

LITERATURE IN THE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM: A RECIPE TO MAXIMIZE LEARNING

ÇAĞRI TUĞRUL MART

Ishik University

Abstract

The pedagogic rationale for welcoming literature in multiple learning settings lies in the claim that it is conducive to language learning. Language and literature are mutually supporting experiences. In fact, sufficiently sophisticated grasp of language is witnessed when literature is introduced in language study. Literature is an input-rich source for coming to good terms with knowledge of language structures, reading proficiency, enriched vocabulary, improving skill in the target language, thinking skills, and cultural awareness. To put the matter at its most basic, language learners can accrue quite tangible benefits from exposure to literature. The core premise of using literature is that it provides clear advantages for learners to perceive the characteristics of target structures in contexts. Both preliminary and final survey questionnaires included the same questions for revealing learners' experiences in relation to literature and its potential contributions to language development. Initial and final responses of the pre-service teachers were compared to each other to determine whether the study of literary texts provided them an occasion to make noticeable gains regarding language proficiency development. A large majority of the survey participants indicated vested interest in the inclusion of literature in language teaching owing to its effectiveness as a valuable tool on augmentation of language learning.

Keywords: language, literature, integration, proficiency

1. INTRODUCTION

Whether the incorporation of literature contributes to language learning has long been contentious. However, starting in the in the early 20th century literature has been raised as an influential tool in the language classroom and considered as "an ally of language" (Brumfit & Carter, 1986, p. 1). In the 1990s when the Grammar-Translation Method was viewed as a distinctly prestigious way of learning, literary works served as "illustrations of the grammatical rules" (Duff & Maley, 1990, p. 3) and the introduction of literature to language learners was adopted as a valuable strategy for creating an ethos where learners acquire language structures and

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Corresponding author: Çağrı Tuğrul Mart, Ishik University, 100 Meter Street, 44001, Erbil, Iraq. Email: cagri.mart@ishik.edu.iq.

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perform drills successfully (Durant, 1995). In the 1960s and 1970s, with the onset of communicative language teaching, the use of literature in the language classroom was downgraded on the grounds that literary texts were not in conformity with standard grammar rules. This resulted in the use of literature in language learning being rather insufficient due to the view that it was inaccessible for learners and had little functional application. In the late 1970s and 1980s, literature reemerged as a useful medium for learners and played a preeminent role in language learning due to the fact that it covers “the greatest skills a language user can demonstrate” (Bassnett & Grundy, 1993, p. 7). By and large, literature played a preeminent role at all levels of foreign language instruction (Paesani, 2011).

Literary texts have been integrated into language instruction for more than two decades (Knutson, 1997; Kramersch, 1985; Schofer, 1990) to facilitate the interpretation of meaning and to examine the structure of language (Paesani, 2005). Learners expand their language repertoire through guided engagement with literary texts for their mightiness to “set interesting language problems to solve” (Carter & Burton, 1982, p. 7). Literature offers a means of enriching syntactic and semantic properties of the target language when learners solve these problems. Literary texts are a valuable source of input-rich instruction and recently have been favored in foreign language classroom. The development of linguistic and literary competence are intertwined, hence language learning and the notion of using literary texts as comprehensible input are espoused. Literature is an input-rich source for language learners and “recent reading research points to the benefits of working with texts for the purpose of drawing students’ attention to formal features of written language as well as to meaning” (Knutson, 1997, p. 52). Literary texts serve as the basis for comprehensible and creative language use because they possess several characteristics that are absent in other types of texts. The introduction of literary texts in the language classroom leads to more efficient intake since “literature is compelling, evocative, creative and memorable” (Paesani, 2005, p. 18). It seems more prudent that diving into literary texts is of considerable importance for learners whose capacity of language acquisition has become dormant.

There is a growing body of researches which sees benefit in using literature at all levels of instruction for its role in the development of linguistic fluency (Kramersch, 1985; Cheung, 1995; Graman, 1986), cultural awareness (Lazar, 1993; McKay, 1982; McGroarty & Galvan, 1985; Widdowson, 1988; Henning, 1993; Shook, 1996), and critical thinking (Oster, 1989; Bretz, 1990; Ghosn, 2002; Weist, 2004; Hoecherl-Alden, 2006).

This paper aimed at developing the potential benefits of literature in language learning. For this purpose, the present study attempts to unveil the attitudes of pre-service language teachers towards incorporating literature in the language classroom. Data were collected through survey questionnaire over one semester period. The preliminary survey questionnaire which was administered at the beginning of the semester and the final survey questionnaire which was administered at the end of the semester after indulging the pre-service teachers in experiencing literature for

one semester included the same questions. A comparison of the initial and final views of the pre-service teachers provided an insight on the effectiveness of literary texts on the development of advanced-level language competencies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning language and literature study can work in tandem to achieve desired outcomes in the development of language proficiency. With regard to the incorporation of language and literature, Donato and Brooks (2004) claim that there are mutually supporting experiences. That literature is an important component of foreign language curriculum has been dealt with in a number of studies (Povey, 1972; Henning, 1993; Paesani, 2005). Bernhardt (2002) addresses this contact between language and literature and asserts "each is an act of text construction and reconstruction based on the conceptualization of available linguistic and cultural data" (p. 197). In the context of literature instruction, the expectation of integrating language and literature without language competence is completely unrealistic. Fein (1999) underscores the need for resolving the language literature gap to allow learners "to gradually build the vocabulary, the linguistic facility, and the self-confidence to discuss the text" (p. 395). Conversely, the acquaintance of literature can be used for the purposes of building the language functioning that are essential for successful language acquisition. The richness of literature provides deeper insights into the understanding of subtle differences in language use and identifying metaphorical language (Hoecherl-Alden, 2006).

