

USING LITERARY TEXTS IN EFL CLASSROOMS: CULTURAL AWARENESS AND VOCABULARY ENRICHMENT

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Abstract

This study was conducted to find out the influence of literature on vocabulary and cultural enrichment in EFL classrooms. A qualitative research design was adopted. A literary text was integrated into an EFL class with 19 students who were studying in the English Preparatory School of one of the universities in North Cyprus. After having 8 weeks of teaching (50 minute each lesson), data were collected by interviewing 5 volunteering participant EFL students who were Kazakh, Pakistani, Georgian, Turkish and Turkish Cypriot and 3 EFL teachers who were Turkish and Turkish Cypriot. In order to collect data, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the participants by the researcher. The participants were selected purposively. The findings of the study revealed consistency between the participant EFL students' and EFL teachers' perspectives. They all pointed out the benefits of using literary texts in contributing to learners' cultural awareness and vocabulary enrichment.

Key words: Literature, language teaching, cultural awareness, vocabulary enrichment.

Approaches to Teaching Literature in the EFL Classrooms

There are different kinds of approaches which best serve the needs of EFL teachers who are willing to use literary works in their syllabus. Carter and Long (1991) stated three main approaches to teaching literature in the EFL classrooms.

1. **The Cultural Model:** This model serves the traditional approach in using literary texts in EFL classrooms. It encourages students to discover and analyse the social, literary and historical elements of the text. With the help of this model, teacher aims to reveal the specific thoughts and perspectives so the students can be more familiar with various cultures and ideologies. .
2. **The Language Model:** This is one of the most popular approaches which were named as "language-based approach" by Carter and Long (1991). This approach helps students to examine the text in a more systematic and methodical way. Linguistic elements such as direct and indirect speech are aimed to be taught in this model. Cloze procedure, exercises, jumbled sentences, summarising the texts, creative writing and role plays are the main activities used by the EFL teachers for teaching linguistic structures. Therefore, literary goals are minimised in this kind of teaching method. The learner is less engaged to the lesson. It is more teacher-centred. It means that literature is underestimated and linguistic practice is more important in this model.
3. **The Personal Growth Model:** This model is a kind of bridge between the cultural model and the language model. It concentrates on the use of language in the literary texts within its cultural context. Students are more tend to express their ideas and feelings about their personal experiences and cultural knowledge in relation to the specific literary text. Various themes and topics are perfect resources to develop themselves. Cadorath and Harris (1998: 188) show the importance of this model by saying "text itself has no meaning; it only provides direction for the reader to construct meaning from the reader's own experience". Therefore, analysing the literary texts is also crucial in this model.

On the other hand, according to Savvidou (2004) these all three models have strong and weak sides. Therefore, she argues that an integrated model with the elements of these three approaches will be the

best alternative way to teach literature more motivationally, methodologically and linguistically in the EFL classrooms.

Maley (1989) also gives two general categorizations of approaches:

1. **The Critical Literary Approach:** It directly concentrates on “the literariness of the texts we study” (Maley, 1989: 10) such as motivation, characterization, background etc. He claims scholars who use this approach expose students to have an enough level of English proficiency and knowledge of literary terms.
2. **The stylistic approach:** This approach is related to analysing texts and examining the language of the text.

According to Maley (1989), literature should not be used as the only resource in language teaching. However, it is perfect to use a literary text as one of the materials for the students’ motivation and for the awareness of language functions.

Another categorization is presented by Van (2009):

