

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF READING LITERARY TEXTS TO ALGERIAN EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This paper tries to show the value of reading literary texts, particularly, different genres to our EFL learners, in an Algerian context. It exposes the problems, difficulties, and challenges faced by EFL learners based on evidence from the questionnaire and semi-structured interview. Therefore, it analyses and discusses the results obtained from different research instruments. The main objective is to identify and analyze the students' requirements and check whether reading literary texts and tasks will assist them to function effectively in their learning, this paper also sought answers to the stated research questions and hypothesis and reported the findings through different stages of the data collection procedures namely questionnaire and semi-structured interview.

KEYWORDS: *EFL Learners, Effective Instruction, Literature Teaching, Language Skills, Algerian Context*

INTRODUCTION

To many of our universities and for our EFL teachers; the study of literature is believed to be with central attention because it introduces learners to contexts that are full of expressive language and fascinating characters and have an important and positive effects on language teaching as they expose EFL learner to a variety of vocabulary, dialogues, and prose through selected literary texts used in class. The introduction of literature in language teaching is said to develop also learners' language skills, improves their cultural awareness and develops their critical thinking during reading different extracts. More importantly, the selected tasks and activities that our EFL teachers select literature classes conform to the student based and interactions during the literature sessions. EFL teachers believe that literary texts are a source of content rich reading material; a model of creative language in use; a way to introduce vocabulary in context; and a way to focus students' attention on English pronunciation, rhythm and stress. Opportunely, a variety of resources are used by Teachers to improve their classes including literature component. Therefore, the following question has been put forward; do literary texts functions more effectively teaching literature in an EFL context at Tlemcen University? In an attempt to attain a consistent answer to this question, the following research questions have been used.

- What are the benefits of readings in literary texts?
- What are difficulties faced when reading literary texts?
- Do literary texts develop our EFL learners' language skills?

Research Methodology

This study has taken place in the English department; it was based on a Case Study where a mixed-method approach has been adopted. Thus, the focus has been put on both qualitative and quantitative methods. Therefore, for the sake of gathering reliable data, the researcher has recourse to the use of the two following research instruments:

- Questionnaire
- Semi-structured Interview.

Due to the type of present research, the first step used for collecting the data has been done through a students' Questionnaire. The second step refers to the Semi- Structured interview which has been administered to teachers in order to: Elicit useful information about the participant's experiences; Obtain practical knowledge of the interviewees' opinions or impressions

Participants

Richards (2001, p. 58) writes, "*sampling involves asking a partial of the potential population instead of the total population and seeks to create a sample that is representative.*" Therefore, the selected sample was second year 60 students in order to well managing the research activity, In addition to six teachers.

Findings and Data Interpretation

After gathering the necessary information, the data has to be analyzed through the use of analytical and logical techniques. Finally, drawing conclusions on the basis of results obtained.

Students' Questionnaire Analysis

To gather insightful data about the literature component from the students' points of view, the present research instrument was administered to sixty informants in the diagnostic phase. Its main objectives were to cross-check the results obtained from the teachers 'Interview. It also aimed to outline the learners' requirements; their interests and attitudes towards the use of literary texts.

Question 1: Students' Difficulties in Language Skills

The question investigates which skill is considered to be the most difficult for students, for this reason, students were given the following choices. The results are best summarized in the figures below: This can be interpreted in the following Figure.

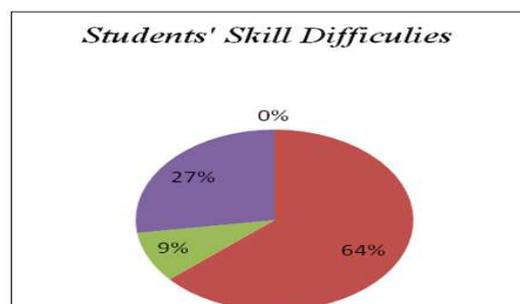


Figure 1: Students' Skill Difficulties

From the results obtained, (64 %) of students find difficulties in speaking and (27 %) of students find difficulties in listening. However, (9 %) stated that they have difficulties in Writing.

Question 2: What do you most prefer to Read?

This question seeks to investigate what most students prefer to read. The participants were given the following choices. The results figures below show the students' preference.

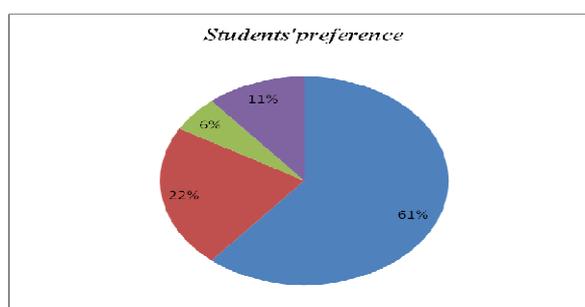


Figure 2: Students' Preference

The results reveal that (61 %) of participants prefer short stories. (22 %) of the sample prefer to read “novels”. (11 %) of the participants stated that they prefer to read “plays”. (6 %) prefer reading “poems” of the given choices.