Learners can reap many benefits from bridging the infamous language-literature gap. An integrated curriculum does not preclude the development of language proficiency; on the contrary, it maximizes learning experience (Barrette, Paesani, & Vinall, 2010). Numerous pedagogical articles and research studies investigated the study of literature in a language teaching context (Brumfit & Carter, 1986; Collie & Slater, 1987; Kramsch, 1985), however that literature can be an effective inviting way for learners to develop language proficiency is still a matter of debate (Edmondson, 1995; Widdowson, 1985). Several researchers prefer delaying the use of literature in foreign language classes due to the belief that learners, until they reach high levels of proficiency, are not linguistically sophisticated enough to handle literary texts (Frantzen, 2001). The explanation suggested for this postponement is that literary texts include "highly abstract vocabulary, complex syntactical patterns, and sophisticated style and content" (Davis et al., 1992, p. 321). Even the teaching of literature for intermediate-level language learners has reached the point where it demands discussion. Hoecherl-Alden (2006) argues that intermediate-level language learners can produce more complex statements, express opinions and formulate hypotheses, but they cannot participate in communicative events at that level. Of late, however the value of introducing literature from the earliest levels on has been recognized. Bretz (1990) urges the need to instill in learners a love for literature and lays stress

on empowering them to become independent readers so that they are cognizant of the richness and power of literature.

The seamless relationship between applied linguistics, second language acquisition (henceforth SLA) and literature study (James, 2000) is a central concern of teaching literature. Literature-based curriculum does not impede structural practice. On the contrary, the development of oral and written language relies on literature-based pedagogy (Hoecherl-Alden, 2006). Moreover, Hadaway, Vardell and Young (2002) concede that building the curriculum around literary texts improves skills of grammatical and lexical structures, and conceptual understanding. Absence of imaginative content impedes creative involvement of learners which ends in one-dimensional learning achievement (McRae, 1991).

The usefulness of linguistics to literature study corresponds to three functions: description, interpretation, and evaluation. The presence of linguistics is contingent upon activities of description. Evaluation and interpretation reside in activities of literary analysis. However, they are obliquely related to linguistics as they cannot be performed in the absence of an accurate description (Stewart, 1987). In describing a literary work, the learner considers genre, culture, conceptual structure and language of the work and uncovers correlations among them. Stewart goes on to say that the description of a literary work is underlined by linguistics in three ways: First, literature becomes accessible by linguistic knowledge. It is difficult to grasp literary texts without linguistic knowledge. The second way in which knowledge of contemporary linguistics underscores the description of a literary work is exploiting linguistic terms and concepts in contemporary critical theories such as reader-response theory. Thirdly, providing tools for language analysis contributes much to the description of a literary work.

In the examination of a literary text learners become more personally invested in literary trends (e.g., modernism, naturalism, romanticism, realism), genres (drama, poetry, short story, novel), themes (e.g., love, friendship, social inequality), and rhetorical devices (e.g., metaphor, simile, alliteration) (Barrette et al., 2010). They process literature genres further; literature can come in any form, be it poetry, drama, story, novel, fiction, fairy tales or even essays in contrast with textbooks. The analysis of a literary text draws learners' attention to grammatical and lexical structures, thus assisting them to progress to advanced-level foreign language competencies.

The rewards of studying literature in language classrooms are numerous. In fact, the major value of literature is its merit to use language resources skillfully. Language is irrefutably put to its highest use in literature with the greatest possible skill, and literature employs a wide range of communication strategies. It is a teaching aid for the mastery of the language. Sufficiently sophisticated grasp of language is witnessed when language learning is interlocked with literary programs. Literature-based materials can remedy "students' awareness of the linguistic and rhetorical structure of literary discourse" (Akyel & Yalcin, 1990, p. 178). A more balanced selection of literary texts can broaden learners' appreciation of literature and enables them to become open to language input.

Language acquisition puts great demands on comprehensible, meaning-bearing input (VanPatten 1993). Language learners are at a linguistic advantage if they are exposed to authentic texts. Literary texts have been supported based on the assumption that they exhibit authentic texts (Elliott, 1990). Authentic text is defined as “a text originally created to fulfill a social purpose in the language community for which it was intended” (Crossley et al., 2007, p. 17). Proponents of authentic texts center on the idea that authentic texts introduce natural language and they embody cohesion. Cohesive devices including conjunctions and linguistic materials are vital to make texts more comprehensible (Philips & Shettlesworth, 1988). Some scholars hold that understanding cohesive devices is essential for the development of information processing, and reading comprehension skills (Cowan, 1976; Halliday, 1985; Louwse, 2001; Crossley et al., 2007). Language learners sometimes criticize authentic texts because these texts might damage their language confidence and their feeling of lexical and syntactical intricacy might become based on them. Also, authentic texts are considered conceptually and culturally dense (Young, 1999; Crossley, et al., 2007). However, authentic texts use significantly more casual verbs and particles necessary for the discovery of cause-and-effect relationships; in addition, authentic texts provide learners with an incomparably rich source of casual connectives which are used to link ideas and create cohesive bonds between text sections (Crossley et al., 2007), thereby they warrant successful understanding.

Swaffar (1985) has pointed out that authentic texts allow students to analyze message systems. Authentic reading materials are designed for native learners, in other words, they are not simplified. In contrast, they present linguistically normed language wherein learning is greatly enhanced. In this regard, exposure to linguistically authentic comprehensible input, Swaffar argues, significantly aids to practice decoding. Learners capitalize on authentic materials for being essential tools of language proficiency.