1. **New Criticism:** In this approach author’s aim, social, political or historical issues are not important. Activities generally include formal elements of the text without looking at its “literariness”. Generally, texts are chosen from traditional canon and these texts can be long, challenging, strange and irrelevant to the students which may lower students’ motivation in the classroom.
2. **Structuralism:** It does not provide some space for the subjective thoughts of the students. It concentrates on the linguistic structures.
3. **Stylistics:** This approach focuses on the elements of literary language to prepare students to make literary interpretations with the help of their linguistic knowledge. However, this approach can be challenging for the students with limited communicative skills and the teachers who do not have enough literary knowledge.
4. **Reader Response:** Students’ personal response to the literary texts and the relation of the text to the students’ experiences, culture or feelings are the most crucial elements in this approach. It is one of the preferable approaches, especially in the EFL classrooms.
5. **Language-based:** This approach leads students to experience the “real” literature through brainstorming and summarising etc. This helps students to be more active, communicative and motivated in the classroom. It is very beneficial in teaching both literary elements and the use of language at the same time. All four skills of the L2 can be taught in this approach. It is again one of the best approaches for the EFL classrooms.
6. **Critical Literacy:** Raising student’s critical awareness is aimed through this model. Literary texts are used to discuss political, cultural and social issues. To employ such an approach in the classroom, a teacher should be sure about the openness of the students to this kind of discussions in the classroom.

Benefits of Using Literary Texts in the EFL classrooms

Literature was one of the primary sources for teaching English for a long time in the past. For instance, literary texts were one of the best tools in Grammar translation method. Later on, with the emergence of structuralism, audio-lingual and more attention was given to daily speeches, dialogues and conversations. It is because they were practical for many educators. Maley (2001) claims that nowadays, research on literature for EFL classes are not very common. There are few studies on this area. However, the use of literary texts for teaching in EFL classes is becoming popular again. It is because literature can be used for all basic language skills such as writing, speaking and especially reading. It is also very beneficial for other language areas such as vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation. Apart from typical EFL classrooms, literary

texts are quite popular in translation courses. Many researchers give logical reasons to use literary texts in EFL classes. For instance, Collie and Slater (1994) claim that there are four advantages which may direct English teachers to use literature in their classrooms. These reasons can be listed as valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment and personal involvement. Besides, Khatib (2011) has summarised the merits of literature in English teaching according to many scholars. He again listed authenticity as number one in his list. Later on, motivation, cultural/intercultural awareness and globalisation, pragmatic knowledge, grammar and vocabulary knowledge, language skills, emotional intelligence and critical thinking are listed as other benefits of using literature in EFL classrooms. Hirvela and Belcher (2001) also give some ideas about the advantages of using literature in EFL classrooms. Their ideas can be listed in this way;

1. Normally, texts used in English Language teaching books are general information based according to those specific contexts. Students need to follow the instructions in order to learn a specific topic. However, literary texts are more likely to encourage students to express their own ideas as they can identify with or react to the characters. By this way, learners may be involved or engaged while learning English language.
2. Literature helps to increase the creativity while students are reinforced to solve incidents and answer questions.
3. Students have the advantage to meet with numerous kinds of text types and sentence structures which help to learn the language.
4. Literature increases learners' cultural knowledge as it includes a variety of cultural elements through the text.
5. Reading literary texts foster the students' academic skills.

Ur (1996) also states some benefits of using literature in EFL classrooms. The summary of these benefits are listed below:

1. Literature is an entertaining material to teach and learn English.
2. Literature presents examples of various types of writing and authentic material.
3. Literature is a good material for vocabulary enrichment.
4. Literature increases reading skills.
5. Literature can be a good source for discussions and writing activities in the classroom.
6. Literature includes both emotions and intellect which help to increase learners' motivation and self-development.
7. Literature gives clues about the target culture.
8. Literature increases creativity and critical thinking.
9. Literature contributes to the learners' general knowledge about the world.
10. Literature helps students to gain awareness about various types of human conflicts and situations.

Although many researchers state various advantages of using literature in the EFL classrooms, this study aimed to focus on mainly cultural awareness and vocabulary enrichment regarding the use of literature in EFL classrooms.

Cultural Awareness

First of all, culture can be explained as “body of social, artistic, and intellectual traditions associated historically with a particular social, ethnic or national group” (Sowden, 2007: 304-305). Also, Mead (1961) mentioned that culture is something that can be learned. Fox (1999: 90) supports this idea by saying “culture is relative and changeable in space and time”. Therefore, cultural awareness is a concept that Cortazzi and

