



Investigating the Awareness of EFL Sudanese Secondary Schools Teachers about Approaches of Teaching Literature

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Abstract: Using literature in language classroom is a beneficial for mastering not only linguistic system but also life in relation to the target language. This study is about investigating the awareness of Sudanese EFL teachers of secondary school in using approaches of teaching literature. It aims to investigate whether EFL teachers of secondary schools are aware of approaches of teaching literature or not. In addition to that, it aims to find out reasons behind the lack of awareness about approaches of teaching literature among Sudanese EFL teachers of secondary schools. The study uses the descriptive approach. It is a qualitative one. The interview is used as a tool for data collection. The population of the study is different Sudanese secondary school teachers who teaches English in Khartoum state and, participated in the correction of the Sudanese secondary school examination in 2020. The sample of the study consists of 30 teachers. The study concluded that the majority of teachers don't use approaches of teaching literature when teaching simplified literature books. In addition to that they neglect the poems which are provided in the national curriculum "SPINE". Also they do not receive any training on how to teach literature. The study recommends that secondary school teachers should be well trained in using approaches in teaching literature.

Keywords: EFL, Approach, Literature, Curriculum.

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INTRODUCTION

Literature plays an important role in education in general and in foreign language learning in specific. In spite of this fact, many teachers are still not aware of the various approaches and techniques that make literature teaching easy and useful. This affects the outcomes of learning English language through literature which is part of the curriculum. This study aims at investigating the awareness of EFL Sudanese secondary school teachers in using approaches of teaching literature.

Problem of the Study

Teaching language through literature is useful. Using literature in language classes requires knowledge of approaches by which the literature is taught. Sudanese EFL secondary schools adopt different simplified novels which are retold by Macmillan for publishing. Although these books are used, students are still have a weak level of English language. There are different approaches of teaching literature which improve personal growth, focuses on providing knowledge of historical background, authors, cultural trends, and one that focuses on language and developing four skills, i.e., listening,

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speaking, reading and writing, in addition to motivating learners to become creative in language use. This study investigates whether EFL Teachers of secondary schools are aware of these approaches of teaching literature or not. It also aims at finding out reasons behind the lack of awareness among them.

Objectives of the Study

- To investigate whether EFL secondary schools teachers are aware of approaches of teaching literature or not.
- To find out the reasons behind the lack of the awareness about approaches of teaching literature among EFL Sudanese secondary schools teachers.

Theoretical Framework

This study is descriptive in nature. The researchers review important studies that related to approaches of using literature in classroom. This includes the approaches of teaching literature, benefits of using literature in language classrooms, literature and the teaching of language skills as well as benefits of using novels in language teaching.

Benefits of Using Literature in Classroom

Many scholars have tackled the importance of using literature in education. Parkinson and Thomas (2000) listed the following ten benefits:

- Linguistic Model
- Linguistic Competence
- Cultural Enrichment
- Authenticity
- Mental Training
- Memorability
- Rhythmic Resource
- Motivating Material
- Open to Interpretation
- Convenience.

Maley (1989:12) mentioned the following seven benefits of literature in language learning which are:

- i) **Universality:** There is no language without oral or written literature. This includes global topics such as love, death, separation, jealousy, pride, etc. which are shared by all cultures.
- ii) **Non-triviality:** Most of the more traditional forms of language input tend to introduce language in artificial contexts that are often rejected by students. Literature, meanwhile, does not trivialize, but offers the reader genuine, authentic input.
- iii) **Personal relevance:** Literary texts commonly deal with events, ideas, feelings and emotions that may conform to a real or

imaginative part of the readers' experience. This makes it much easier for them to relate the reading experience with their previous background knowledge that facilitates the learning process.

- iv) **Variety:** Literary texts tend to cover a wide variety of topics and to include all the conceivable varieties of the language.
- v) **Interest:** Since the topics and themes treated in literary works are part of the global human experience, they are intrinsically interesting for readers.
- vi) **Imaginative power:** One of the greatest strengths of literature consists in its imaginative, suggestive power, which is undoubtedly beyond the scope of the written part of the text. This makes literature an ideal tool generating topics for class debates.
- vii) **Ambiguity:** Literature is opened to subjectivity and association of ideas and guarantees class debates.