Pugh (1989) attests that literature is a potentially worthwhile source of meaningful input to develop language proficiency. Her view is in harmony with Krashen’s (1981, 1985) SLA theory which explicates that comprehensible input evokes robust efficiency in language proficiency. Exposure to genuine and undistorted language by virtue of literary texts helps learners internalize the language at a high level (Elliott, 1990). To put the matter at its most basic, learners can accrue quite tangible benefits from access to authentic materials literature provides.

Literary texts are rich in “language, content, culture, form, structure, affective values, critical thinking, and engagement” (Weber-Feve, 2009, p. 456), hence provide an avenue for coming to good terms with enriched vocabulary (Liaw, 2001), advanced language competence (Brumfit & Carter, 1986), cultural tolerance (McKay, 1982), knowledge of language structures (Hadaway et al., 2002), sensitivity (Liaw, 2001), creativity (Preston, 1982), practicing pronunciation by reading aloud (Liaw, 2001), finding useful idiomatic expressions (Liaw, 2001), improving skill in the target language (Liaw, 2001), maximizing learners’ opportunities to use language skills (Liaw, 2001), reading proficiency (McKay, 1982), language acquisition (McKay, 1982;

Liaw, 2001), and a nonthreatening learning environment in which learning takes place (Davidheiser, 2007). Experimenting with the target language through reading literature leads to learners' realization that learners are placed in an active role in making sense of language (Liaw, 2001). Literary texts are suitable at all levels of language teaching to enhance learners' exposure to internalizing abstract vocabulary, deciphering syntactical patterns, preventing linguistic difficulty and decoding complex styles.

Davis (1992) draws attention of language learners to four components in understanding of a literary text. First, a literary text has a key feature of successful decoding of words. Literature manifests the largest variations of vocabulary that have primary importance for foundation of understanding. Second, literature encompasses historical and cultural practices that weave together to heighten awareness of learners. Third, literary competence constitutes the basis for comprehension. This requisite evolves through knowledge of conventions, for instance knowledge of genres. Fourth, learners need to re-construe the text in order to make it meaningful qua infusing their experiences, feelings and ideas.

Henning (1993) supports a full integration of literature into the language curriculum for its well-recognized value as input to foster "linguistic and cognitive skills, cultural knowledge and sensitivity" (p. 53). Shanahan (1997) points to the value of literature for expanding language and he advocates integrating literature into the core of language teaching for its "important impact on developing communicative competence in the language learners" (p. 166). Literature gives a basis for group discussions; thus, it has communicative value. The introduction of foreign language literature in language study can be used for the purpose of leading learners to practice more sophisticated as well as subtle grammatical structures and vocabulary to expand competence and confidence.

Literary interpretation and comprehension of the text is not possible unless "an investigation of the grammar of the literary text, its structures and patterns and their interrelationships" (Cheung, 1995, p. 99) has explicitly been performed. Povey (1972) examines the wisdom of using literature for extending language usage and asserts that literature is ideal for increasing all language skills as it provides a convenient source of "extensive and subtle vocabulary usage, and complex and exact syntax" (p. 187). Mattingly (1984) acknowledges the need for grammar to produce engagement with linguistically relevant aspects of sentences in the language. His characterization of grammar involves "syntactic, phonological, and semantic components, each of which is a set of ordered rules; and a lexical component, each entry in which specifies the peculiar syntactic, phonological, and semantic properties of a word in the language" (p. 10).

Literature use culminates in syntactic development and enhances written and oral communicative competence (Barnitz, Gipe, & Richards, 1999). Using literature is an excellent means of advancing written syntax. Potential applications of literature in the composition classroom involve learners "to make inferences, to formulate their own ideas, and to look closely at a text for evidence to support generalizations"

(Spack, 1985, p. 721). Literary texts are taken to writing classrooms “to interact with texts, make claims, frame discussions, and write essays” (Cutchin, Rottweiler, & Dutt 1998, p. xvii). Literature itself does not serve as model for writing. However, reading and interpreting a work of literature involves learners in “modeling the analytical patterns of thought that underlie expository writing” (Gajdusek & Van Dommelen, 1993, p. 201). It is worth noting that the incorporation of literary texts into composition courses stimulates the writing of essays and empowers writing skills due to their involvement of a profound range of vocabulary, dialogues and prose that are linguistically distinctive. The argument is that this empowerment is achieved effectively “through writing about literary rather than non-literary texts because of the imaginative nature of literary texts and the deeper levels of engagement that imaginative power makes possible” (Belcher & Hirvela, 2000, p. 32). The interpretive richness literature possesses “made us think, feel, and reflect, gave us the joy of discovery and the pleasure of testing and articulating our beliefs” (Morgan, 1993, p. 492).

Barnett (1989) argues for an emphasis on teaching reading and grammar simultaneously. His orientation toward teaching reading and grammar concurrently operates on the assumption that learners have more opportunities to process the language input. As a result of this type of instruction, learners will enjoy “increased exposure to [...] grammatical print” (Shook, 1994, p. 88). In the context of foreign language teaching, focus on functions of grammatical structures is seen as one of the key concepts to construct meaning. Therefore, it is possible to put the notions of reading to promote in-depth knowledge of the content of the text. Encouraging learners to make a successful transition from language study to literature stimulates to experiment with the target language grammar.

