Khatib, 2011)

Tung asserts in his article ‘Developing Critical Thinking through Literature Reading’ “...the mental process of literature reading requires critical thinking skills. Literature reading is a complex process that requires readers to recall, retrieve and reflect on their prior experiences or memories to construct meanings of the text.” (p. 6). Students may comprehend, connect, and explore ideas through literature, which enables them to apply the four language-learning abilities. As everyone knows, literature stimulates our deep thinking and is full with ideals that may be analysed critically. A shrewd educator may encourage his pupils to read, write, think, and discuss in English by employing literature as a teaching tool. “It is believed that with good critical thinking ability, college graduates can be better prepared to compete and exercise their rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a global community” (Tung, Chi-An Jennifer, 2009, p.3)

Writing Skills

Literature provides a solid foundation for writing practice when it comes to writing goals. Students will be able to produce an analysis or their own summary of a work in their own words after reading a poem, short story, or novel. As a result, it improves students' writing practice and proficiency. Stern (1991) published an article entitled “An Integrated Approach to Literature in ESL / EFL” he shows the importance of literary text to enhance writing skill through,

“... paraphrase, summary, and adaptation. These techniques are very beneficial ESL / EFL writing exercises. In paraphrasing, students are required to use their own words to rephrase the things that they see in print or hear aloud. Since paraphrase coincides with the students’ trying to make sense of the poem, it is a strikingly useful tool with poetry. Summary work goes well with realistic short stories and plays, where events normally follow a chronological order and have concrete elements like plot, setting, and character to guide student writing. Adaptation requires rewriting prose fiction into dialog or, reversely, rewriting a play or a scene into narrative. This activity enables students to be aware of the variations between written and spoken

English (p. 333).

2. What challenges do EFL teachers face in integrating English literature into their instruction, and how can these challenges be addressed effectively?

Obviously, many have sought the challenges that EFL teachers face when including literature in language learning, Vitoria Prochet, is one of those researchers whom declared:

Scholars have been analysing the problems teachers face in the classroom when teaching language using literature as materials. However, many of the theorists seeking to identify the problems faced by classroom teachers were not engaged in empirical studies and had not collected empirical data. For this reason, it is relevant to investigate if the works available in the body of research approach the correct issues teachers face in the classroom nowadays. (Prochet,, 2017)

Accordingly, incorporating English literature into English language learning for (EFL) in University curriculum though it is rewarding yet it is considered a challenge for most teachers. Below are some of the challenges they and we as teachers face:

- 1. Language Complexity:** EFL learners may find it challenging to understand the intricate vocabulary, colloquial idioms, and antiquated linguistic patterns found in English literature. Finding materials that are appropriate for each student's level of language competency can be difficult for teachers.
- 2. Cultural Differences:** EFL students may not be familiar with the cultural concepts and social or religious customs that are frequently reflected in literature. This ignorance of cultural context may make it more difficult to understand and participate.
- 3. Motivation and Relevance:** If a work of literature has themes or locations that are foreign or remote, some students may find it less interesting or applicable to their everyday life.
- 4. Limited Time:** It might be difficult for EFL teachers to devote enough time to literature because of curricular requirements and language competency goals, which frequently place time limits on them.
- 5. Evaluation Difficulties:** It can be difficult to evaluate literature comprehension and analysis, especially if EFL students are not a good fit for a traditional evaluation technique.
- 6. Teacher Training and Resources:** Sometimes teachers may lack a certain type of training or information about including literature in their curriculum.

It is important to put our hands on the problems that might face teachers and students in using literature to enhance Language learning for EFL university learners. By doing so, we can face to solve the obstacles above that teachers face. For Example:

Simplified versions of literary works or extra support through the pre-teaching of important terminology and concepts might help make literature more accessible when it comes to linguistic complexity.



Regarding cultural differences, educators should give students basic knowledge and cultural context. They can also improve understanding by having a discussion about the text's cultural components. Instructors can add talks, activities, or multimedia elements in addition to it.

Through careful preparation, material adaptation, and a student-centered approach, EFL teachers can overcome these obstacles and establish a more inclusive and productive learning environment that facilitates the integration of English literature into their classroom.

Motivation and Relevance: Teachers could attempt to make literary connections to students' interests, experiences, and current situations in order to increase motivation if they are having trouble getting students to pay attention because they are not connected to their way of life. Multimedia elements like movies, music, and interactive activities. Additionally, incorporating multimedia, such as films, music, or interactive activities, can make the content more relatable.

Regarding Time, the greatest method to make the most of limited time is to carefully integrate literature into language classes and link it with language learning objectives, as teachers of literature frequently encounter time constraints. Instructors can also introduce shorter texts or passages and work their way up to lengthier pieces.