Hişmanoğlu (2005) added: "One of the main functions of literature is its sociolinguistic richness. The use of language changes from one social group to another. Likewise, it changes from one geographical location to another. A person speaks differently in different social contexts like school, hospital, police station and theatre (i.e. formal, informal, casual, frozen, intimate styles speech). The language used changes from one profession to another (i.e. doctors, engineers, and economists use different terminology).

In other words, since literature provides students with a wide range of language varieties like sociolects, regional dialects, jargon, idiolects, etc., it develops their sociolinguistic competence in the target language.

Literature and Teaching of Language Skills

Literature plays an important role in teaching the four basic language skills i.e reading, writing, listening and speaking.

According to Rai (2012) when using literature in the language classroom, skills should never be taught in isolation but in an integrated way. Teachers should try to teach basic language skills as an integral part of oral and written language use, as part of the means for creating both referential and interactional meaning, not merely as an aspect of the oral and written production of words, phrases and sentences.

Khamkhien (2010) believed that "speaking is considered to be the most important in a second language". In the literature class, question-answer,

debate, and role play are some of the effective activities to improve the students' speaking skill.

Literature also enhances listening. According to McKay (2001), literature provides a perfect setting for enhancing listening skills as it familiarizes learners with a variety of voice qualities and dialects. Jacobs (1990) recommended that learners should be provided with listening opportunities of literary texts which help them get engaged – both intellectually and emotionally. Literature promotes reading skill. Many studies show how literature promotes reading development and achievement Yopp&Yopp (2013) provided various 'pre, during and post-reading activities,

Literature inspires writing too. Stern (2001) stated that literature is a rich source of inspiration for writing in EFL/ESL – both as a subject matter and as a model. Readers of literature are motivated to imitate the original writing, its theme, content and style, and at the same time readers show original thinking when they analyze and interpret texts. Many students of literature metamorphosed into a highly creative writers. Classroom activities such as discussion or exercises after text comprehension reading motivate students to analyze, interpret and criticize the work of literature Stern (2001). Various contents, themes, styles and organizations of literary works help generate original thinking among learners which they tend to write Hismanoğlu, (2005).

Literary texts are rich sources of figurative language, beautiful sentences, idiomatic expressions, interesting proverbs, and suitable vocabulary items filled with connotative meanings. In addition, range of vocabulary, grammatical structures and style of writing woven into a gripping narration enthrall the readers. Rabb Khan & Alasmari (2018).

All the above mentioned approve that literature has a vital role in language classes. It is a very important means of learning and teaching. This is why teachers should not neglect it.

Approaches of Teaching Literature:

An approach refers to the general assumptions about what language is and about how learning a language occurs (Richards and Rodgers, 1986). It represents the sum of our philosophy about both the theory of language and the theory of learning. In other words, an approach to language teaching describes: The nature of language, how knowledge of a language is acquired, and the conditions that promote language acquisition. They argued that different types of activities form the

basis for different philosophies at the level of teaching approach.

Teachers should have the knowledge of various approaches and techniques for making literature teaching a success. Among many, some of the approaches to teach literature are discussed below. The Critical Literary Approach and the Stylistic Approach of Maley's (1989) offered two approaches: the critical literary approach (the study of literature as a cultural artifact), which focuses on background, plot, literary concepts, motivation, characterization, psychology and value etc., and the stylistic approach (the study of literature as a resource for learning language), which focuses on description of text, analysis of language and critical interpretation. While the critical approach requires expertise in linguistics the stylistic focuses on linguistic competence without covering the teaching needs about four language skills.

Three Models of Carter and Long

For teaching literature, Carter and Long's (1991) suggested three models – the language model, the cultural model and the personal growth model. The cultural model focuses on providing knowledge of historical background, authors, cultural trends, and certain periods. The language model focuses on developing four skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing, in addition to motivating learners to become creative in language use. The personal growth model aims at students' growth as individuals by inculcating imagination, creativity, critical thinking, and aesthetic taste in their personality.