Jin (1999) defined as being aware of another society's culture with their manners, expectations, beliefs and values. Nowadays, multiculturalism has an important role in western societies and the words such as intercultural and transculturally or cultural awareness is very popular in many academic written works. On the hand, it is not surprising that the main support to teach literature in EFL classrooms is because of its ability to arouse students' cultural awareness. This cultural awareness seems to be crucial for having more intellectual students for the future of any society. In this respect, Sell (2002: 19) claims that "participatory pedagogy, whose overarching aim will be to give language learners a chance to try on the alien culture for size". Therefore, it is not wrong to say that cultural enrichment is quite important to improve students' link to the target language. Literature and culture in the EFL classes can be seen as the bridge between English and its spirit. This connection contributes learners to feel closer to the English speaking countries. In this context, literature enhances EFL with the help of elements such as authentic material as well as language teaching and cultural enrichment. Researchers and English language book writers were aware of it for a long time that teaching a new language is not possible without teaching the culture of that country. It is possible to say that today most of the EFL study books try to include texts about the culture of English-speaking countries such as the UK or the USA. However, literary texts as authentic materials naturally include cultural elements which can be beneficial for students' improvement of cultural awareness.

Vocabulary Enrichment

As it is mentioned before, one of the advantages of using literature in EFL classrooms is vocabulary enrichment. Vocabulary enrichment is generally seen as a critical tool for English language students because lack of vocabulary knowledge in a foreign language may block a fruitful conversation. Schmitt (2000: 55) expressed the importance of rich vocabulary knowledge as "Lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language". Other scholars such as Laufer and Nation (1999), Maximo (2000), Read (2000), Gu (2003) and Nation (2011) have also demonstrated the importance of a successful vocabulary acquisition as a crucial element. According to these researchers above, vocabulary enrichment directly influences all other language skills such as listening, speaking, writing and reading. In addition, Nunan (1991) claimed that for a successful communication extensive vocabulary is the key tool as it helps to use correct structures and functions of the language as well. Also, when we have an incident that we need to express, we should have good knowledge of vocabulary. Krashen (1988) summarised this situation and importance of vocabulary knowledge with a perfect sentence; "when students travel, they don't carry grammar books, they carry dictionaries" (as cited in Lewis, 1993: 25). Therefore, it is possible to say that a successful curriculum should include lots of activities for vocabulary teaching. In this case using literature in school's curriculum will be one of the best options to teach it effectively. Many researchers have approved the intellectual, academic, cultural and linguistic advantages of using literary texts in teaching (Paran, 2006). They claimed that literature and EFL teaching should go together to make it more contributory and encouraging for the learners (Elliot, 1990, Widdowson, 1995).

It is because students will naturally develop their vocabulary knowledge with the help of exposure to the language. This exposure is what Krashen (1988) calls comprehensible input or (i+1) input. The exposure will happen automatically with a slight linguistic competence which may exist in literary texts. It is because vocabulary used in literary texts is much broader than ordinary speech (Shen, 2002, Widdowson, 1995). Another advantage of literary texts is that they include a lot of different words used in a various range of contexts. Even, Van (2009) claimed that a profound range of vocabulary is one of the six key reasons to use literature in an EFL classroom.

Research Design

This study aimed to examine the use of literary texts in the EFL classrooms in the preparatory school whether using literary texts have any contribution to vocabulary learning and cultural awareness. For this purpose the following research questions were adopted:

- 1-What influence does the use of literary texts in EFL classrooms have on vocabulary learning?
- 2-In what ways, does the use of literary texts in EFL classrooms influence cultural awareness?

For the purpose of collecting data, semi-structured interviews were conducted. Since in the EFL classes where the research was carried out skills were integrated into teaching. Therefore, reading classes were integrated into standard teaching sessions as well.

Participants

In this study, a total number of 19 preparatory school students were attended to the demo lessons as an EFL classroom. They were all in the same pre-intermediate classroom. Only 5 students voluntarily participated in the semi-structured interviews after completing these demo lessons. Besides, 3 EFL teachers were also interviewed. All the interviews were audio-recorded. Duration of the students' interviews was between 5-10 minutes while teachers had interviews between 20-25 minutes. All the students and the teachers were interviewed individually.

