

An Investigation into the Teachers' Perspectives on Literature Text Selection in Secondary Level Language Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This article tries to investigate the English teacher's perspective on text selection in the language classroom in an EFL context. Incorporating literary texts has its relevance in the language classroom. and the necessity of introducing literary texts in the language classroom is an established fact. However, the appropriateness of the texts selected for a particular class remains a crucial factor in the success of the teaching approach followed therein. The paper throws some light on the issue of text selection that keeping observance on the different parameters involved therein. The review directly relates to the necessity of reintroducing literary pieces in the classroom with the view that they help develop learners' language efficiency and proficiency in the target language. The research, therefore, primarily aims at finding the perception of the teachers on selection criteria of texts for their target group. In order to gather data, the researcher administered a questionnaire survey among 50 teachers of English from 12 different secondary government schools. To serve the purpose, both quantitative and partly qualitative investigations were made. The data obtained is analysed and discussed to reinforce and strengthen the library research findings. The study among other possibilities shows that when learners are encouraged to explore texts themselves, the element of learner autonomy is promoted that develops a sense of responsibility in the learner towards learning and achievement. This also enhances their understanding of self-achievement, confidence, and self-reliance proving that introducing literature in the English classroom could be beneficial, lead to a positive impact on learning, and ensure equal educational opportunities for all. At the end, conclusive remarks are made along with some suggestions and recommendations that might be useful in an EFL situation particularly in the context of Bangladesh.

Keywords: Literary language, Literature, Text selection, EFL classroom, Learner autonomy

INTRODUCTION

Literature, in its broadest sense is an integral part of human life as it speaks of life and life's essentials. It is a form of human expression and countenance. However, some writings that are primarily informative belonging to the category of referential material not having the element of creative meta text. On the other hand, certain forms of texts universally belong to literature as an art possessing the quality of artistic merit.

Literature has an obvious affinity with the other form of arts. A play when presented transforms into a drama, many films have been based on written books; oratory great epics are recorded on paper later and then have been filmed with utmost success. Literature opens its magnificence through its vast massive imaginative domain where one can delve into according to one's own choice of depth and profundity that ultimately helps one to develop one's language reflection as well.

In an all language, no literature environment, the absence of imaginative content will limit the learners of achieving a goal which is a combination of both referential and representational language. In many English language learning and teaching contexts the absence of literary texts still seems to be the custom. Sometimes in a textbook, extracts of a novel or a short story, a short poem may somehow make their way among most

non-fictional texts. If the teachers enjoy the freedom to select materials, they then must decide on which texts to include, for what purposes, and what activities will be appropriate to explore the texts to promote language development. Selecting a text itself may become difficult, enough demanding on the teacher's part to put them off the inventiveness of bringing literature to the language classroom altogether.

In the post-modern, deconstructionist age, shedding off the traditional concept of literature (with a large L) the definition of literature took on a new shape to include texts such as advertising copy, graffiti and public notices, extracts of newspaper articles, samples of travel brochures, or content from webpages. These types of written pieces use literary devices like parallelism, rhyme, rhythm and metaphor which are thought to be appropriate, worth interpretation and relevant in the classroom (Maley, 2001). Within the broader scope, literature now encompasses popular fiction, advertising and film to make the whole teaching/learning process more attractive, thought provoking and stimulating.

One main reason for using literature is to encourage students' creativity. However, when choosing a text, language difficulty must be considered, so that access is not restricted, and the learners can attain a basic level of comprehension. McKay (1986) however, cautions against simplification of text, since this may result in diluting information and reducing cohesion and readability. Students also need to be able to identify *with* the experience, the thoughts and situations depicted in the text, in order 'to make connection to personal or social significance outside the text' (Brumfit, 1985: 108). Therefore, as McRae (1991:126) suggests, a good choice would be any text that encourages or invites interaction with the world of ideas, a text that 'affirms, confirms and expands the indispensable human capacity to read the world'.

Selecting a literary text for a language classroom requires several considerations. Issues such as, students' age, their emotion, intellectual maturity, suitability, their interests and hobbies should be noted before selecting a literary text. Text selection is a process that requires professional discussion, contextual decision involving time and thought.

The criteria for text selection also include background of the learners, their literary experience and linguistic proficiency, level of understanding, etc. Texts should not be too long, too complex linguistically, and not too far removed from the world knowledge or schemata of the learners. However, linguistically simple texts are not always 'simple'. As pointed out by Carter (1988) that contemporary literature is generally not always the most accessible. This is especially for non-native, non-European students, because of its reflection of a world, which is usually based on an impersonal industrialised scenario where spiritual values are non-existent.

In addition, experimental usage of the language can give rise to complexity in understanding, whereas writings from the past may prove to be quite comprehensible in terms of their comparatively simple setting, theme and use of language producing more direct involvement and personal responses. The argument regarding the intricate language usage of a literary work could be overcome by using a proper methodology. Drawing parallel examples or converting old English to new English, for example, from Shakespearean English to modern day English would instill interest in the learner.

Background of the Study

In Bangladesh, English learning has always been associated with literature until the late 1990s. However, in the classroom literature became less popular when language teaching and learning started to aim at teaching English as a means of communication endorsing development of the four language skills and giving less emphasis on the fifth skill, the thinking skill that involves among other components, critical thinking, imagination and interpretation which literarily expose one to innumerable language experiences.

Various measures have been taken in recent years to standardise English language teaching (ELT) in the country, nevertheless, the outcomes seems to be disappointing as pointed out by Ali & Walker (2014) due to certain impediments that include the decision in lowering the status and use of English in Bangladesh since

the independence (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014), implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) curriculum, teaching method and instructional materials in practice (Rahman, Pandian, & Kaur, 2018), etc.