Paesani (2005) framed four steps that addresses grammar instruction in which literary texts are used as comprehensible input: a) grammatical structure is presented in a meaningful context; b) learners endeavor to recognize the grammatical patterns c) explanation of the grammatical forms is provided- that is of importance for learners to decode the grammatical elements in the text; d) learners are immersed in meaningful practice, once they have ascertained the meaning of the grammatical structure. Embracing literary texts is an essential need for the acquisition of grammatical forms. More importantly, exposure to literary texts helps learners to carry out complex language steps.

Literary texts are suitable in language classrooms by combining attention to meaning as well as to form (Paran, 2008). It goes without saying that literature is motivating and engaging and provides adequate linguistic resources. A substantial amount of language acquisition occurs due to massive quantities of reading. Comprehensible input is an essential ingredient for language acquisition. Large vocabulary makes a significant contribution to the mastery of language. More comprehensible input is associated with significant reading. Krashen (1989) claims that vocabulary competence is most efficiently attained by comprehensible input in the form of reading. It thus appears to be the case that vocabulary and spelling bear on print-rich environments. Great competence in vocabulary and spelling is acquired when

language acquisition is devoted to reading. This assertion was confirmed in studies which found significant positive correlations between the amount of reading and vocabulary competence (Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988; Greaney, 1980). Abundant evidence exists that reading is effective to do better in tests of grammar, reading and writing (Krashen, 1985, 1988). A newly acquired word results in considerable knowledge concerning its grammatical properties. Moreover, more recent studies have concluded that interactive reading programs led to real gains in vocabulary and general oral language skills (Cho & Krashen, 1994; Anderson & Roit, 1996).

Davidheiser (2007) focused on the notion that literature has primary importance for language development through engaging in retelling activities for the development of oral language, sentence forming activities for the development of grammar, and yes/no or true/false question answering activities for the development of listening. Redmann (2008) argued in favor of implementing literature in language courses to make form-meaning relationships, to create a classroom discourse community, and bridge the gap between language and literature.

Lazar (1993) justifies the use of literature in language teaching, making it clear that literary texts include unusual use of language—that is, creatively used style, register, metaphors and similes where a higher instance of language use seems an ideal venue for language development. In line with this, studying literature texts will increase awareness and understanding of language and inspire learners to arrive at accurate meaningful interpretations striving to discover “grammatical, lexical or discursal categories to make authentic judgments of the text” (Lazar, 1993, p. 23). Considering the significance of these variables of linguistic elements in the acquisition of language, the idea of an emphasis on literature in language education has developed progressively over the past several decades.

Matos (2005) identifies two purposes for reading literary texts and notes that during the act of reading learners try to construct textual understanding seeing the essential link between language and literature, and literature engages learners in exploring the layers of selves by depicting the worlds of protagonists. The experience of reading literature is pedagogically significant for it allows learners to explore key features of language to decipher meaning. The connection between learner and text, she convincingly argues, broadens horizons of learners.

Research questions:

- 1) Is the incorporation of literature worth considering in language classes for higher education students?
- 2) Is literature a medium to promote cultural awareness, academic literacy and thinking skills?
- 3) Does the use of a literature-based approach constitute a medium to promote language development of learners?

3. METHOD

3.1 Participants

The context of this study was within an English Language Teaching (henceforth ELT) program in one of the major universities in Iraq which offered student-centered teaching. The English language Bachelor's degree program at the university is committed to the teaching of English as a foreign language. The curriculum of the four-year undergraduate program is designed to help students acquire theoretical and practical knowledge connected with foreign language skills and critical thinking development. The curriculum includes teaching the four basic language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and the development of communication skills to have complete mastery of the language during the first two years. In the third and fourth years the curriculum covers the study of the principles of language teaching and learning and the introduction of communicative approaches. ELT curriculum at the university has been designed to foster language education to meet the needs for well-educated language teachers who can teach competently.

Table 1. Group profiles

Total of students	Gender	Age range	Grade level (Educational stage)	Average over the past three years (all students)
96	F = 64 M = 32	19-24 19-26	4 4	2.86 (out of 4)

The students in the study were of native language backgrounds other than English. A placement test was used which was designed to assess the approximate level of the students' English skills. Based on the placement test, they fell into the upper-intermediate level. In other words, the students were able to express their emotions and understand complex thoughts in an English-speaking setting. The curriculum the students exposed to at the university did not include language and literature integrated learning. For that reason, it is possible to say that the students for the first time had integrated learning experience. The core premise of using literature is that it provides clear advantages for learners to perceive the characteristics of target structures in contexts and use these forms for communicative language use. The study was conducted to unveil the attitudes of learners towards the application of literature for language development. The participants in the present study included 96 senior-year ELT students who met for three hours in a week in literature classes. A four-level sequence of work developed by Gajdusek (1988) was implemented in literature classes while studying the texts:

- 1) Pre-reading activities: Students are engaged in a process of discovery and collect essential background information to identify what the text is about.

In addition, they decipher the meanings of unfamiliar words for better comprehension of texts.

- 2) Factual in-class work: Students attempt to find answers to who, when, what, where, and why questions. Factual in-class work includes learning about action, character, setting and students' point of view.
- 3) Analysis: style and theme
- 4) Extending activities: The use of classroom activities serves as an avenue for language learners to articulate their opinions, ideas and interpretations. These activities provide clear advantages for learners to perceive the characteristics of target structures in contexts and use these forms for communicative language use.