Characteristics of the Participants

The participants in the EFL classroom were Kazakh, Georgian, Pakistanis, Turkish and Turkish Cypriot preparatory school students who were learning at one of the universities in North Cyprus. Only one of the students was a female. Other students were all males. Their ages were between 18-27. Their native languages were Turkish, Russian and Urdu. They were all at the pre-intermediate level. Five students were participated voluntarily to be interviewed. They were all male and their ages ranged from 18 to 27. Three EFL teachers also took part in the interviewing process. All the teachers were quite experienced and had MA degrees. Two of the participant teachers were Turkish Cypriot while another teacher was Turkish. They were all female and teaching at one of the universities in North Cyprus. Their native language was Turkish.

Prior to the Fieldwork

A week before starting to use a literary text, *Macbeth* from William Shakespeare, in EFL classroom, all the students in the classroom were informed about this research and asked if they would like to participate. The aim of informing the students as participants of the study was to increase the validity of this research.

All 19 of the students agreed to participate voluntarily in these "literary lessons". Also, five of these participants again voluntarily accepted to have interviews with the researcher. Additionally, three teachers accepted to have interviews. During the interviewing process, semi-structured questions were asked by the researcher. The interviewer also recorded these interview sessions and later on transcribed the participants' answers to the questions. The participants were also informed to feel free to talk about their feelings, ideas or perspectives in order to get objective answers from them.

During the Fieldwork

The literary lessons were carried out every Wednesday for 50 minutes during 8 weeks. In this process, the teacher as a researcher did one chapter from the book to the students. Reading, doing exercises, learning new vocabulary and analysing the cultural and social aspects of the book were the main activities during these teaching sessions. The teacher was like an orchestra chef while students were taking active roles in discussing various elements of this literary book.

FINDINGS

EFL Students' Perspectives

Research Question 1: What influence does the use of literary texts in EFL classrooms have on vocabulary learning?

As a result of the analysis of the interview, two main categories emerged; providing a meaningful context for vocabulary learning and literary texts involve a profound range of vocabulary, dialogues and prose.

Providing Meaningful Context for Vocabulary Learning

All of the participant students somehow mentioned that reading literary texts in the classroom helps them to learn vocabulary easily because of its meaningful context. According to them, it is easier because reading literary texts with their meaningful contexts help them to talk about the incidents, to learn sentence structures, new words without showing any efforts, and to get more motivated. Some students mentioned this as;

“While we were reading the book, we were discussing the new words and their meanings between each other so we learned them automatically. I mean, we learned new words that we didn't know through discussions.”

Student 1

The analysis of the given statement demonstrated that students' vocabulary learning is dependent on the motivation for discussing the meaning of the new words which emerged because of the meaningful context. It seems that students found the context of the book meaningful and in order to understand better, students were ready to discuss the unknown vocabulary. Therefore, it is possible to say that literary texts have meaningful context and this motivates them to learn more new words in the process of reading the book.

“Reading literary texts in comparison to contemporary passages in our course book are much better because they are more fascinating and there is always an incident going on. Here, even if you don't know the meaning of the word, you can guess the meaning while you are reading the text”.

Student 3

According to the student's response, the context of the text is very important both for the motivation and guessing the meaning of the new words. Series of incidents which take place during the text take an important role especially in predicting the meaning of the words. The authenticity of the text also makes it more interesting for the reader.

“It was very beneficial for the vocabulary knowledge. Also, it helps to improve your reading fluency, learn the arrangement of the words and sentence structure. It also affects your motivation”.

Student 3

As it was claimed by many students, Student 3 again emphasised the importance of reading literary texts for the learners’ motivation. This student strongly highlighted that reading a meaningful context also helps to understand the correct order of the words and their correct places in a sentence as well as improving the reading fluency.

“If the book is suspenseful, you learn new words automatically. As long as you learn these words and you can learn much more in the process of time”.

Student 4

The given quotation also indicated that, the meaningful context is crucial for an attractive way of reading. If the literary text is suspenseful, they learn new words very easily and this motivates them to learn much more vocabulary in time. If the text does not mean anything to them, the literary text will not be suspenseful and it will be demotivating. However, it is impossible to say this for the literary texts. It is because texts have to be meaningful in order to be included in literature. Meaningless contexts cannot be counted as part of the literature.