Teachers should use a variety of assessment techniques to meet assessment issues. These techniques include conversations, projects, creative assignments, and cooperative activities. These techniques provide a more detailed examination of students' comprehension and application of literary themes. Additionally, teachers can become more competent and self-assured by being given access to resources on teaching literature in an EFL environment, workshops, and professional development opportunities. Ultimately, overcoming these obstacles can be facilitated by working with colleagues, making use of online resources, and customizing courses to the language skill levels and cultural backgrounds of the pupils.

3 What are the styles and skills that can be more effective in learning English language through literary text in Universities?

In colleges, studying English through literary texts can be a rich and fulfilling experience that promotes a better knowledge of expression and culture while also assisting students in developing language skills in context. Sage in his *Incorporating Literature in ESL Instruction*, shares the same idea in "...how literature and ESL / EFL instruction can work together and interact for the benefit of students and teachers has lead to the flourishing of interesting ideas, learning, and improved instruction for all. Many teachers consider the use of literature in language teaching as an interesting and worthy concern" (p. 1).

The following techniques and abilities may be useful in this process:

- 1. Cultural Connection:** The cultural environment in which literary texts are composed is frequently reflected in them. Knowing the social and historical context of the literature they study helps students become more culturally competent.
- 2. Communication Skills:** Essay writing and literary analysis can help students to become more proficient communicators in the English language. Canale and Swain (1980) believe



that “the communicative approach in the language should contain grammar, sociolinguistics, and strategic competence; and this can never be fulfilled through grammatical classes solely without the help of literature.” (p. 22)

3. Literary Analysis Essays: Composing essays on literary analysis enables students to clearly express their ideas, arrange their thoughts logically, and create strong English arguments.

4. Group Discussions: Participating in group conversations about literary texts enhances one's capacity for oral communication, listening comprehension, and collective opinion and idea expression. Stern (1991), also believes in the importance of encouraging learners to practice through;

...stimulate[ing] total participation. All students are involved and the participation is multidirectional. When teaching English through literature, some of the group activities used in language classroom are general class discussion, small-group work, panel discussions, and debates. All of these group activities both develop the speaking abilities of the students and give importance to pronunciation practice. Teachers indicate pronunciation errors of the students during the act of such activities so as to correct such errors (Stern 1991:337).

5. Multimodal Approaches: Adding multimedia components to literary texts—such as audio, video, or visual aids—can improve understanding and create a more engaging learning environment.

6. Comparative Analysis: By examining a variety of literary works, students can draw comparisons between various themes, writing philosophies, and cultural settings, which promotes a deeper comprehension of English literature.

7. Use of Digital Technology: Technology nowadays has a vital role to improve learning English in general and it enables teachers to enhance class activities of literary text in particular. To enhance conventional teaching strategies and offer more chances for practice and engagement, make use of digital resources, internet platforms, and language learning apps. It's critical to balance language acquisition with literary analysis while customising these methods to the unique requirements and preferences of the learners.

Teachers and students prefer including software techniques which opposes the traditional method in teaching, that modern method really improved learning a lot, Harikumar Pallathadka (2020) in his study proved that through his article “Use Of Technology In English Literature Teaching” he declares:

“Multimedia technology has shown a positive role in encouraging student events, projects, and teaching in the English classroom. Progress in technology is part of English development and improves our form of communication. The growth of the Internet is relatively indicative of the increase in English, and computers are no longer limited to a few but can be utilized by many at a time. Therefore, the literature on the use of technology in English has led to a considerable evolution” (p. 9008)



Conclusion:

In conclusion, the impact of literary texts on improving the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is substantial and multifaceted. Literary texts provide a rich and authentic context for language learning, fostering linguistic, cultural, and critical thinking skills. Through exposure to diverse narratives, characters, and themes, students can enhance their language proficiency, expand their vocabulary, and develop a deeper understanding of the nuances of the English language.

Literary texts also serve as a bridge to cultural insights, offering students a window into the societies where the language is spoken. This cultural awareness is crucial for effective communication and language use in real-world situations. Moreover, literary texts encourage empathy and broaden students' perspectives by exposing them to different experiences and viewpoints.

Additionally, the analysis of literary texts promotes critical thinking skills as students engage in discussions, analyze characters' motivations, and interpret complex narratives. These activities contribute to the development of analytical and interpretive abilities, which are essential for language learners to navigate and comprehend diverse forms of communication.

Furthermore, integrating literary texts into EFL classrooms creates an immersive and enjoyable learning experience. Students are more likely to be motivated and engaged when exploring narratives that captivate their interest. This intrinsic motivation enhances the learning process and contributes to a positive language learning environment.

In essence, the impact of literary texts on teaching English as a Foreign Language extends beyond language acquisition. It encompasses cultural enrichment, critical thinking development, and the promotion of a positive and engaging learning atmosphere. As educators continue to recognize and leverage the power of literary texts, EFL students are better equipped to navigate the complexities of language and culture in a globalized world.

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