Question 3: Why do you generally Read the Literary Text?

This set of questions tackles the issue of reading and writing

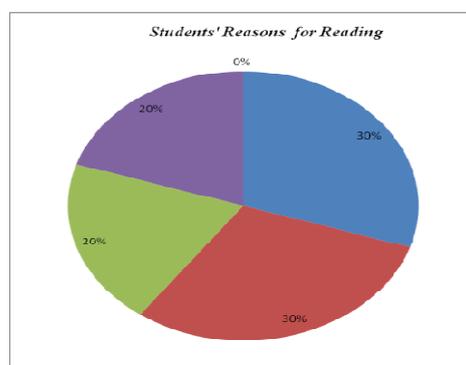


Figure 3: Reasons for Reading

Concerning reasons from reading the literary work, (30 %) of participants read literature for expanding their awareness in language. Similarly, (30 %) of participants stated that they read it to the cultural background for other people. However, (20 %) of them wanted to strengthen their imagination, meanwhile, others of (20 %) read the short story just for passing the exam.

Question 4: Does Literature Contribute to the Development of Your Reading Skill.

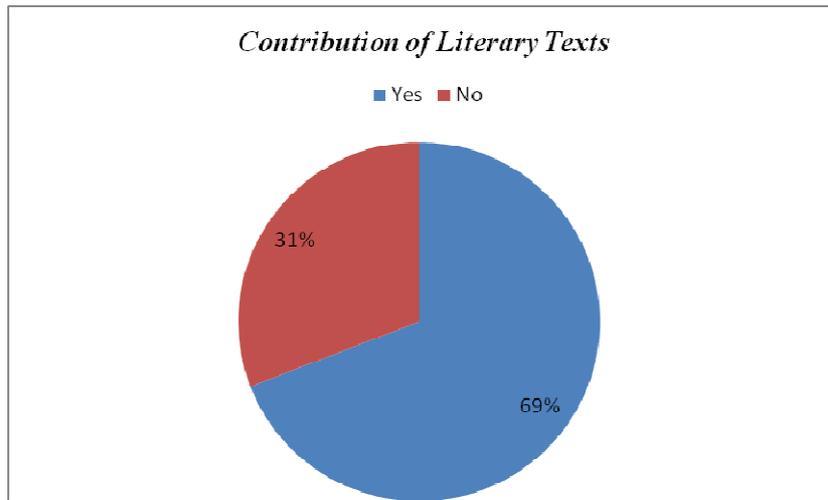


Figure 4: The Contribution of Literary Texts in Reading Skill

The majority of participants agree on the fact that literacy texts contribute to reading skill with (63 %) of respondents saying 'yes'

Question 5: What is your benefit behind Reading?

This question shows the benefits behind reading literary texts

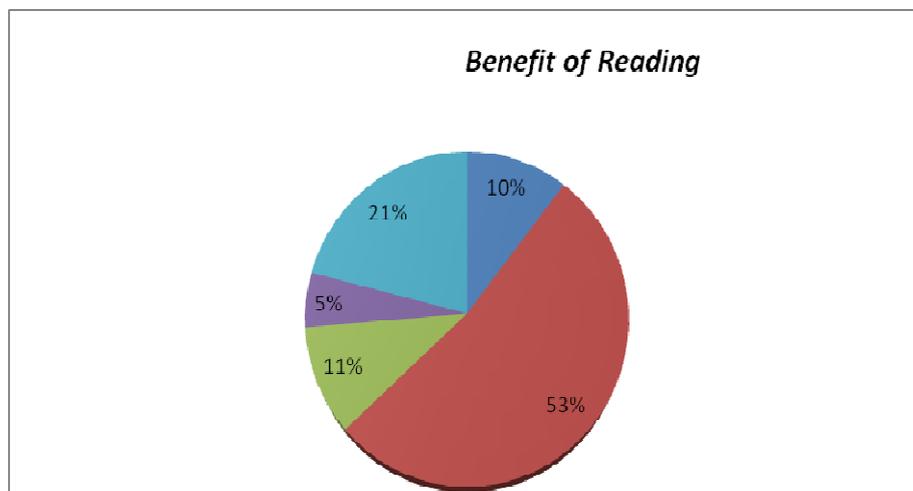


Figure 5: Students' Benefits from Reading the Short Story

From the result obtained (10 %) of students stated that reading literary short story enhances their language awareness. However, (53 %) of them argue that those literary texts expose them to a large range of vocabulary. Furthermore, (21 %) of students develop knowledge about other people cultural background. While (11 %) confirm that they organize their ideas and thought through reading. Finally, (53 %) respond that the literary text improved their vocabulary while (5 %) respond that literary texts improve sentence structure and grammar

