

Literature And Its Effectiveness in Improving English Language and Its Cultural Understandings

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Doi: 10.23918/ijsses.v10i1p200

Abstract: When it comes to the field of literature the first thing which comes to mind is reading different literary works from the different genres; however, literature means the development of communication between individuals of different cultures and societies; this is against the past knowledge that linguistics was regarded as a tool to teach languages. Through the study of language, imagination can hardly be developed, and vocabulary development would be something so difficult to accomplish; in contrast, literary works will help learners of any language to adapt to the real world through language competence and knowledge since language and literature have an intimate role. The paper aims at improving the English language and understanding the cultural background of the language through literature. Another objective will be the improvement of personal imagination and emotion and provide the opportunity to use the language through the words that will be learned in different literary works effectively. Furthermore, further ideas will be given to utilize critical thinking.

Keywords: Communicative Approach, Culture, Critical Thinking, Ethno, Literature

1. Introduction

Why language should be learned? The answer is simple, it is the way of communicating and understanding each other from different perspectives. So, the best way to improve that communication is through a communicative approach and performed activities (Allwright, 1979). 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. Moreover, literature will increase the learner's competence in functioning his/her imagination ability (Donnerstag, 1996). This kind of competence will aid the learner to interact in any possible way, as only through the linguistic studies and subjects this aim cannot be accomplished. Literature and language are two merged fields that each talk about another, as the passages taken from literary texts work well in comprehension classes. Additionally, literature will help writing skills as it will help the writer with stylistic. As it is also proven that literature will learners' vocabulary competence and improve sentence knowledge structure; besides it will help the pronunciation skill. The use of literature will reduce

Received: November 12, 2022

Accepted: December 28, 2022

Muhammed, A.A. (2023). Literature And Its Effectiveness in Improving English Language and Its Cultural Understandings. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies*, 10(1), 200-208.

the anxiety that students will face in many linguistic classes (Ogunsiji, 2011).

Carter (1997) says that instruction between language and literature classes was not so smooth, and each was taught individually. In addition, literature nearly vanished in language classes and curricula as linguistics was given priority when learners try to learn a new language. In contrast, linguists are trying to bring back literature to linguistic classes so learners can adapt to both of them and use one in another alternatively. Long (1964) believes that writing cannot be improved with the absence of literature in language learning classes and through literature, students will easily learn to take notes. As writing is the record of life, considerations, feelings, and motivation to continue on the path of learning. Juden (1994) states that literature is the nail that sticks the language categories together and gives language the real beauty. Another idea by the author is creativity as literature will add value and weight to the language in the sense of enjoyment, consciousness, significance, and creativity. Wongkul (1997) states that literature will add wisdom to the language and learners can wisely use an appropriate language in their conversation as there is a subject which is called communicative grammar. Besides, learners will understand the foreign culture and not only carry the language to speak with.

Literature is a communication tool that language is used to send messages through different societies and nations. In addition, innovation and imagination can be improved once literature is studied side by side with language in language learning classes (Mersand, 1973) as literature is an active piece of any society. Literature fits easily into any individual's culture and will be released from language as it can be seen in most literary works, and it is called cultural awareness.

The paper deals with English literature in specific as it becomes something inevitable and particularly for foreign learners and in foreign classes all around the world. As literature is a necessary subject in the English department and faculties of art with English subjects; it will enhance abilities in different skills of the language, and it is proved that any curriculum with the absence of literature part of the curriculum is missing. Therefore, it is recommended to study literature besides language classes as many authors, linguists, and scholars approved of the idea. It should be a compulsory subject to be studied as before learning any language a strong and rich background knowledge regarding the language should be accumulated. (Zhen, 2012; and Li, 2011)

Pedagogically, literature will help the language to be used easier and consider cultural awareness (Tudor, 1996); through literature, the language will pass through many discoveries regarding vocabulary, style, coherence, and structure.