In the EFL context of Bangladesh, English as a language is primarily introduced from grade one to tertiary level (Ainy, 2022). However, the exclusion of literature has not proved to be anything positively contributing towards learning the language. It is worth remembering that literature itself is language that reflects life and predominantly real language. Therefore, the role of literature in the language classroom should be re-assessed as literature inevitably provides rich linguistic input, effective stimuli for students to express themselves in dimensions that acts as a latent source of learner motivation.

In such a situation, this study aims at finding the teachers' point of view regarding criteria for text selection and the benefits and demerits that are associated with introducing literature in the classroom.

Research Objectives

This small-scale study aims at looking for the criteria that are important in selecting a text for the language classroom, the appropriacy of a text and the possible loopholes that a teacher may encounter while presenting a text to the learners. Once the text selection criteria for a particular level and group is determined, introducing the appropriate text is likely to be proved beneficial, encouraging and motivating in developing the learner's language input in all four skills. They will also get developed in creative awareness, self-reliance and independence in reading texts inside and outside classroom.

LITERATURE REVIEW

'Literature' with an upper-case 'L' and within inverted commas signifies the idea of that global body of literary writing which has been recognised with Matthew Arnold's famous utterance, as quoted in Widdowson (1999: 4) – 'the best that has been known and said in the world'. However, as pointed out by Eagleton (1976:166), it is now a state when 'Literature must indeed be re-situated within the field of general cultural production; but each mode of such production demands a semiology of its own, which is not conflatable with some universal "cultural" discourse'.

Critics base their arguments for exclusion or non-inclusion of literature in language classroom on the pretext that most literary texts are heavy with literary devices and that they bring irrelevant vocabulary, and outdated poetic language which do not have any connection to the language used in today's world. According to Brumfit and Carter (1986) this apparently outdated language is language that people would normally encounter in authentic texts, literary or not. The impediment of this scenario could easily be overcome by transforming the language to the present day one. Moreover, lexical appropriacy objections can easily be overcome with the teacher's careful selection of texts and judicious task designing (Collie and Slater, 1987). Moreover, to 'demystify' literature, McRae (1991:2-3), differentiates between 'referential' language, which communicates on the informative level only, and 'representational' language, which engages the imagination of the reader. He defines a literary text as any imaginative material that stimulates a response in the reader, including songs, cartoons, idioms and proverbs. However, according to McRae (1991: vii) 'in future years, the absence of imaginative content in language teaching will be considered to have marked a primitive stage of the discipline.'

According to Elliot (1990), texts should engage readers cognitively and affectively. To my opinion, texts should also let learners practice reasoning, promote language awareness aiming at developing their language skills, and help them be critical and respond imaginatively to the world where they live with the help of schemata. Such areas where knowledge and understanding may be lacking are best addressed before starting a text by careful attention to building the relevant schemata (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983). Schemata will offer background and supporting information to aid understanding of something that is new to the learners. Nevertheless, texts chosen should not be too far removed from the world knowledge of the learners.

According to Derrida (1976), reading and interpretation are not merely acts of reproducing what the writer expresses in a text. Texts open the horizon of interpretation, there are as many interpretations as there are

readers. The element of interpretation gives way to a text beyond text, a meta text where the learners can play with their imagination combined with cognition. The meaning of the text is eventually created by its reader. As proposed by Bakhtin (1981) the 'meaning' of a text is the result of a multiplicity of voices and influences, including the ones the learners bring themselves to the reading process. Texts that aim to develop language and reading skills through critical thinking process are the best choice for a language classroom.

Literature in the ELT Classroom

The use of literature in language classes has seen considerable ebbs and flows (Khatib and Hossein, 2012; McKay, 1982). In the last decades of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, the situation of language teaching viewpoints began to shift, and literature started to be considered as a prospective source for language development (Hall, 2005). There are arguments for and against using literature in the language classroom. Many scholars argue that using literature especially in an EFL classroom is beneficial as it provides meaningful context; involves a profound range of vocabulary, dialogue, and prose; appeals to the imagination and enhances creativity; encourages critical thinking; and harmonises with Communicative Language Teaching principles. As observed by Lima (2005) teachers on the ground must have felt the damaging outcome of putting literature out of the scenario and that there was something wrong in neglecting such a rich source of language input.

Those against using literature maintain that literary language is structurally complex, conceptually difficult to understand, and unique to a particular culture or authentic situation. Literature, therefore, as argued by these critics does not support the goals of teaching grammar or helping students meet their academic and occupational needs. However, there are reservations with counter arguments. According to Liaw (2001) literary works provide additional material of grammar practice, vocabulary learning, and translation. Furthermore, McKay (1982) argues that literature can be useful in developing linguistic knowledge to the extent that students enjoy reading literature. Enjoyment may increase their motivation to interact with a text and thus, ultimately increase their reading proficiency. It may also enrich students' understanding of a foreign culture that may work as an incentive to become creative with imaginative works.

It is already noted that literary texts provide opportunities for multi-dimensional classroom experiences and can appeal to learners with different learning styles. A written text can be complemented by audio-texts, music CDs, film clips, podcasts, internet materials, etc. that accelerate the richness of the sensory input that students receive.

Apart from developing learners' language input, due to the development of critical thinking and imaginative qualities in the learner, literature lessons can lead and motivate the learner to express their understanding through reproductions of student creations e.g. writing poems, short stories, develop meta text based on one text, or through performances of plays. Literary texts, thus, could help learners to activate and exercise their imagination.