Six Approaches of Van

Van (2009) offered the following six approaches:

- The Stylistic Approach
- The Reader-Response Approach
- The Language-Based Approach
- The Critical Literacy Approach
- New Criticism
- Structuralism.

According to Van (2009), the Language-Based Approach considers literature as “an excellent vehicle for CLT methods that result in four-skill English language development through interaction, collaboration, peer teaching, and student independence”.

According to Simon (2006), Stylistic Approach “considers literature primarily as discourse and studies it from a linguistic perspective, which means, how literary texts exemplify the system of language”.

Critical Literacy motivates students to learn how texts are associated with issues of class, culture, identity, gender, ethnicity, religion and political power. The teaching of language has far has failed to addresses how literature tackle dominant problems of ideology and power relations in society (Cummins 2000; Comber 1994).

Wellek and Warren's Intrinsic and Extrinsic Model

Wellek and Warren (1994) presented two approaches: intrinsic and extrinsic. in intrinsic approach, reader focuses on the structure, language, form, images, symbols, style, contrasts, and growth of a plot in a literary text. The extrinsic approach focus is directed to the biography of the author, historical background, and social aspects. In intrinsic approach, following levels are explored:

- Grammatical
- Lexical
- Structural
- Cultural.

The major focus of extrinsic approach are:

- Biographical
- Historical
- Aesthetic
- Philosophical.

Methods of Durant

Durant (1995) stated four methodological approaches to teaching literature: lecture, informal dialogue, workshop and self-access learning. He provided the following activities in classroom:

- Silent reading
- Comprehension task
- Listening tasks
- Personal response
- Dictionary learning and study skills and dictionary work
- Talk in the target language
- Stylistic analysis
- Creative writing and written response.

Integrative Approach to Literature Teaching

There are many well-known linguists and language teachers offered integrated approach

Lucas Text Type Approach

Lucas (1990) divided texts into two major types: artistic and functional. Artistic texts include novels, short stories, essays, poems and plays. Functional texts consist of whatever texts other than the artistic as shown in Figure-1 below:

Functional text comprises six categories:

- 1) Casual texts include newspapers, magazines and non-fiction

- 2) Personal texts include letters and diaries.
- 3) Transactional texts include business letters, legal documents and reports.
- 4) Reference texts include dictionaries, catalogues, directories and inventories.
- 5) Pedagogical texts include text books and encyclopaedias.
- 6) Academic texts include research papers, theses, specialist books and journals.

Timucin's Integrative Approach

Timucin (2001) integrated the stylistics and language-based approaches into a one pedagogical framework and noticed the benefits of this integrated approach vis-à-vis learners' engagement, liking for literary texts and enhanced motivation. This approach paved the way for further research on incorporating literature in language teaching.

Savvidou's Integrated Approach

According to Savvidou (2004), the following six-stage model can be employed to teach literary texts in language classroom:

Stage 1: This is to elicit the students' literary knowledge on the context and themes of the text.

Stage 2: This familiarizes learners with the text via reading and listening.

Stage 3: This is directed towards learners' response to the literary text: spoken or written.

Stage 4: This is focused on comprehension through intensive reading.

Stage 5: This motivates learners to explore deeper into literary texts to analyze the text.

Stage 6: This takes learners to individual understanding of the text followed by analysis.

Divsar and Tahriri Integrated Approach

According to Divsar and Tahriri (2009) literature as content or culture, literature as personal growth and language-based are three models for teaching literature. The researchers focused on three considerations: linguistic considerations, cultural considerations and communicative considerations as prerequisite for teaching literature. Following are the three phases for teaching literature:

- 1) The Preliminary Phase: This is language-based activities for developing comprehension.
- 2) The Content-cultural Phase: This makes learners know cultural aspects in the text.
- 3) The Synthesis Phase: This leads learners to evaluate the text and express their understanding.

Dhanapal's Integrated Approach

Dhanapal (2010) integrated reader-response approach with stylistics analysis approach

to address the critical and creative thinking skills upon Malaysian high school students. While “reader-response approaches would enlist a variety of interpretation but with stylistics in play, readers would follow some similar interpretive conventions”.