2. Related Works

As it is obvious that almost all linguists agree on the term that literature will help learners to advance their imagination process and easily communicate in the learned language. Hence, this will create creativity and will be more aware of the world the learner lives in (McRae, 1991). However, Carter (1997) believes that even in signposts and advertisements creativity can be formulated. Due to the figurative patterns and metaphors, people can see every day, foreign learners will learn different patterns of the foreign language, and this will enhance the cultural attitudes and skills of the foreign language; furthermore, they love to learn and use the language will be increased (Carter, 1997). In addition, literary works will support the

language authentically; since most of the literary works are authentic, then the communicative approach will work faster and in a more reliable way as it shows the reality of the learned language. The ultimate goal is to help learners to learn the language authentically and deal with the real world and not only learn the language linguistically (Hedge, 2000). Stern (1992) illustrates that authentic materials in language learning and improvement are experiential strategy and genuine experience which give the learning process value; and literature is considered one of those authentic tools (Long, 1986), especially for advanced learners. On another hand, Ur (1996) states that literature is not only for learning but also is written for enjoyment and life development as it will help personal confidence to use the language properly. Another source by Widdowson (1992) states that through literary works expressing one's ideas would be much easier and can explain the same idea from different perspectives. Another role of literature is the activation of the dynamic role of the language, and talk with reference (Wallace, 1992) and words will not only stay on the paper but will be used during daily communications. There is terminology that is known as justification, and through the study of linguistics only this cannot be improved, but it needs further angles which is literature. So, the more those ideas will be manipulated, interpreted, negotiated, and noticed; the more likely the information will be drilled into the brain and developmental energy (Schmitt, 2000).

Critical reading is necessary for all language classes to think critically; such critical thinking can never be accomplished solely by linguistic classes as help is needed from literary subjects Olaofe (1993). In addition, introducing language learners to a wide range of literary texts and genres will help them to make the inference. Hence, the techniques that literature teachers are using to teach the subject are necessary to understand the studied linguistic variations, since there is no fixed answer in literature (Grant, Nnamonu, and Jowitt, 1998). Both Bolaji and Alabi (1994) explain that writing with a literary background in language classes helps to improve sharp and acute minds. On the contrary, Oluikpe, et al (1997) believe that not all literary texts and genres can help students' comprehension levels as some literary works are so old and the language can no more be used in an actual communicative approach. Each written literary work is composed in a way that the author employed all the necessary techniques of writing; therefore, all the language categories are used to provide a good piece of writing and those texts can be used in writing composition classes (Read, 1994).

Much and Retnaningdyah (2011: 9) clarify the statement as a human creation, abstract experience, language use and articulation, presentation of culture and ethics, and happiness comprehension. Carter and Long (1991) look at three dimensions of literature in language classes and they are the cultural model, the framework of the language and the development model of the language through literature. Each of the above principles shows the active effect of literature on learning language and culture to create creativity. There is a coherence between using literature and learning a language (Fraser, 2017). Isariyawat et al (2020) did a study on a group of undergraduate Thai EFL students and the result shows that almost all the students took advantage of literary classes to understand language classes and the researchers proved that literary texts enhanced the students' capability in using the English language proficiently. The data showed students' ability in improving personal reflections, cultural awareness regarding English culture, and improve their creativity level.

Literature generally and English literature especially should be introduced to the students when they try to learn a foreign language as different aspects of language will be learned from the texts like vocabulary, culture, critical thinking, and language style. It will teach learners sophisticated language and help them improve their writing skills. Hill (1986) explains that the study of literature is a crucial subject in the foreign classes to internalize the language and it will enrich the language as is supported by Lazar (1993) also; in addition, the contexts will be drilled into the brain of the learners.

The study by both Mustofa and Hill (2018) proves that literary texts enhance both vocabulary competence and critical thinking for EFL/ESL students in studying the English language; moreover, it accomplishes something further than that like applying words in the contexts, analyzing the structure of the sentences, evaluating the information they will learn. It, also, helps the reader to understand historical texts based on the knowledge they accumulated from literary texts (Mustofa, 2016), learners will undergo several stages like recognition, recalling, structuring, and investigating. From the study, different interactions can be learned like the interaction between experience and text, recognizing the connection between text and culture, researching to find out the L1 and L2 cultural differences, responding to the text critically, and the interaction between the author and the reader, and interaction between the reader and L2 culture.