Text Selection Criteria

The appropriateness of the texts selected for a particular class remains a crucial factor in the success of the teaching approach followed in that class. Brumfit's criteria for text selection (1985: 109) relates to suitable linguistic level, 'cultural and social expectations of different groups of learners,' and length of the text.

Some of the most common challenges that the teachers may face in selecting a text for their classroom include their appropriacy in regards to the learners' relevance and interest, linguistic difficulty, cultural shock elements, societal norms and values. Texts need to be appropriate to the level of the students' comprehension. Length of the text could be another issue, whereas a shorter text may be easier to handle within the time frame, nevertheless, a longer text would provide more contextual details, and development of character and plot. For example, as noted by Collie and Slater (1987), short stories offer greater variety than longer texts, offering greater chance of finding something to appeal to everyone's tastes and interests, whilst poems offer a rich,

varied range and are a source of much enjoyment. An appropriate longer text may be handled in chunks. As discussed in Carlisle (2000), Hirvela (1996) and Oster (1989) longer texts can be used in a necessarily scaffolded and slower manner, likely using a range of reader response style activities.

Regarding the issue of cultural diversity, researchers argue that if students do not encounter diverse experiences in texts, they are likely to limit their ability to coexist in the wider world, as they will miss out to understand the society outside of themselves. By actively engaging with a variation of viewpoints through literature, learners will be exposed to critical ethical engagements with diverse cultures and values that involve discovering ethical dilemmas and where eventually issues of justice surface.

Nevertheless, it is to be noted that although texts need to reflect the diverse world we live in, acting as ‘mirrors’ of diverse experiences, students also need to realise that the content of the text reflects who they are in a real sense. They should be able to feel that their identities are perceived and validated as their voices and experiences matter.

But it is also important to consider that culturally dense text may pose difficulty in placing learners as strangers to the atmosphere resulting in comprehending the essential meaning as they may face cultural alienation and culture shock. Socio-cultural issues can be handled through using comparison and contrastive issues taken from the learners’ own context. However, it is very important to remember that under no circumstances the learners should be made offended by textual content. Their values and ideologies should not be undervalued, questioned or threatened. McRae and Vethamani (1999) observe that the growth of strong local literatures in English has triggered a corresponding interest in incorporating such texts into language teaching materials. Vethamani (1996) argues that new literatures are unjustly overlooked in many teaching contexts, whereas their inclusion in the classroom can broaden students’ perception of the use of English in wider cultural contexts, thus will continue to fuel interest in using literary texts for cross-cultural exploration. As such, literature lends itself well to investigating similarities and differences between self and others, and to an awareness and understanding of ‘the other’ (Kramsch 1993).

Lazar (1993), summarised three factors which teachers should think when choosing literary texts for their suitability to the students in language classes. These are: the students’ cultural background, linguistic proficiency and their literary background.

Duff and Maley (2007) stress that teachers can cope with many of the challenges if they ask a series of questions to assess the suitability of texts for any group of learners:

- Is the subject matter likely to interest this group?
- Is the language level appropriate?
- Is it the right length for the time available?
- Does it require much cultural or literary background knowledge?
- Is it culturally offensive in any way?
- Can it be easily exploited for language learning purposes?

Two main points of criticism have been leveled at the use of authentic literary texts - the issues of unfamiliar lexis and of challenging syntax (Robson, 1989, Savvidou, 2004). If ease is concerned a text should not pose too much difficulty with lexical items and should not be too easy that there is no challenge and no vocabulary increase.

Possible criteria for text selection, for classroom and extensive reading (Waring, 2008) include some of the principles advanced by Prowse (2002:142-4) for the selection of extensive reading material as reiterated by Lima (2010). I agree with Lima that choices should be given to the learners regarding text selection where possible. Even if the school library is limited, students can be offered a shortlist of texts that gives them a certain degree of choice that may include graded readers, although McKay (1982:531) notes: “the simplification of syntax may reduce cohesion and readability”. According to Honeyfield (1977) reduction of

texts renders some loss of richness of language, and, inevitably, of meaning. Texts should also provide good potential for a variety of classroom activities, to give students more chance to gain true familiarity with any work as a whole. Most importantly, the texts should have the capacity to engage the interest of the student.

However, learner should never go short of texts as there is plenty of free copyright material available on the Internet also. They could be suggested and recommended reading material based on the availability and what is considered culturally and linguistically appropriate. It is important to note that a text has the capability of having a long-lasting impact on the learner as it can shape a student's conception of themselves as a reader and also help increase learner's reading habit for the rest of her/his life. A text should incorporate perspectives that can help broaden learners' horizons and develop their sense of empathy is crucial as the ultimate purpose of reading and comprehension should focus on the learner becoming an active citizen contributing positively to a multi-faceted world.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In Bangladesh, National Curriculum and Textbook Bonard (NCTB) is responsible for books for the secondary level education. Teachers are bound to follow these prescribed books, and they have no or little time to incorporate any material in addition to the textbook contents in a large classroom and a system which is very much examination oriented. The examination itself is prescribed and formatted. In most of the cases the questions are set in manner that do not provide opportunity to spark the learner's imaginative, critical or independent quality. English textbook contents are Communicative Language Teaching oriented. That is not even the case. English teaching and learning are completed with some reading and writing experiences, whereas, listening and speaking are the skills in the oblivion. Moreover, the not-so-authentic and outdated materials used in the language classroom greatly impede the application of CLT in Bangladesh. Students memorise answer to questions and that is how they prepare for the examination. Government school adhere by the textbook published by the NCTB.