Table 2. Characteristics of books

	<i>Lord of the Flies</i>	<i>The Great Gatsby</i>
Length (in pages)	208	172
Number of episodes/chapters	12	9

These two novels were chosen due to their appropriate length and clear sequential development. Classroom discussions, dialogues and explanations were components of the literature classes in the learning process. The instruction included metalinguistic explanations and references to grammar in meaningful comprehensible input to promote grammatical accuracy development. Both explicit and implicit corrective feedback was used to maximize language development. Drawing attention to errors and provide corrective feedback provided some of the strongest rationales for students to attend to accuracy in communicative activities. Nevertheless, the activities focused mostly on content to build an ethos for the students for meaningful communication. The students made appropriate use of form-meaning connections in literature discussions and had a number of distinct opportunities to develop accuracy and fluency.

3.2 Data collection

Data collection tools in this study included a survey questionnaire which was applied at the beginning and end of the semester. A fifteen-item Likert-scaled survey questionnaire was used as an instrument to reveal the students' views about the role that the application of literature in language classes plays in the development of language proficiency. All students filled out the survey questionnaire in their regular classrooms at the beginning and end of the semester. Both the preliminary survey questionnaire and the final survey questionnaire included the same questions since they both attempted to reveal how the attitudes towards the application of foreign language literature to foster language proficiency develop. The difference between

initial and final views of the students provides an insight into the role of literature in maximizing language learning.

The survey questionnaire was a quick method to collect data regarding the students' reflections on the use of literature for the development of language skills. It lasted 10-15 minutes of the class time. The survey questionnaire was divided into three sections and each part was composed of five questions. A four-point Likert scale was employed.

Table 3. Timeline for survey questionnaires

Weeks	Data sources
1	Preliminary survey questionnaire
12	Final survey questionnaire

The preliminary survey questionnaire was conducted in the first week of the semester. The final survey questionnaire was conducted in the twelfth week two days before the final exams. Initial and final responses of students were compared to each other to determine whether the study of literary texts provided them with an occasion to make gains regarding language proficiency development.

4. FINDINGS

The presentation of quantitative findings obtained from the survey questionnaires is divided into three parts: 1) the incorporation of literature in language teaching which was designed to elicit information on students' attitudes concerning the use of literature in language classroom; 2) the role of literature in promoting personal growth which was administered to reveal views of students whether literary encounter develops understanding and appreciation of other cultures, critical abilities, imagination and personal experience; 3) the potency of literature in exploring linguistic forms and communicative functions which attempted to discover the merits of literature as a valuable source to energize language learning.

4.1 The incorporation of literature in language teaching

Table 4. The incorporation of literature in language teaching

	Students agreeing/disagreeing with each statement									
	Pre-survey					Post-survey				
	N	M	SD	D	A	N	M	SD	D	A
1. Literature is accessible and comprehensible for language learners	96	1.5	0.665	87	9	96	3.15	0.68	16	80
2. Literature has motivating and inspiring role in language pedagogy	96	1.66	0.63	88	8	96	3.21	0.679	14	82
3. Literary texts are treated as learning sources like any other classroom materials	96	1.5	0.649	88	8	96	3.18	0.68	15	81
4. The integration of language and literature maximizes learning experience	96	1.66	0.678	85	11	96	3.26	0.637	10	86
5. Literature can be used in language teaching programs	96	1.48	0.632	89	7	96	3.24	0.645	11	85

Note. D: Disagree A: Agree

Table 4 illustrates that the number of students agreeing with each statement with regard to their views on the incorporation of literature in language teaching increased after the study. Pre-survey results suggested that the use of literature in the language classroom received little attention from the students; however, the final results revealed that literature was worth considering in language classes. The difference between the two means clearly determines that the students demonstrated a move towards the inclusion of literature in foreign language teaching. It is worth noting that the responses of the students for the first question are notably high in the final survey questionnaire and they are heavily weighted on the positive side indicating that students found literature to be accessible, comprehensible, motivating, inspiring and interesting in language instruction. It came into prominence in the post-survey questionnaire that literature and language learning could work in tandem to maximize learning experience; while 86 students showed strong preference for language and literature integration to maximize learning experience in the post-survey questionnaire, only 10 students indicated otherwise.

Table 5. Comparison of preliminary and final responses about the use of literature in language teaching

Pairs	Questions	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Pair 1	Pre-survey 1	-21.397	95	.000*
	Post Survey 1			
Pair 2	Pre-survey 2	-20.219	95	.000*
	Post Survey 2			
Pair 3	Pre-survey 3	-22.002	95	.000*
	Post Survey 3			
Pair 4	Pre-survey 4	-19.307	95	.000*
	Post Survey 4			
Pair 5	Pre-survey 5	-23.898	95	.000*
	Post Survey 5			

Note: *Significant at $p < .05$

The first part of the questionnaire was designed to reveal the attitudes of students towards incorporating literature into language curriculum. A paired samples t-test showed that the difference between pre-survey and post-survey questionnaires was statistically significant in all questions in the first part. All p-values are less than 0.01, therefore, all pairs show statistically significant differences. The test revealed an increase in the attitudes of the students towards the use of literature in language teaching.