In general, literary texts due to their authenticity and meaningful contexts provide good reason for learning. It helps to improve students’ vocabulary learning as well as increasing their motivation during lesson hours.

Literary Texts Involve a Profound Range of Vocabulary, Dialogues and Prose

In the interviews, the majority of the students claimed that literary texts involve a profound range of vocabulary, dialogue and prose. They were also asked to compare the vocabulary learning in literary texts versus contemporary texts.

One of the students claimed some beneficial ideas about this question;

“We learn different words that we can’t see in our student books. It helps me to improve my vocabulary knowledge and to see different kinds of question types and sentence structures”.

Student 3

The interpretations of the student’s response revealed that literary texts involve a profound range of vocabulary, question types and sentence structures. It is because literature deals with various language types and varieties from slang to formal about different incidents. It is not only good source for the unknown words; it is also a good source to learn grammatical structures. It deals with both formal and informal language and reading literary texts is a good practice for improving vocabulary learning, various question types or sentence structures.

“For instance, if there are some characters in the literary text and if they have conversations between each other, we can learn how to use these dialogues in our daily lives as well”.

Student 3

This response of the participant student clearly shows the importance of dialogues in the literary texts. It means that students are able to use these dialogues in their real lives if they read this kind of authentic texts. It emerged that learning from the dialogues also improves the vocabulary learning. The events in the text can be associated with students' own experiences in the reality. Since literary texts handle with ideas, objects, feelings and incidents which may associate with the students' experiences, they can easily relate the events to their own lives. Especially, having the learners comment on the incidents without any restriction and critically analyse the events in the classroom also help to improve their speaking skills as well as their vocabulary knowledge.

"I've learned words that I didn't know. Object names or verbs that I didn't know... Forming sentences or new words related to the battles... such as the word 'castle'".

Student 1

Student's immediate response to the question demonstrated that due to its authenticity, literary texts include non-trivial things which can be related to the real world's events such as wars. This authenticity is naturally included in the literary texts. Authenticity is a criterion element which is extremely necessary for the literary texts.

"There was a profound range of vocabulary in the book. It was easier to learn new words. Also, reading books is much better."

Student 2

Similar to the previous student, it is possible to claim that literary texts are much richer in terms of variety of vocabulary. Therefore, students may learn many more new words both with their denotative and connotative meanings, proverbs, slang words etc. Also, as it is motivating, it is much easier to learn these new words.

"There are also many unknown words in old English. That's why it is needed to be taught in EFL classrooms."

Student 4

This student's comment was very different according to other participant students. The student mentioned the importance of "old English" in some old literary texts. It shows that students are also curious about the words which can be considered as "old fashion". Literary texts may include a variety of vocabulary from ancient periods to contemporary periods. It is not possible to find this kind of vocabulary in the contemporary student English teaching books.

"Reading a literary text was beneficial in relation to vocabulary knowledge. There were unknown words that I didn't know and I learned them".

Student 5

Similarly, *Student 5* claimed that there were many new words and this helped him to improve his vocabulary knowledge. It means that literary texts are basically good instruments to learn vocabulary while learning a new language.

Finally, using literary texts in EFL classrooms can provide a profound range of vocabulary which may help students' improvement very quickly and effectively.

Research Question 2: In what ways does the use of literary texts in EFL classrooms influence cultural awareness?

The analysis of the interview showed that literary texts may influence the students' cultural awareness in several ways.

"I learned things that I didn't know. For example, I've learned that knowing about your future earlier than expected is not an advantage".

Student 1

The interpretations of the student's response revealed that the exposure to literature help students to think on various issues, recognise problems and find solutions in these literary texts and then compare them with their real perspectives, values and life styles in their real contemporary world. By this way, teacher and students may have discussions about these rich and authentic texts about various perspectives, beliefs or philosophical issues which may lead to personal improvement of the students. This encourages students to question the world around them to avoid ethnocentrism and improve their cultural awareness.