The fact remains that exclusion of literature from the English classroom hasn't proved to be anything positivity contributing towards learning the language. A total language-based approach firstly results in learners' memorisation tendency that ultimately produces fear and inertia in using the language in real life. However, incorporating literature as a text in the language classroom will bridge the gap of materials lacking authenticity and multidimensional aspects and also will open up access to develop students' critical thinking and imaginative ability. Using literature will thus integrate students' language learning with their life experience and personal feelings together. Literature is created by language and represents one of the most recurrent uses of language.

Well-chosen literature can offer not just motivating content but also the necessary context. This article after providing an insight into the context tries to find out the teachers' perception towards texts that they would like to bring into their classroom when the scope of using literature opens. This is important under the circumstance to have a summary of criteria that would help teachers choose appropriate literature for their classrooms. This small-scale research would try to throw some lights on the following areas:

1. Why do the teachers think is literature important in a language classroom?
2. What types of texts would they like to bring into the class? Literary canons or contemporary works?
3. How would they handle 'literary language' in a language classroom?
4. What are the criteria that the teachers would follow in text selection?
5. What are the constraints that they may face in using literature in the classroom?

METHODOLOGY AND SUBJECTS

The notions of 'qualitative' research and 'quantitative research' are two terms that cover a wide range of procedures, methods and approaches, which are both useful in research (Flick, 2015). According to Blaxter *et*

al. (1996), qualitative and quantitative data taken separately provide only a partial description of the whole situation.

A mixed methods methodology allows the researcher to gather a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. It provides a more holistic perspective by combining qualitative depth with quantitative breadth enhancing the overall strength of the study. According to Best and Kahn (1989: 89-90): Quantitative research is based more directly on its original plans and its results are more readily analysed and interpreted. Qualitative research is more open and responsive to its subject.... It is possible for a single investigation to use both methods”.

This study employed both quantitative (bringing precision) and qualitative (providing more nuanced picture) approaches in the study. In research, surveys can be online or in-person and have either free-answer, essay-style questions, or closed, multiple-choice style questions. Depending on the data required, a survey could also use a mixture. Bell (1993) suggests that the open-ended questions be used to give the subjects an opportunity to express their personal views and support the choice they made in the close-ended ones. The close-ended questions were based on a scale, devised to discover „strength of feeling of attitude” (Bell, 1993:139). According to Bell, the most straightforward attitude scale is probably the Likert, one which asks respondents to indicate strength of agreement or disagreement with a given statement or a series of statements on a four point range (from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”).

The questionnaire for the present study was distributed among teachers working at secondary levels to perceive their thoughts and perception on the issue of text selection for the group they teach. The teachers were codified to keep their identity confidential as most of them wished so. To assist the library research and literature review, a questionnaire survey is conducted among 50 teachers of English belonging to six government schools.

Government schools were chosen because they are solely dependent on NCTB backed textbooks where study materials are set for the students across the country. They have no choice of text selection and must adhere to the contents of the book without an option but to follow. The study aimed at finding the teachers attitude and thought regarding text choices for the learners with the motto on brining in development in their linguistic maturity as well as their thinking, imaginative and creative faculties that will eventually contribute to better comprehension of the world around them. The questionnaires were distributed as an email attachment via the head teacher at the school and were returned to the researcher within the stipulated time (2 weeks).

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following section presents the data received on the questionnaire in tabular form followed by a discussion on the findings.

The questionnaire started with eliciting personal data of the participants who were all secondary level teachers of English.

Personal data: How long have you been teaching English? What is the age group of your students?

Teaching experience	Age group of students (approximately)
8-25 years	12-16

Data reveals that the teachers are well experienced and mature in teaching. The age of the learners is usual at the secondary level of Bangladesh.

Question 1 asked about the teachers’ reading interest in English.

Q. 1. Table 1: You enjoy reading books in English.

1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
		6 (12%)	44 (88%)

Data on Question 1 reveals that among the respondents the majority (88%) strongly agrees with the statement whereas 6 (12%) teachers agree that they enjoy reading books in English. Therefore, it is established that cent percent of the teachers enjoy reading books in English.

Question 2 asked about the genres they prefer to bring into the language classroom.

Q. 2. Table 2: Genres of preference with comments.

Genre	Respondents (N) (%)	Some reasons behind choice (s)
Poetry	42 (84%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Poem on a page looks nice. It carries mystery and tells a story. Beautiful poems can make learners imaginative, soft and curious. Poetry could be used successfully in multiple level classrooms. · Poetry refreshes one's mind and soul. Stories can be made from a poem on multiple themes. · Patriotic and rebellious tone in a poem can excite the youth; they feel alive and get motivated while reading. · Reciting a poem in the class help develop pronunciation, intonation, tone, etc. this is important in language learning. · There are layers of meaning in a poem. This can be explored for language learning purpose. Vocabulary and simile, metaphors can be explained, and multiple meaning and sense could be made of that. · Theme based poems can initiate thought and critical ability. · Verses of a poem could become favourite to a student if that can engage their attention, for example, a romantic verse.
Drama	34 (68%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Drama is a narrative form of a story; students can participate and can act out a drama in the class. · The different characters of a drama may engage their attention, and they can relate some of them from the world around. · Dialogues in a drama can be helpful in learning conversations. Dialogues can be rewritten and thus increase the ability of creativity and learning the language.
Short story	50 (100%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Short stories usually focus on a single plot which could be expanded and explored thoroughly. A well-written short story can successfully convey the same messages as a novel. · Short stories are like beautiful afternoons in a backyard sinking into oblivion with thrilling excitement. · Stories employ literary devices. Language items could be taught implementing proper methodology. · Due to its length, it often ends without a definite conclusion, which lets the readers seek their own conclusion. Thus, it can excite the reader's imaginative faculty, could be thought provoking and dramatic while being realistic. · Relatively simple plot can carry deep meaning opening doors to deeper understanding of the world. · Stories can be scripted and performed.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · They can be read between the lines to bring in multifarious and diversified meaning. · Short stories provide authors the freedom to convey a message or experiment with a theme without the burden of committing to a lengthier one. · Short stories teach us about life, about ourselves and about others.
Novel	30 (60%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Novels are the precious jewels of literature. · The intricacy of plot makes one excited and dealing with parallel plots in the same time zone create suspension and motivate the reader to read on. · Novels deal with many twists in the form of plot and sub-plot which are connected to our daily life. · Novels can be dealt in chunks in the language classroom and multidimensional activities could be developed on them. · Students consider graphic novels to be a literary art form that interest them a lot.
Others (please specify)	Songs, One-liners, proverbs, advertisements, graffiti, text messages 28 (56%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Songs are bound to capture interest in the learner. Language items can be taught via songs. · Theme of a song is important in engaging students in issues of importance. · Language activities could be devised and thus the progression of language learning ensured. · One-liners and proverbs can be thought provoking. Learners can debate on them, and elaboration of a proverb can initiate a lot of language input in the learner. · Graffiti is a strong medium of language unspoken. It opens a wide range of creative thoughts on very current issues. · Text messages are interesting extract that can be used in a language classroom for all good reasons. Stories, poems can be built on them. Meaning can be deciphered; dramatisation is possible.