Benefits of Using Novel to Language Teaching

The use of a novel is a beneficial technique for mastering not only linguistic system but also life in relation to the target language.

In novel, characters reflect what people really perform in daily lives. Novels not only portray but also enlighten human lives. Using novel in a foreign language class offers the following educational benefits:

Novel develops readers’ knowledge about different cultures and different groups of people, increases students’ motivation to read an authentic material, offers real life / real life like settings, gives students the opportunity to make use of their creativity, improves critical thinking skills, paves the way for teaching the target language culture, enables students to go beyond what is written and dive into what is meant.

Asamani and Thomas (1998) mentioned the educational benefits of novels as follows:

- 1) Stimulates students' imagination
- 2) Helps students to identify the emotions of the characters so that they can learn how others cope with situations and problems similar to their own experiences
- 3) Helps them master the skills that will enable them to acquire information, process this knowledge, identify problems, formulate alternatives, and arrive at meaningful, thoughtful, effective decisions and solutions,
- 4) Develops oral and written language skills

Macmillan Readers

Macmillan readers are graded readers for learners at all levels. It is a series of retold versions of popular classic and contemporary titles and specially written stories continues to grow and there are now over 170 titles in the series. Most titles are available with Audio CDs and most include accompanying exercises and glossaries.

The Sudanese ministry of general education and the NCCER (National center for curriculum and educational research) adopt seven books of Macmillan Readers in secondary school level. Treasure Island, things fall apart, our mutual friends, Oliver twist, Anna and the fighter, the prisoner of Zenda and Jane Eyre. The curriculum of secondary

school "SPINE" is also include various stories and poems.

Methodology of the Study

The study adopts the descriptive approach .It is a qualitative study. The population of the study is the teachers of English language of secondary school from Khartoum state who participated in the correction of the Sudanese secondary school examination of 2020.They are 263.The sample of the study are 30 teachers. The study uses interview as a tool of data collection.

This interview aimed to investigate

- Whether the teachers use different tasks to teach English literature or not? What are they?
- Have they received any training on how to design different tasks to teach English literature?
- Have they received any training on how to teach literature by using different approaches or not?
- Whether they teach English literature for personal enrichment or not?
- How do they teach literature in secondary schools? Do they use content based approach in teaching English literature or not? What other approaches do they use?
- Have they received any training on how to use Macmillan resources of teaching literature at secondary schools and how to test literature?

Validity and Reliability of the Interview

The questions of the interview were checked by three doctors who are specialized in the field. They reviewed the content, wording, suitability and the ease of the questions. They all mentioned that the content is suitable and relevant and convenient to the purpose of the study. Some changes were made in the wording of some questions, a few were deleted and others were added.

Data Analysis and Results of the Interview

The following is the analysis of the interview's questions. The questions are eight and mainly about the awareness of teachers about the use of literature in language classrooms at secondary schools level in Sudanese context.

1. Teaching English literature in secondary schools is easy for me.

All the participants, with 100% said that they can teach literature easily.

2. I used content based approach in teaching English literature.

Only 6% of the teachers use content based approach in teaching literature, the rest said that they ask one of the students to read aloud in turn

while the rest listen then answer the questions which are written in the book. Most teachers neglect the poems which are provided in the national curriculum "SPINE" which are very useful and can be used to enhance the four skills.

3. I used different tasks to teach English literature.

23% of the participants use different tasks when teaching literature while the rest only give them the questions that are provided in the book which are wh questions. The majority of the participants said that they ask students to read aloud during the class and then check the students' understanding by the questions which are on the back of the book. The rest of the teachers design different tasks by their own. "A" for example asks students to talk about their favorite character and write about why they like most, He also gives his students tasks like summarizing a chapter and write an opinion composition about the novel. "O". asks students about the value they learned from the book, she also designs tasks to practice different vocabulary items. She focuses on reading and writing. "M" reads the books with students practice the language of each book and ask them to write summary of the story. No one of the participants practice listening or bring the movie of the novel for students to watch. Many useful tasks to practice the four skills are totally neglected.