"I didn't get any information about English culture or history before. I got some information with the help of this book (Macbeth)"

Student 2

The given quotation clarified that this student also was pleased about the cultural information which can be gained through literary texts. It means that EFL students may become familiarised with the cultural aspects of target language without visiting the countries where the language is spoken. Moreover, since in today's changing world people tend to travel abroad more than in previous years and have more chance to communicate with foreigner people through electronic devices with the help of social media. Therefore, it is quite necessary to already know what to talk or not to talk about some sensitive topics such as culture, politics, race or religion to the people who live in the countries where the target language is spoken. That is because literary texts and literature must enter the scene to help students develop their cultural awareness especially related to these societies.

"I hadn't read a book like this before. I read it with the help of our school. Shakespeare is famous worldwide and this literary text is a beautiful work of art. Of course, it gives us variety of cultural information".

Student 3

The analysis of the student's statements revealed that, literary texts or famous writers such as Shakespeare are work of art. The Students got a cultural awareness with the help of this literary text and the writer. Therefore, through their imaginary world of a play such as Macbeth, students were also able to experience a full and colourful atmosphere of the characters in the book. For that reason, students may explore the world from characters or Shakespeare's perspective in that specific era. Students learn about every detail such as emotions, traditions, problems, social issues, what they eat or drink, afraid of, like or dislike; the way they speak to their friends, family or colleagues etc. in different situations. Finally, with the help of literary texts, it is possible to claim that students feel all the codes and mental states that may shape this specific era.

“Through this book, we examined the writing style of William Shakespeare. Also, we’ve learned about Shakespeare’s period.”

Student 4

Similar to previous students, this student also claimed that literature is a beneficial tool to develop the cultural awareness and using literary texts in EFL classrooms may help students to improve their knowledge of English spoken (target) countries.

In conclusion, especially in these days when multiracialism has become very obvious as the slogan of peaceful societies, it is not surprising to use literary texts as an important material for the English language teaching in the classrooms. It fosters knowledge of culture, race, religion, history, politics etc. diversification and sharpens the students’ different perspectives about these issues which are mentioned above.

EFL Teachers’ Perspectives

Research Question 1: What influence does the use of literary texts in EFL classrooms have on vocabulary learning?

As a result of the analysis of the interviews various perspectives about providing a meaningful context for vocabulary learning and literary texts involve a profound range of vocabulary, dialogues and prose, being able to recycle the vocabulary, linking the new vocabulary to the real life etc. emerged. Nearly all the participant teachers firstly emphasised that reading literary texts in the classroom help students to improve their vocabulary knowledge easily because of several reasons. According to the teachers, it is easier because reading literary texts with their meaningful contexts help them to talk about the incidents, learning sentence structures, learning new words without showing any efforts, get more motivated. Some quotations from teachers’ interviews are listed below;

“One of the benefits of using literary texts in the EFL classrooms can be the imagination. When the student imagines the things in the book, they can learn how to use these words or sentences. So, the student can learn new words in the course books but the knowledge of ‘how to use’ these words are limited. However, a student can learn better ‘how to use’ the words through a literary text”.

Teacher 1

According to teacher’s response, the meaningful context of the literary texts is very crucial. It is because, with the help of the meaning in the context, students are able to imagine the meaning of the words and even how to use them in different contexts as well. In addition, everybody knows that learners generally declare their thoughts through vocabulary which are easy for them to learn. Vocabulary is effortlessly integrated into their daily speech with the people around them. Therefore, because of the meaningful context of the literary texts, students are able to figure out the meaning of unknown vocabulary on their own. This ability to understand the meaning of unknown words automatically is related to “knowing how” to use these words in another sentence.

“Students are able to connect meaningful context of the literary texts to their real lives. Language is not only information sharing or it is not a message forwarding process. We also express our feelings with the language and we can observe the characters expressing their feeling in the literary texts. This helps students to improve grammar and vocabulary knowledge”.

Teacher 2

Similar to the previous teacher, Teachers 1 and 2 mentioned that the meaningful context is very important to the students. Many researchers also have claimed that teaching unknown words or grammar structures within a meaningful context of literary text and reading are really advantageous for the language learners. By this way, students would be able to reflect their knowledge of vocabulary to their daily lives as well that normally not taught in class. It is because each different character in the text will help them to learn new words related to different feelings which are very useful for our daily lives, outside the school or university. Even, reading very often will allow the learners to acquire a profound range of vocabulary that could only be taught through direct vocabulary teaching methods such as telling students to memorise a long list of new vocabulary.