Question 6: when you read the short story, you focused on:

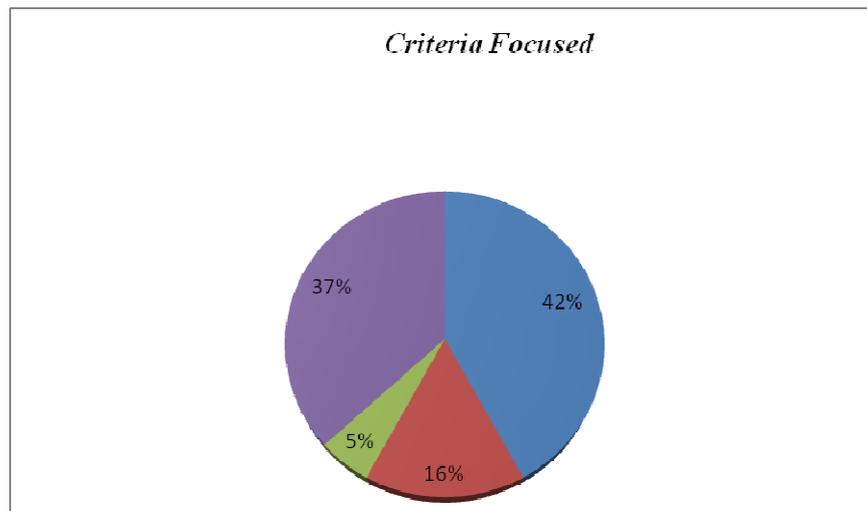


Figure 6: Criteria Focused While Reading

(42 %) of participant focus on ideas of the text during readings, and (37 %) of students focus and language use. However, (5 %) of students pay attention to the organization of the text.

Question 7: What are the difficulties you encountered during reading?

The main objective of this question is to know some learners reading difficulties.

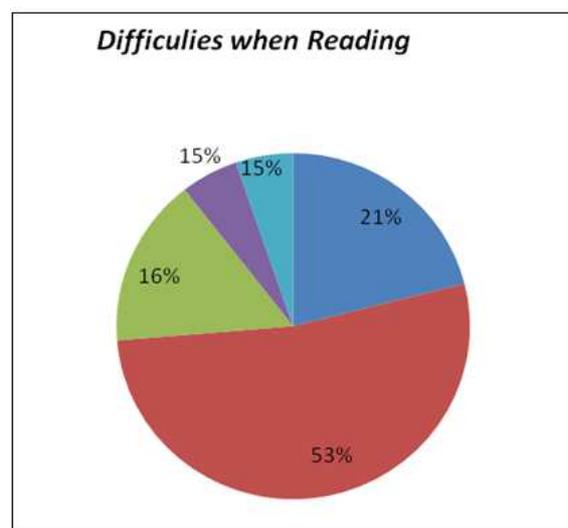


Figure 7: Students' Difficulties in Reading a Literary Text

The findings show that (53 %) of responses said that they faced linguistic difficulties. Most of the respondents (21 %) have great difficulties in getting the hidden meaning of given literary texts. Meanwhile, four respondents (16 %) participant found the structure of some short stories is complex and (15 %) of students faced difficulties to understand the plot of the short story. Finally (15) of response that had little knowledge about the cultural background of other people in sort story. This can be more illustrated in the following table and Figure.

Comment on Students' Questionnaire: Major Results

According to some students,

- Reading opens their minds through the expansion of ideas and thoughts.
- Some s difficulties in terms of implicit meaning and linguistic difficulties.
- The lack of vocabulary posed problems will reduce their Development of ideas.

Teachers' Interview Analysis

Most of the interviewed teachers believe that literary texts are helpful class material, because they are authentic, and authenticity is highly recommended in the learning / teaching process. They suggest that literary texts should be used as models and as visual supports because of the EFL the English language through literature.

- literary texts would certainly allow learners to learn both culture and vocabulary;
- Literary texts can be as a source for language learning;
- literary texts as an informal resource are highly recommended;
- They are considered an essential resource.
- They argue that literary texts are Good resource
- help students interact and develop an attitude towards the world outside
- Develop a wide range of vocabulary
- Improve language skills namely: reading, writing, speaking and listening
- An open horizon for other cultures
- Language level sometimes too high and difficult

According to them, the selection of literary texts, tasks, and activities will reinforce learners to explore the target language as they agree on the fact that reading and writing go hand in hand to improve the teaching-learning context.

CONCLUSIONS

Finally, from the results obtained in the present study, one may conclude that teaching literature in EFL contexts is a rich area. Hence, the present study has examined the importance of reading literary texts to EFL students in an Algerian context and has reported on the feedbacks of only a small number of students. More studies using different literary genres, implementing different strategies and methods, or student populations, are expected and as many EFL teachers use literature in their classes, more EFL learners will develop interests in literature in particular and learning the language through literature in general.

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