The data indicates that the majority of teachers prefer short story (100%), and then poetry (84%) as their choice of preference. The next two close choices are drama (68%) and novels (60%). Apart from these popular and more traditionally inclined choice fifty-six percent (56%) teachers also mentioned songs, one-liners, proverbs, advertisements, graffiti, ad text messages to be their choice of preference that could be brought into the classroom.

The data depicts that short story and poetry are the most preferred and interesting literary genres among the teachers. A summary of their choice indicates that they prefer short stories because, short stories focus on a single plot which could be expanded and explored thoroughly. They employ literary devices and language items could be taught through them. They often end without a definite conclusion, and thus can excite the reader's imaginative faculty, and thoughts. Nevertheless, relatively simple plot can carry deep meaning opening doors to deeper understanding of the world.

Regarding poetry as a preferable genre, the teachers indicated that poetry has the refreshing quality. It carries mystery and tells a story. Beautiful poems can make learners imaginative, soft and curious. Patriotic and rebellious tone in a poem can excite the youth; they feel alive and get motivated while reading. Reciting a poem in the class helps develop pronunciation, intonation, tone, etc. this is important in language learning. Vocabulary and simile, metaphors can be explained and multiple meaning and sense could be made out of that.

As for drama teachers thought that it is preferable because students can participate and can act out a drama in the class which has motivating effect on them, and they can relate to the characters and events there. Dialogues in a drama can be helpful in developing conversations. Teachers find that the intricacy of the plot of a novel makes one excited and dealing with parallel plots in the same time zone could create suspension and thus motivate the reader to read on.

Teachers also believe that songs are bound to capture learner's interest and language items and issues of current importance can be taught via songs. One-liners and proverbs are thought provoking, can initiate debate. Graffiti is a strong medium of language unspoken. They also look beautiful and can open a wide range of creative thoughts on very current issues. Stories, poems can be built on text messages and meaning can be deciphered; dramatisation is possible on small texts that can help develop spoken skills.

Question 3 asked the respondents to indicate the type of literature that they would prefer to use in the classroom mentioning the reasons behind their choice. They could choose more than one type.

Q.3. Table 3. You would prefer to use (*please mark bold*): a) classical literature b) contemporary literature c) all kinds of literature works d) literature with a small 'l'

Type of literature	Respondents (N) (%)	Reasons behind choice (s)
Classical literature	22 (44%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classical literature is considered noteworthy and well-known works such as William Shakespeare's <i>Hamlet</i> and Herman Melville's <i>Moby Dick</i>. Classics deal with universal themes, memorable and notable characters, and disseminate widespread appeal to readers. A work is typically considered classic when it is widely read and studied. Classical literature is an expression of life, truth, and beauty. It must be of high artistic quality and usually refers to the great masterpieces of Greek, Roman, and other ancient civilizations. The works of Homer, Ovid, and Sophocles are all examples of classical literature. Classical literature crosses the boundary of time. They could be dense in language, boring and not easy to handle in the class.
Contemporary literature	47 (94%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contemporary literature refers to the concept of 'now', and focuses on the writer's feelings, emotions and societies as s/he was experiencing them. The main idea of this genre is to convey realistic characters and experiences. They represent real and current situation and deal with realistic events that are placed through characters. This genre can initiate critical thinking, acceptable to younger generation. Contemporary literature is reliable and versatile. They explore the much wider world. Besides, learners can relate to the contents of contemporary literature more. There should be no entry of contemporary literature in the classroom, because they may present issues not suitable for students. They reflect current political, social, and broader personal issues of the time and desire to experiment with new genres. Writing style is relatively easy.
All kinds of literature works	50 (100%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classical to contemporary – all are welcome in class to serve the purpose of learning. Variety breaks monotony and boredom. Different kinds of literature reflect different aspects of life. Variety opens wider windows that makes one thoughtful, behave mature and can think about life, love, nature, and everything else more deeply.

Literature with a small 'l'	43 (86%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whatever suits the class in learning and understanding a language that incorporate culture and society, develop tolerance and humanity, help understanding humans better, promote critical thinking, enrich knowledge of culture and society, help grow someone to become a better self, etc. are good resources in the class. Humanistic education is important. Literature with a small 'l'. will bring variety in the classroom and the resource bank would be richer.
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The data above indicates that the most preferred type of literature is all kinds of literature works supported by cent percent (100%) of the teachers and the next preference is contemporary literature (94%). Literature with a small 'l' is the third choice having the support of 86 percent.