4.2 The role of literature in promoting personal growth

Table 6. The role of literature in promoting personal growth

	Students agreeing/disagreeing with each statement									
	Pre-survey					Post-survey				
	N	M	SD	D	A	N	M	SD	D	A
6. Literature improves learners' cultural awareness	96	1.76	0.805	74	22	96	3.35	0.615	7	89
7. Literature deepens learners' awareness of social factors	96	1.84	0.73	77	19	96	3.34	0.613	6	90
8. Literature promotes learners' academic literacy and thinking skills	96	1.57	0.75	81	15	96	3.2	0.592	9	87
9. Literature fosters learners' interpersonal and intercultural attitudes	96	1.71	0.679	84	12	96	3.22	0.636	11	85
10. Literature extends personal experience	20	1.52	0.665	87	9	96	3.28	0.644	10	86

Note: D: Disagree A: Agree

It is noteworthy that the responses to the preliminary and final survey questionnaire in the second part differ significantly. Whereas a moderately high number of responses showed disagreement in the pre-survey results, a considerable number of responses showed agreement toward the positive in the post-survey questionnaire. As in the previous table, in the post-survey questionnaire the vast majority of the responses amasses on the positive side. Results in Table 6 show that, in general, the students agreed that literature was an excellent medium to promote cultural awareness, academic literacy, thinking skills and awareness of social factors in the post-survey questionnaire. 89 students reported agreement that they saw benefit in using literature for its role in the development of cultural awareness, 90 students reported agreement that literature offered an enhancement of awareness of social factors, 87 students reported agreement that literature was a potentially worthwhile source for promoting academic literacy and thinking skills, and 85 students reported agreement that literature provided an avenue for coming to good terms with enhanced interpersonal and intercultural attitudes. A large majority of the students in the post-survey questionnaire seemed to eradicate negative thoughts and believe that literature helped them in the enhancement of personal growth. In other words, although a very small number of the students seemed to believe otherwise, the difference between preliminary and final survey questionnaire responses suggests the fact that they defend the merits of literature as a valuable source to boost their personal growth.

Table 7. Comparison of preliminary and final responses about the role of literature in promoting personal growth

Pairs	Questions	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Pair 1	Pre-survey 6	-16.303	95	.000*
	Post Survey 6			
Pair 2	Pre-survey 7	-18.193	95	.000*
	Post Survey 7			
Pair 3	Pre-survey 8	-23.804	95	.000*
	Post Survey 8			
Pair 4	Pre-survey 9	-19.277	95	.000*
	Post Survey 9			
Pair 5	Pre-survey 10	-22.569	95	.000*

Note. * Significant at $p < .05$

The second part of the questionnaire was designed to reveal the opinions of students about the role of literature in promoting personal growth. A paired samples t-test shows that the difference between pre-survey and post-survey items is statistically significant. All p-values are less than 0.01, therefore, all pairs show statistically

significant differences. The analysis of the students' responses in the post-survey questionnaire indicates that literature offers a motivating medium for the development of cultural awareness, personal growth, and thinking skills.

4.3 Literature offers an extensive range of enrichment to acquire language knowledge

Table 8. Literature offers an extensive range of enrichment to acquire language knowledge

	Students agreeing/disagreeing with each statement									
	Pre-survey					Post-survey				
	N	M	SD	D	A	N	M	SD	D	A
12. Literature fosters learners vocabulary development	96	1.84	0.772	74	22	96	3.33	0.643	9	87
13. Literature is an important element to engage in communication	96	1.56	0.723	83	13	96	3.26	0.669	12	84
14. Literature meets the standards of authenticity	96	2.06	0.805	62	34	96	3.35	0.632	8	88
15. Literature has the potential to build language skills	96	1.6	0.732	82	14	96	3.29	0.648	10	86

Note: D: Disagree A: Agree

As regards the use of literature in the language classroom to acquire profound knowledge of language, a great number of students in the post-survey questionnaire agreed that literature offers a motivating medium for language learning. Simply put, it is apparent that the empowerment of language knowledge by means of literature is considered favorable by students because at the end of the study many students changed their views in the opposite direction. The great positive shift towards language through literature indicates that the students deemed it to be necessary to take heed of literature use in language teaching for building up language skills. While 17 students at the beginning agreed with the potency of literature in furnishing knowledge about grammar rules, 85 students agreed with this statement at the end. 22 students agreed at the beginning with the role of literature in the development of vocabulary knowledge, and the number rose to 87. Only 13 students agreed that literature was an important element to engage in communicative functions in the pre-survey, the number rose to 84 in the post survey. While 34 students at the beginning agreed with the positive effects literature demonstrated on meeting the standards of authenticity, 88 students reported agreement with this statement at the end. For the final question the students displayed considerable disagreement at the beginning; however, the post-survey questionnaire results showed that the responses fell more on the positive side.

Table 9. Comparison of preliminary and final responses about the role of literature in language acquisition

Pairs	Questions	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Pair 1	Pre-survey 11	-21.838	95	.000*
	Post Survey 11			
Pair 2	Pre-survey 12	-16.538	95	.000*
	Post Survey 12			
Pair 3	Pre-survey 13	-21.622	95	.000*
	Post Survey 13			
Pair 4	Pre-survey 14	-15.203	95	.000*
	Post Survey 14			
Pair 5	Pre-survey 15	-19.743	95	.000*
	Post Survey 15			

Note. *Significant at $p < 0.05$

The third part of the questionnaire was designed to reveal whether literature offered possibilities of language proficiency development. A paired samples t-test shows that the difference between pre-survey and post-survey questionnaires is statistically significant. All p-values are less than 0.01, therefore, all pairs show statistically significant differences. The test reveals an increase in the opinions of the students towards considering literature as a potential source of meaningful input for the development of language skills.