3. Literary Competence and Vocabulary Development

Literature contributed a lot to the field of language, as it is a gateway to increasing students' capability in vocabulary development in the target language. Nuttall (1982) mentions that the valuable way to enhance the language is to go and live among those people; however, this is not an option for the majority; so the plan b option is to realize the language through literary works and the various use of vocabularies in those works. Additionally, Sinclair (1996) argues that literature helps students to improve their vocabulary capacity in different fields of life. In addition, Nation (1997) believes that extensive reading will help language acquisition as it contains a wide variety of lexicology and aid vocabulary development side by side with improving literary competence. Cho and Krashen (1997) state that through literary competence not only vocabulary range will be developed, but also a positive attitude toward learning the language will be created, as it promotes motivation and positive thinking. Moreover, extensive literary reading can build an independent language learner and more confidence in learning the target language to develop a range of vocabulary (Hedge, 2000).

Literature is one of the best ways to acquire new, updated, contextual words in various sentences and contexts (Collie and Slater, 1987). In addition, different meanings of the same words can be easily seen in the proses and poems, as this will help to build up different sentences with the range of the vocabularies the learner will accumulate during literary classes, and they can be used in linguistic classes. If a Novel will be taken as an example, it is like a coding system in that the basic structure of sentences and the number of the used in vocabulary in each sentence can develop writing techniques (Achebe, 1986) and will help learners understand different grammatical categories easier.

Those students who study literature for joy have a higher range of vocabulary and they are better at organizing and structuring their sentences grammatically and linguistically. This will show a direct relation of literature with linguistic subjects. The literature will not only help the language through broad ideas but also aid the logical combinations and basic reasoning aptitude. It distinguishes each category

systematically and will help the content (Lombardi, 2017). Many instructors in language classes pick up literary-based texts for education and language learning to highlight the field and urge learners to increase language capacity and wide range of vocabulary as it is known as the intellectual state (Perles, 2017). Besides, it will help learners' critical thinking and acknowledge the pattern to be drawn between literary texts and language classes. Studying literature is a dynamic process that which learners experience different time lapses to create a creative text. (Khatib, 2012)

Sa'eed (2021) carries out a study on 30 EFL students who study the English language in the English department at Red Sea University; the result shows that more than half of the students believe that literature plays a vital role in English classes, and it improved the performance of 90% of the students.

4. Culture and Creativity through Extensive Literary Reading

Culture and creativity are two paradigms that learners need to learn and improve in any foreign language. Without understanding, any culture's creativity cannot happen, and without creativity, language cannot be used appropriately. Without understanding the culture language will be affected negatively as the terminologies and degree of registration cannot be used appropriately. Apart from those, social classes, racism, and cultural bias will be appeared so easily (Rony, 2014) and with the help of literature the blurred window will be cleared, and the spirit of the language will be indicated easier (Smith, 2017). In addition, through reading literary texts the different skills of a language will be improved and points of view regarding different cultures will positively change. The literature will help different areas to build language intelligence as the learner will learn different connotations of one sentence based on cultural dimensions and their life stories (Tongchuy, 2011), and literary texts will provide learners with emotional aspects and values as an art of transmission. Moreover, literary texts will provide learners with the real cultural background of any learned language and through the knowledge of the culture, communication will be much easier to send and receive (Shtepani, 2012). In addition, it inspires students with a broader horizon, and they will be able to see the building blocks of any language culturally and socially.

Literature is one of the principles which help to understand any culture and enhance creativity, through the idea language can be easier to be learned as the learner will not think in L1 but directly think in L2 and will utter all the ideas in L2. The literature will empower the selection of dialects and picking the dialect or accent the learner wants to use based on cultural awareness and understanding (Isariyawat et al, 2020).

Besides the language skills, literature will help learners' cultural awareness as literary works and texts carry a great deal of information and knowledge regarding any society. Sa'eed (2021) confirms that literature will create a referential and interactional meaning and enrich learners' vocabulary and critical thinking inputs. Zhen (2012) believes that literature is the key in teaching foreign languages to expand background knowledge of the language. Furthermore, literature is an essential subject in foreign classes to learn different forms of a language and facilitate the learning procedure as it has the power to understand the studied culture easier. Saeed (2021) expands the idea of teaching literature to be further aware of the culture and stimulate creativity that different methods can be used to merge literary and linguistic subjects. He also believes that studying literary subjects will not only enhance students but also improve teachers' teaching quality in language classes as they will learn more about different cultures and the culture of the language they are teaching. Hence, without literature part of the teachers' teaching methodology is missing

as the teacher cannot relate the linguistic examples to real life and world situations and this will lead to the absence of communicative grammar.