4. I teach English literature for personal enrichment.

All participants with 100% do not teach literature for personal enrichment. They do not give them tasks that aim at enhancing the students' growth as individuals i e; promote imagination, creativity, critical thinking, and aesthetic taste in their personality. These are very important skills which can be improved by literature.

5. I received training on how to design different tasks to teach English literature.

The majority of the participants did not receive any training on how to design different tasks to teach literature. Only 13% of them received training. One of them did that through online course, while the other two teachers have studied it during high diploma of education.

6. I had training on teaching literature by using different approaches.

Only 6% of the participants had training on how to teach literature. The rest didn't. One of them did that through self-learning, on an online course, while the other teachers had studied a course of teaching English through literature during the high diploma.

7. I received some training on testing literature.

All the participants 100% haven't received any training on how to test literature. Evaluation is very important part which is totally neglected. Assessing literature or language skills which are taught through literature requires skillful teacher who has ability to design a valid and reliable test about the novels.

8. I have been trained on how to use Macmillan resources of teaching literature at secondary schools.

All the participants 100% have never used Macmillan resources of teaching literature at secondary schools. They didn't receive any training on how to use them. Macmillan readers are the series which are used in the Sudanese secondary schools. They are retold versions of popular classic and contemporary titles for different level. They are provided in partnership with the NCCER –Ministry of General education. The series have free resources which are available on the internet. The resources include useful tasks based on different approaches.

DISCUSSION

Literature has great role in language learning. The interview of this study revealed important information. It shows that the majority of the EFL teachers aren't aware of the approaches of teaching literature as well as their importance. They don't use different tasks when teaching the literature books and they teach them as the same as reading passage in the language curriculum "SPINE" which is mainly for teaching reading and writing. Students has lower level of English cause such books are not used well in the classes. Teachers also don't even teach the poems in the curriculum. The first hypothesis is achieved for this study which assumed that Sudanese EFL teachers of secondary schools are not aware of approaches of teaching literature. In addition to that, the teachers do not use the Macmillan resources of teaching of the books of literature. These resources are very useful and include different tasks based on various approaches. The interview showed that the majority of the teachers didn't receive any training on how to teach literature in general and these novels in specific. This made them teach the books as reading passages, ask students to read it aloud inside the class and do not use any approach of teaching literature when teaching. This achieved the second assumption which assumed that there are different reasons behind the lack of awareness about approaches of teaching literature among Sudanese EFL teachers of secondary schools. The main reason is the lack of training on how to teach literature.

Findings of the Study

- 1) Teachers at secondary schools don't use the approaches of teaching literature. They teach literature by asking students to read the novels aloud and only ask learners to answer the questions which are in the end of each book to check their understanding. Moreover they neglect the poems which are provided in the national curriculum "SPINE" which can be used to enhance the four skills.
- 2) EFL teachers at secondary schools lack the awareness of using various approaches in teaching literature.
- 3) Teachers don't design different tasks to teach the four skills of English language through literature.
- 4) They haven't received any training on how to teach and test literature at secondary schools.
- 5) They do not use Macmillan resources which include different tasks which are based on various useful approaches and methods. They enhance the four skills of language as well as other skills such as imagination, creativity, critical thinking, and aesthetic taste in their personality.

Recommendations of the Study

- 1) Teachers at Sudanese secondary schools should receive training on using literature in language classroom.
- 2) They should be well trained on using various approaches to teach language through literature.
- 3) Secondary schools teachers should also be trained on how to design different tasks to teach and test the four skills of English language through literature.
- 4) Macmillan resources are useful and include different tasks which are based on various useful approaches and methods awareness about using such resources should be raised among all teachers.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the EFL teachers of English language .It is limited to secondary school from Khartoum state who participated in the correction of the Sudanese secondary school examination of 2020.

CONCLUSION

Teaching English through literature is very useful and essential. The graded books which are provided by the general ministry of education are not used well by teachers, while the students have lower level of English language. The books need trained teachers that capable to use different approaches, methods and techniques to teach them. This will guarantee the developing four skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing, in addition

to motivating learners to become creative in language use. In order to achieve this, teachers should be trained on how to teach and assess literature.

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