A summary of the reasons behind their choice indicates that they prefer classical to contemporary literature as they are versatile and thus would break monotony and boredom in the language learning process.

Contemporary literature refers to the concept of 'now', and focuses on the writer's feelings, emotions and societies as s/he was experiencing them. It can initiate critical thinking, and is acceptable to younger generation. They also reflect current political, social, and broader personal issues of the time and their writing style is relatively easy. Nevertheless, there is also the reservation that there should be no entry of contemporary literature with issues non suitable for and unacceptable by students.

According to the third majority of the teachers literature with a small 'l' should be brought into the classroom. They will help understanding a language better because they will incorporate culture and society, help develop tolerance and humanity, help understand humans better, promote critical thinking, enrich knowledge of culture and society, help grow someone to become a better self, etc. Humanistic education is important going beyond rigidity in text selection.

However, all agree that different kinds of literature reflect different aspects of life. Variety opens wider windows that makes one thoughtful, behave mature and think about the importance and meaning of life.

Question 4 sought the teachers' stand on the statement whether literature texts in the lessons of English can help learners to improve their English. The data obtained is presented below:

Q.4. Table 4: Literature texts in the lessons of English can help learners to improve their English.

1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
		7 (14%)	43 (86%)

Data above confirms that all teachers completely approve that literature texts in the lessons of English can help learners to improve their English. A majority of forty-three (86%) strongly agree with the statement.

Based on Q. 4. there were six statements that inquired about the ways literature can help learners develop their English skills. These statements were set to provide the teachers' opinion. Data received is exhibited in the table below.

Table 5. If literature texts can help, then they can help:

Statements:	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
to acquire new vocabulary.			9 (18%)	41 (82%)
to get to know the culture of the English-speaking countries.			12 (24%)	38 (76%)

to have access to varied examples of the language grammar structures in use.			14 (28%)	36 (72%)
broaden one's imagination that ultimately helps one express vividly and clearly.		1 (2%)	7 (14%)	42 (84%)
to be creative.		1(2%)	9(18%)	40 (80%)
develop confidence and independence in expressing students own ideas, opinions and emotions in English.			7 (14%)	43 (86%)

The analysis confirms that all fifty (100%) teachers confirm that literature can help develop learners' language skills including some soft skills such as, imaginative ability and creativity. Only one teacher disagree that literature helps develop imaginative quality and creativity in the learner. Majority of the teachers strongly agree that literature assists learners in their vocabulary development, learning the cultural aspects of English speaking countries, help them have access to varied examples of the language grammar structures in use, broaden their imagination and creative thinking ability, and finally, contribute in developing self confidence that leads to independent expression of ideas, opinions and emotions in English. Thus, data on Q. 4 reaffirms the positive input of literature in a language classroom.

Question 5 is a continuation of Q.4 in the way that it also tries to accumulate points from the teachers regarding the benefits that literary texts may offer in language learning. There are six statements that the teachers are to rate according to their preference. The table below contains the data obtained on the statements.

Q. 5. Table 6. Literature texts also:

Statements:	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
motivate your students in English lessons.		1 (2%)	11 (22%)	38 (76%)
provide valuable authentic materials.			8(16%)	42 (84%)
help students get in touch with universal human values.			10 (20%)	40 (80%)
bring students into contact with real language.		1 (2%)	13(26%)	36 (72%)
stimulate personal involvement of the students.			6 (12%)	44 (88%)
provide materials for creating analytical and critical abilities.			12 (24%)	38 (76%)

Data above reveals that all teacher (100%) among them the majority strongly confirm that literature can help develop learners' language skills in many other ways that include increase in motivation, getting in touch with authentic, genuine materials, developing universal human values, creating contact with real language, stimulating personal involvement, and providing materials for creating analytical and critical abilities. A single teacher disagree that literature has motivating quality and can bring students into contact with real language. Thus, data on Q. 5 reiterates the positive influence that literature has on the learners.

Q. 6. and Q. 7. aimed at eliciting information regarding whether teachers find literature texts to be a source of enjoyment and whether they encourage their students to read literary texts available outside classroom. Data produced on the questions is presented in Table 7 below.

Q. 6. and Q. 7. Table 7. Working with literature texts in lessons of English is a source of enjoyment and the teachers encourage their students to read literary texts available outside classroom.

Statements:	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly Agree
Working with literature texts in lessons of English is a source of enjoyment.		2 (4%)	8 (16%)	40 (80%)
You encourage your students to read literary texts available outside classroom.		5 (10%)	12 (24%)	33 (66%)

The data above shows that the majority of 48 teachers (96%) among whom the majority strongly confirm that they find working with literature in the English classroom brings enjoyment; only 2 of them disagree with the statement which as data can be disregarded. Again, a majority of 45 respondents (90%) agree (66% among them strongly agree) that they encourage their students to read literary texts available outside classroom. Only 5 among 50 teachers disagree with the statement, perhaps because they find it time-consuming as well as difficult on the student's part as they are mostly examination oriented in the study scheme.

Question 8 asked the respondents to indicate the reasons behind the importance of text selection. Following table presents some of the comments.

Q.8. Table 8. Why is 'text selection' important? Please comment.