Culture is similar to gravity, unless one cannot jump above cannot attract him/her back. Similarly, language is the identity, so one should dive in to understand the gravity of culture. Culture is like a name it will stick to the person from womb to tomb, so, to understand the language then the culture should be understood. And, to understand any culture, the literary works should be comprehended. From the comprehension of any literature, the culture of that community will be comprehended. Then, once both culture and literature are understood, the use of the language will be easier. Patil (2002) explains culture as the cover of the fruit, and literature is like the action of peeling off; then, the language is the sense of tasting. Without understanding the fruit and peeling it off, the taste can never reach us. Also, he explains culture as a code that can be decoded through literature; in addition, any language should be decoded to understand the nature of the language, and this can never be done without understanding the culture of the learned language.

Creativity is another terminology that through literary texts can be improved. Reading literary texts will help foreign learners of the language to understand the dimensions, behaviours, etiquettes, customs, politeness, and degree of registration of the learned language. Once the literary texts are understood then reading skills will be improved; from that, the writing skill will be improved. After those steps, creativity will try to be born in the sense of writing like a new baby.

Learners should learn about the relationship between language and culture as literature is the bridge to combine those two. Though both culture and language are two inseparable items, still, the bridge of connection is necessary to create creativity (Patil, 2021) and nonequivalent between those two in learning will dismiss creativity and the effect of L1 will be more on L2 thinking (Baker, 1992). Hijer (1964) and Swadesh (1964) confirm that language can only be studied and understood when it goes side by side with literature and under the influence of social phenomenon; that cultural transition from one to another will help learners to avoid using L1 thinking once they talk in L2. The interaction between culture and language is so close that literature will draw their pattern; to be clearer, the relation between cultural factors and language use is so close that literature will act as a communication procedure to have a broader knowledge of the spoken language and be more creative.

Literature is the mirror of life and any society; the richness of any language can be seen through the number of literary texts they have. Through literature, creativity can be seen when it comes to the description of nature (Thomas Hardy), description of life (Charles Dickens), description of love (Jane Austin), description of kingdom ship (William Shakespeare), and other descriptions. To understand more about any culture's weather, rural areas, lifestyle, etc. literary works of that language should be studied, and this will help the learner to learn the lesson of creativity and the way to think critically rather than accepting everything s/he reads and hears.

5. Conclusion and Further Recommendations

Literature is not only a source that could be used in the classes, but it is a tool to improve the language and develop the range of vocabularies side by side with an understanding of any culture and society. It is a

map that helps learners to use the language professionally. The use of literary texts to improve the language is a methodology and motivation that linguistic capability can easily be shown in the sense of words. Through literature the linguistic form will be used in personal imagination and experience; thus, it means that without the use of literature part of the language is missing and cannot stand alone. Furthermore, literature will enrich language competence and will help to understand the foreign culture way easier. Using literature will enhance motivation, creation, imagination, and many more things in the field of writing and style which help learners to develop the language more and enjoy the learning experience.

Teaching literature besides linguistic classes is a requirement to learn and improve in any language. By learning from literary texts not only vocabulary and sentence structure will be improved, but also different cultures and societies will be experienced through their works and linguistic features will be developed. However, this should be done very precisely as not all literary texts are valid, authentic, and reliable; some works cannot help the learners as the language is too old and is used no more. Teaching literature to many students is a difficult subject to comprehend and digest as it is a figurative and symbolic language; however, it is an interesting subject to understand other cultures and improve the critical thinking of students and language learners. In addition, literature will assist language to be comprehended and learned easier. As many investigations found and proved that to improve any language and enhance awareness ability toward any language literary texts should be studied. Also, it will improve the role of language use in daily conversation.

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