5. DISCUSSION

Analyses of the responses elicited from the students show that there is a significant difference between the means of the pre-survey questionnaire and the post-survey questionnaire. The widespread assumption in the pre-survey questionnaire was that literature had little impact on language learning; therefore, incorporating it in language teaching was not supported by the students. However, the post-survey data indicate that literature and language learning could work in tandem for the purposes of building the language functioning that is essential for the development of language proficiency. The preliminary data show that a great number of the students did not believe that they could accrue tangible benefits from access to literature. The data collected in the final questionnaire indicate that there was an increased attention devoted to literature on the premises that it enriched the ground for teaching literature for the purpose of moving towards advanced-level proficiency. The pre-survey questionnaire result of the first part, which included the first five statements, with regard to incorporation of literature in language teaching was 1.56. The post-survey data demonstrated a move towards the use of literature in language teaching

and the students considered literature as an excellent medium for extending language usage and increasing an awareness of language use because the means of all statements in the first part rose to 3.21 in the post-survey questionnaire. While the means of the second part in the pre-survey questionnaire, which included statements from 6 to 10, with regard to the use of literature for personal growth was 1.68, the means of all statements rose to 3.28 in the post-survey questionnaire. Finally, the means of the third part in the pre-survey questionnaire, which included statements from 11 to 15, with regard to the potency of literature in exploring linguistic forms and communicative functions was 1.73. The means of all statements rose to 3.30 in the post-survey questionnaire.

It is increasingly clear that literature-oriented classes advance reading skills and writing competence, develop critical awareness, and raise willingness to discuss the issues embedded in texts (Durant, 1995). Moreover, literature-based language activities engage students in linguistic forms and communicative functions to decipher language patterns. Literary encounter motivates and inspires students for language learning and makes students sensitive to the reading process. Examination of the statistics shows that students indicated strong agreement with the incorporation of literature into the language curriculum as it offers linguistic, methodological and motivational medium for learning. The study revealed findings similar to those of Collie and Slater (1987), Hadaway et al. (2002), Liaw (2001), and Barrette et al. (2010) who argue that the use of literature in language learning is an enormous source for language development.

A large number of the students showed agreement that literary texts expose students to a rich sample of input of linguistic information. These findings are consistent with those of McKay (1982), Ghosn (2002), Lazar (1993), Barnitz et al. (1999), Liaw (2001) and Hoecherl-Alden (2006), who argue that the use of literature in the language classroom fosters linguistic accuracy, facilitates language learning, enhances language development and allows learners to use language skills in the target language. Literature illustrates language use and can offer students an acquisition-rich learning setting in which all language applications can function. The rewards of studying literature in a language learning context are countless. Language resources are skillfully used in literature. There is no blinking to the fact that students are exposed to grammar and other aspects of structure of language by the way of resorting to literature. Literature provides a broad range of benefits to students for the improvement of all language skills. The use of literature in language classes is a teaching aid that enhances listening skills when used aurally, fortifies oral practice when used in discussions, and extends linguistic knowledge when used for language learning. The attainment of these qualities paves the way for mastery of the language. The development of oral and written language hinges upon literature-based pedagogy (Hoecherl-Alden, 2006). Literature-based curriculum spawns skills of lexical and grammatical structures, and enhances conceptual understanding. All of the above indicates that the acquaintance of literature can be used for the purposes of language acquisition.

The high number of the positive views of literature in the language classroom in the survey questionnaire showed that the use of authentic materials was more suitable to language learning which is consistent with the findings of Collie and Slater (1987), Duff and Maley, (1990), Elliott (1990), and Hadaway et al. (2002). Lasagabaster (1999) also argues that literary texts serve as authentic materials and have been a sine qua non condition to raise language awareness. Authentic texts are intended to communicate meaning and they are tailored to engage students in decoding language systems for themselves (Swaffar, 1985). Authentic texts have been criticized not only for their syntactical and lexical intricacy but also cultural density (Young, 1999). The use of simplified texts has been supported as researchers have come to believe that students are exposed to the language features as long as the input is understood by them (Krashen, 1981; Shook, 1997; Hill, 1997). However, authentic texts introduce natural examples of language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000) and provide occasions for students to explore language use in real context. They are not linguistically sanitized; thereby, students become sensitive to language features by facing the texts continuously.

The findings indicated that a great number of the students considered literature as an enormous source of cultural enrichment. At this point, the findings are consistent with those of Lasagabaster (1999), Collie and Slater (1987), Weber-Feve (2009) and Alvstad and Castro (2009). When students are triggered by cultural issues, curiosity develops in them about other people with differing cultural backgrounds, and they become willing to pose questions to learn about cultural practices that are unfamiliar to them (Kim, 2004). Literature fosters cross-cultural understandings (McGroarty & Galvan, 1985) that aid students to overcome even insurmountable cultural barriers between people and lead them to tolerate cultural diversity. Literary texts depict cultural aspects that lead students to think about the characteristics of the foreign culture and eventually turn their thinking into appreciation of the values of the foreign culture. Literature has the potential power to eradicate negative feelings students have towards other cultures and build bridges across cultures that promotes empathy and tolerance. Moreover, the indissoluble relation between language and culture uncover the idea that cultural competence nurtures communicative competence (Lasagabaster, 1999). It seems safe enough to assert that students need an orientation to the culture of the target language in the process of learning the language. Literature helps students attain cultural insights so that they become more responsive to cross-cultural barriers and develop their communication across cultures.

A large number of the students reported that literature has a pivotal role for personal development. Literature reflects people's needs, concerns, and values. It depicts situations that are familiar to all human beings. It brings out feelings common to numerous people. It discusses human condition and exhibit experiences of people. Daily activities carried out by people are the root of literature. The universality of literature extends to issues, significant ideas and attempts to unravel them. Literature offers students a natural milieu to develop the understanding of the world.