Some comments on the importance of text selection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Texts need to address the audience. They should not be too long, or too short that ideas cannot be expanded on them. A wrong text for the intended class will bring complexity and boredom instead of having positive effect on language learning. It is important to choose texts looking at its linguistic level as linguistically complex and a text too far removed from the world knowledge of the students will not work in the classroom. In a society where spiritual values are important, texts which are usually based on an impersonal industrialised scenario where spiritual values are non-existent should be carefully avoided. Experimental usage of the language can give rise to complexity in understanding in many cases. Writings from the past may prove to be quite understandable in terms of their comparatively simple setting, theme and use of language. It is important to choose texts that can produce more personal responses and initiate more direct involvement. Texts dense with old, obsolete English may tire the learners as they may impede reading. Text selection is important because a good choice should address the age of the students, their emotion, intellectual maturity and their interests and hobbies should be taken into consideration. Suitability of texts is important because students should be exposed to world literature that may come up with values and culture that are against their own practice. Learners and teachers would be both involved in reading texts that aim to develop language and reading skills through critical thinking process.

A summary of the comments on the importance of text section reiterate that the teachers agree that the text need to be appropriate, relevant and timely for the students. The aim would be to develop their linguistic capacity, humanistic education, and prepare them for the world when the issue to facing the challenges evolves. An inappropriate text for the intended class will bring complexity and boredom instead of having positive effect on language learning. A society that is based on spiritual beliefs should be careful about bringing in texts that are far removed from the world knowledge of the students and deal with issues devoid of mystical principles.

It is also important to choose texts that can produce more personal responses and initiate more direct involvement. Text selection is important because a wrong choice not addressing the age of the students, their emotion, intellectual maturity and their interests and hobbies would not work in the classroom and thus fail to bring in the intended outcome.

Q.9. asked the teachers about the criteria they would look for in a text while selecting texts for their students. The following table presents the items they have mentioned while they would select a text.

Q.9. Table 9. If you are to select texts for your students, what would be the criteria that you would follow in text selection.

Some criteria in text selection as proposed by the teachers	
·	Texts need to be relevant and interesting to learners.
Regarding linguistic difficulty - texts need to be appropriate to the level of the students' comprehension.	
·	As regards length, shorter texts may be easier to use within the class time available, however, appropriate extracts from a longer text can be used to accomplish the goal.
·	Texts should not be so culturally dense that students feel ignored from understanding essential meaning and should be culturally appropriate so that learners are not offended by the content.
·	Texts chosen must be easily exploited for language learning purposes. Finding a text with the right language level is crucial. It should neither be too difficult that students stumble every now and then; nor too easy that there is no challenge and no vocabulary gain.
·	Texts should provide frameworks for creative response. They should offer learners to modify, extend or add to a text.
·	Oversimplification of a text may result in diluting information and reducing cohesion and readability.
·	Students also need to be able to identify with the experience, thoughts and situations depicted in the text, so that they can make connection to personal or social significance outside the text.
·	Texts should provide good potential for a variety of classroom activities.
·	Texts should have the capacity to stimulate interest for cross-cultural exploration.
·	Texts should initiate follow-up writing, classroom presentations and face-to-face or online discussions.
·	A text should initiate imagination and creativity and help learners to activate and exercise their imagination. This can be done by using visual arts, music, movie clips, etc. A text should also invite multifarious and multilevel interpretations.
·	Lexis and syntax of a text need special attention as the intention to expose learners to rich and creative language, which is a definite benefit of using authentic texts, they surely should not be overtaxed and thus discouraged.

A summary of the above data projects that the teachers believe that while selecting a text it is of utter importance that the text is relevant and interesting to learners. The level of linguistic difficulty of a text need to be appropriate to the level of the students' comprehension. Schemata building should be encouraged in such cases. Finding a text with the right language level is crucial. It should neither be too difficult that students stumble every now and then; nor too easy that there is no challenge and no vocabulary gain.

Texts should provide frameworks for creative response. They should offer learners to modify, extend or add to a text. Oversimplification of a text may result in diluting information and reducing cohesion and readability. Texts chosen should introduce follow-up writing, classroom presentations and face-to-face or online discussions.

Question 10 asked the respondents to put their final thoughts of having literature in the language classroom. They were to mention both the positive and negative sides. The comments are presented below.

Q.10. Table 10. Mention the positive outcomes that literature texts will bring and the challenges that are associated with literature texts in your classroom.

Positive outcomes	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Literary texts assist language development and expand cultural understanding in the students. · Literature can give students the means to imagine and think creatively. · Reading and analysing literature help students develop reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, creative skills and critical thinking skills. · A student can expect to develop skills in critical thinking and analysis, verbal and presentation skills, forming arguments. · Literature can initiate better participation in and leading discussions. · It can enhance learner's writing and storytelling ability. · Being authentic material, literature prepares learners for real life language usage. · Literature broadens learners' horizons if texts of different types are included, for example, texts such as <i>Paradise Lost</i> and working-class writing, slave narratives, protest literature and prison testimonies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Difficulties may include limited vocabulary, grammar issues, use of literary terms, pronunciation struggles, lack of schematic knowledge, inefficient time management, resulting in low motivation. · The challenges faced include difficult language, inappropriacy with students' level, unsuitability with topics, time management, and unattractive materials. · Literature deals with difficult language, in terms of its complexity, its structure, vocabulary, poetic and unfamiliar diction. · The weaknesses include poor communication skills; and an inability to answer questions in good English. · Students can face difficulties in pronouncing unique English sounds or spelling. · Challenges include poor learning environment, shortage of textbooks, low language proficiency, misunderstandings about the value of literature, heavy workload and lack of parental support.

A gist of positive outcomes establishes arguments that literary texts assist language development and expand cultural understanding in the students. It also makes one more aware of values worldwide. Literature broadens learners' horizons if texts of different types are included and helps develop transferable skills that are required in the job sector.