“I think using literary texts in the classrooms helps students to increase their profound range of vocabulary because they contain grammar rules or a wide range of vocabulary in a context. It is much more different than teaching normal pacing in the classroom. I believe it also helps to improve students’ oral and productive skills not only grammar and vocabulary knowledge”.

Teacher 3

The analysis of the given statement revealed that Teacher 3 also believed that vocabulary could be taught in a contextual setting which is extremely purposeful. Having learners read gives an exposure to learning unknown words and improves their vocabulary knowledge. For example, while a teacher is using a literary text in a classroom, the teacher may give a short break to describe the meaning of an unknown word in that specific context. By this way, learners can discuss or predict the meaning of the word as well. Then, learners may take part in some activities such as writing, role-plays, listening to others, or creating new sentences. Thus, practising speaking, vocabulary, grammar, listening, reading and even writing within the context of literature become possible. To conclude, it is one of the best ways to improve all the skills in the same context.

“Students can recycle the unknown words, while they are reading a literary text”.

Teacher 2

The given quotation clarified that another benefit of using literary texts in the classroom is recycling the words as students encounter with the same words very frequently. Therefore, when learners are exposed to the same unknown words again and again in several contexts, the consequence is successful learning, better ability to commemorate the unknown word, an increased chance of using the word automatically.

Finally, participant teachers’ responses show that suitable literary texts which are full of many unknown words can be very logical in order to improve students’ vocabulary learning and many other skills at the same time.

Research Question 2: In what ways does use of literary texts in EFL classrooms influence cultural awareness?

The analysis of the interview showed that literary texts really affect the students’ cultural awareness in a positive way. The participant teachers’ responses are analysed below;

“Of course literary texts have a positive effect on students’ cultural awareness because each writer has her/his own culture. Language is the part of culture. I mean, language goes together with the culture”.

Teacher 1

“Also, standard reading passages are contemporary and include narrow topics. For example, a student who reads William Shakespeare can start to compare the culture in the past and now. So, a student can learn about people’s thoughts, lives, feelings in the past and their development”. (Quote 6)

Teacher 1

Teacher 1 emphasised that literature has contribution to students’ cultural awareness. The use of literature in EFL classrooms maintains this cultural awareness with the help of authentic materials and their meaningful contexts. Also, cultural elements in the literature with that country contribute students to expand both their cultural and intercultural awareness. It is because each writer or poet has a different cultural background because of the place she/he lives or the time and other factors. Students who have a focus on literary texts in the EFL classrooms tend to have an awareness of the historical, social, political, cultural background of writers. They are also able to understand some basic concepts of English Literature theories. In time, they are even able to compare and contrast the differences between two different authors and their cultural background.

“While they are examining a literary work, they will definitely read about the writer’s biography and they can also read about important world wars, holocausts, genocides or changing government structures in that specific period. They will automatically learn all about these issues”.

Teacher 2

“A literary text already involves the culture it comes from. By this way a student can learn English and experiences, environmental factors etc. all at the same time. A Student can find some similarities and get used to that culture as well”.

Teacher 3

Teacher 2’s and Teacher 3’s answers to the question showed that; students may learn about different cultures or incidents with the help of literary works. It leads students to question the differences between cultures or discover important events in history in different countries. Cultural awareness involves an understanding of other people’s culture with various values, behaviour, beliefs, political perspectives, backgrounds etc. It is something beneficial for the students because we are all shaped by our cultural elements.

In conclusion, participant teachers’ responses maintained that cultural awareness is crucial for L2 learners as they can easily analyse the world around them and compare themselves to other people who speak the target language that they want to learn. Learners need to have that cultural awareness in order to understand that there is not only one “true” culture but a variety of numerous cultures. Culture is something like a mosaic and involves extremely dynamic beliefs, traditions, customs or behaviours which are continuously changing and unstable.