Students gain insight into feelings of other people and experience their difficulties. When dealing with conflicts of others students they are given the opportunity to discover solutions to their own difficulties. Interactions with others and experiences lead to the development of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Students by literary exposure develop insights into feelings of their own and those of others which will enable them to make right decisions.

From participants' responses in the survey questionnaire it can be concluded that the use of literature in the language classroom is a viable approach to enhance imagination and critical abilities. Literature makes an interactive demand on students (Gajdusek, 1988). In reading literature, students are obliged to create meaning from the text. An interaction between the reader and the text occurs in the reading process (Widdowson, 1979). This interaction necessitates students to negotiate meaning by concept comprehension and language decoding. Literature inspires learners to seek for discovering deep meaning in the text through going beyond the literal meaning. Students can take the advantage of boosting their interpretative skills through an attempt to elucidate a text in their own way. Students identify themselves with the characters in the story, and their curiosity and interest to find out what is going to happen next is awakened. In experiencing this, students are involved in enhancing their imagination and critical abilities. Literature embraces the full range of mental traits that motivate students to demonstrate their critical thinking skills.

In the language classroom, literature forms the basis for discussions (Long & Porter, 1985); and encourages oral practice (Enright & McCloskey, 1985). The findings show that literature pushed students to elaborated language and had primary importance on the development of oral language. The findings are consistent with that of Shanahan (1997), Barnitz et al. (1999), Kim (2004), Davidheiser (2007) and Redmann (2008) who argued that exposure to literature culminates in communicative competence development. Literature is rich in real-life language examples; therefore, it offers a motivating medium for communication development. The variety of models that occur in different situations demonstrate students how to use language for communication. It is worth mentioning that literature discussions provide ample opportunities for more meaning-focused interactions (Johnson, 1995). Students constantly engage in constructing, expressing and clarifying meaning and produce more extended output that helps them with the development of communicative competency of the target language (Swain, 1985). The opportunity of generating different possible interpretations of the same text compels students to participate in the process of communication.

The results of the study illuminated the effects of literature-based language instruction on language learning outcomes of pre-service teachers. The findings demonstrated that the use of literary texts is conducive to language learning and the incorporation of literature in the language classroom can accommodate the needs of pre-service teachers. The big difference between the preresponses and postresponses in the survey questionnaire provided further insight into attitudes of the

pre-service teachers towards the use of literary texts in the language classroom. Those pre-service teachers who showed favorable attitudes toward literature-based instruction purported that literature is a potentially worthwhile source of comprehensible input that enables them to become proficient in the target language. The results of the questionnaire highlighted the premise that the incorporation of literature into foreign language teaching program of pre-service teachers was shown to be a powerful tool for offering motivational basis for language learning, creating a medium to venture into other cultures and delve into social interactions and dialogues, and more importantly building an ethos for extending linguistic knowledge and promoting language awareness. Additionally, a large majority of the pre-service teachers indicated vested interest in the inclusion of literature in language learning owing to its effectiveness as a valuable tool on personal development and augmentation of language learning.

Lastly, the present study did not investigate the role of the teaching method employed in the literature classes. However, the findings demonstrated that developing motivation is one of the most significant variables that determines language learning outcomes. It is important to stress that learning becomes more purposeful if language teachers seek constructive ways to invite students to further meaningful use of the target language. With this in mind, language teachers should encourage students to enthusiastically engage and verbalize their interpretations in classroom discussions of literature. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that acquainting students with appropriate literary texts is worthy of consideration due to its enhancing role in active engagement in the learning process. Interestingly, the study showed that for a successful integration of language and literature teachers should embrace interests of students in the selection of literary pieces and plunge learners into exposure to literature that offers input-rich source for maximizing the mastery of the language.

6. CONCLUSION

The present study set out to determine whether a literature-based approach constitutes a medium to promote language development of learners. The findings of this study illuminated the effects of literary encounter on language learning outcomes. The results suggest that literary texts were considered as a valuable source for target language learning by a vast majority of the participants. The big difference between the preresponses and postresponses in the survey questionnaire provided further insight into attitudes of the participants towards the use of literary texts in the language classroom. Those participants who showed favorable attitudes toward literature-based instruction purported that literature is a potentially worthwhile source of comprehensible input that enables them to become proficient in the target language. The results of the questionnaire highlighted the premise that the incorporation of literature into foreign language teaching program was shown to be a powerful tool for offering motivational basis for language learning, creating a medium to

venture into other cultures and delve into social interactions and dialogues, and more importantly building an ethos for extending linguistic knowledge and promoting language awareness. A large majority of the survey participants indicated vested interest in the inclusion of literature in language learning owing to its effectiveness as a valuable tool on personal development and augmentation of language learning.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Findings from the present study may not be generalized to EFL learners in other settings where literature is studied as one of the subjects with teachers who are non-native speakers. It would be a mistake to generalize the findings as practices and attitudes of students were unique to 96 students where the study was conducted and they do not represent the overall practices and attitudes of other EFL learners.

It would be desirable to have a large sample size to yield more varied data that would render more accurate information. However, the study is limited to both a small number of participants and a small sample of materials. The study was conducted at a university and all senior-year students in ELT department took part in it.

The researcher's dual role as teacher and researcher might have created some personal biases in the research; however, he took every measure to keep an objective eye throughout the study and made every effort to reflect the reality as closely as possible. The present study prioritized rights, dignity, safety, and well-being of the participants and it also ensured confidentiality of the research data, and anonymity of the students participated in the research. Moreover, the study ensures to protect the privacy of the participants and avoids any type of misleading information and presenting the data findings in a biased way.

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