Introducing literature in a language classroom poses some challenges as well that include limited vocabulary practice, and grammar issues, use of literary terms, pronunciation struggles, lack of schematic knowledge, inefficient time management, resulting in low motivation. Challenges also include poor learning environment, shortage of textbooks, misunderstandings about the value of literature, heavy workload on the part of the teacher and sadly, the lack of parental support who do not encourage their child to read books outside syllabus.

A Summary of the Findings

A summary of the findings show that teachers prefer firstly short story and then poetry followed by drama and novels as their choice of preference. Some teachers mentioned that songs, one-liners, proverbs, advertisements, graffiti, and text messages could also be brought into the language classroom.

Different genres of literature employ literary devices and language items could be taught through them. They are capable of exciting the reader's imaginative faculty, and thoughts. They can also be asked to read between the lines to bring in multifarious and diversified meaning to the story that are connected to our lives.

Literary texts carry mystery and tells a story. Patriotic and rebellious tone of a text can excite the youth; they feel alive and get motivated while reading. Vocabulary and simile, metaphors can be explained, and multiple meaning and sense could be made out of that and themes can initiate thought and critical ability. Literature is connected to individual's daily life and can be dealt in chunks in the language classroom and multidimensional activities could be devised on them. Literature is versatile and thus would break monotony and boredom in the language learning process.

All teachers approve that literature texts in the lessons of English can help learners to improve their English. Literature can help develop learners' language skills including some soft skills such as, imaginative ability and creativity and brings enjoyment. Only 5 among 50 teachers find reading literature outside class is time-consuming and difficult on the student's part as they are mostly examination oriented in the study scheme.

Regarding text selection teachers opine that appropriate, relevant and timely texts should be with the aim of developing learner's linguistic capacity, holistic education, and prepare them for the world when the issue to facing the challenges evolves. A society based on spiritual beliefs should be careful about texts that are far removed from the world knowledge of the students and deal with issues devoid of mystical principles.

Using literature has its own benefits that include literary texts assisting language development as well as cultural understanding in the students. It helps develop imagination and critical thinking and reading comprehension, and critical thinking skills. Literature offers opportunities in obtaining verbal and presentation skills. It also makes one more aware of values worldwide.

The challenging factors associated are poor learning environment, shortage of textbooks, misunderstandings about the value of literature, heavy workload on the part of the teacher and sadly, the lack of parental support who fail to inspire their child to read books outside syllabus in an examination-oriented world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the research suggests some recommendation on using literary texts in the classroom so that the aim could be positively reached. While choosing, it is important to note that a text should provide good potential for a variety of classroom activities, to engage the interest of the students properly. As noted by Collie and Slater (1987), short stories offer greater variety than longer texts, offering greater chance of finding something to appeal to each individual's tastes and interests, whilst poems offer a rich, varied range and are a source of much enjoyment. Local literature is also a good source in the classroom as observed by McRae and Vethamani (1999) as the growth of strong local literatures in English has triggered a subsequent interest in incorporating such texts into the classroom.

It remains also a fact that in many EFL contexts there are constraints in terms of availability of appropriate books, or the set curriculum the teachers are to follow. Goodwyn and Findlay (1999) point out that teachers teach best when they are enthused about a text/topic they are teaching. However, available texts and materials can nevertheless be successfully used to achieve objectives if used properly and systematically.

Intellectual merit is a key point to be considered while choosing a text. Appropriate selection should be made targeting the audience, and age group, who need to be challenged with exciting issues and ideas. Students should be offered enough ingredients to be able to appreciate the text critically and enjoy reading. The variety should include traditional and contemporary ones belonging to different literary genres. The context of the text should reflect current community standards and expectations and perspectives of male and female, young and old, and a wide range of cultures, in historical contemporary and imaginary settings. Obscenity or issues sensitive and objectionable to a particular community, society, religious beliefs, region and country as a whole should be avoided to evade any sort of dispute. To enhance and maximise the benefits of using literary texts in the classroom, teachers can exploit texts in many ways in the classroom. Classroom work with literary works may involve pre-reading tasks, interactive work/ while reading activities on the text and follow up activities. Some options may include follow-up writing, classroom presentations and face-to-face or online discussions. According to Lima (2010), when access to the Internet is possible, the use of wikis, blogs, discussion forums and web quests can broaden the experience of a text and be used to promote collaborative writing, creative writing, exchange of ideas and contextualisation of literature works.

Learners should also be encouraged to examine articles and books, attend workshops and courses, visit websites, and join Special Interest Groups and discussion forums to feel to be a part of the wider community.

CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

In order to be successful with a text in the language classroom, it is worthy to note that in an atmosphere where English is a foreign language, teachers need to engage students in multifarious activities which should be interesting and relevant to the learners' life and environment.

Teachers should try to maintain an all English policy if not possible at the beginning but gradually. Using English for these purposes will increase the amount of practice in writing and speaking skills. Learners should be given the impression that English, like the mother tongue, can be used for real life communication. If the technique of all-English presentation and practice is continued, the learners will quite soon develop their comprehension capacity.

Learner autonomy being the key issue will enhance learners' sense of self-achievement, self-respect, confidence, and independence. With the absence of the teacher learners are likely to be able to exploit literary texts for language learning activities at their own pace.

This paper reviewed the benefits that literature texts can bring into the secondary level language classroom and suggested some criteria for the selection of literary texts to be used therein. It called for the inclusion of literature into language classroom experience to exercise the creative exploration of language so that the language learners can critically and creatively make meaning of the texts they read with enjoyment.

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