Discussions of the Findings

The findings of the study revealed that there is consistency between EFL students’ perspectives and EFL teachers’ perspectives in all the categories including vocabulary enrichment and cultural awareness. The present study aimed to emerge the influence of using literary texts in the EFL classrooms. The participants

attended to the interviews provided positive results about the research. Results showed that five participant students in EFL enjoyed the experience of reading a literary text in the classroom. The students also emphasised that this kind of teaching such as integrating a literary text to their curriculum affected their engagement to the lessons in a positive way and helped them to understand literary texts and their importance better. Similarly, three EFL teachers emphasised that using literary texts in an EFL classroom is beneficial for the students' vocabulary knowledge and cultural awareness.

Participant students particularly pointed out some advantages of using literary texts in the EFL classes. The findings of the study firstly showed that using literary texts help especially students' vocabulary learning in a beneficial way. According to participant students, one of the greatest advantages of using literary texts is the meaningful context comes with the authenticity. With the help of this authenticity, students were able to learn important vocabulary which they could also use in their daily lives. Berardo (2006) also strongly claimed that "one of the main reasons for using authentic materials in the classroom is outside the safe, controlled language learning environment, the learner will not encounter the artificial the language of classroom but the real world and language how it is really used". Even, participant students stated that this connection to the real experiences made them discuss these issues in the classroom and they really felt motivated. By this way, they learned new vocabulary automatically while they were discussing these issues. The mentioned findings also agree with Berardo's another statement about advantages of using authentic materials. He (Berardo, 2006) stated that using an authentic material in the classroom have a positive effect on student motivation.

Another contribution of this study to the previous studies in this field is finding that the positive influence of reading literary texts on the vocabulary learning and even their knowledge of grammatical structures because of its exposure to lots of unknown words in a meaningful context. Povey (1972) also claimed that "literature will increase all language skills because literature will extend linguistic knowledge" (p.18). Some former researchers (Stern, 1991; Erkaya, 2005; Van, 2009) also thought that literary texts can meet the needs and make better language skills. Turker (1991) also emphasised that literary texts with their expanded vocabulary can improve all language skills. Therefore, it shows that student participants' experiences are overlapping with the former findings particularly in relation to vocabulary learning through literary texts.

Similarly, three participant teachers agreed with the all mentioned findings of the student participants. Additionally, teachers claimed that using literary texts in the classroom also has two more benefits such as being able to use the imagination and recycling the words. About the imagination, one of the EFL teachers noted that students are able to use their imagination through reading literary texts and this helps them to imagine where to use these new words and in what way. This idea resembles the idea of Alam (2007:381) who noted that literature "stimulate the imagination, offer learners specimens of real language use, allow for group discussions and individual exploration, and are intrinsically more dialogic".

Another important finding from the teacher 2's perspective was being able to recycle the vocabulary. Teacher 2 claimed that recycling the words helps students to learn these new words very easily and automatically. Ellis (2002, 2005) also agreed with this statement and claimed that "Learning requires attention, then, but also requires repeated acts of attention". Similarly, Schmidt (1990) argued that "attending to a word or form once is not enough; nor is uninterested noticing". Therefore, the teacher's opinion on the importance of recycling and repetition of the words was completely meaningful.

One of the other aims of this study was exploring the influence of literary texts on the EFL learners' cultural awareness. Although limited time was one of the limitations of the study, all of the participant students' findings showed that learning English through literary texts were contributing to their cultural awareness. Each participant mentioned different advantages of reading literary texts in relation to the concept of

cultural awareness such as finding some events in texts which is related to their real lives, learning about the historical events between England and Scotland, getting information about famous writer Shakespeare and atmosphere of the period that he was living in. When these findings were analysed they were clearly consistent with Iser (1993: 29) "Literary text makes no objectively real demand on its readers, it opens up a freedom that everyone can interpret in his own way". Therefore, it can be interpreted as all these aspects really contributed to their cultural awareness.

Furthermore, teachers' findings also demonstrated that they agreed with the student participants. In general, they claimed that using literary texts is crucial for the cultural awareness. They declared that each author come from a different cultural background, therefore students can learn about different cultures. Students are also able to learn about various feelings, thoughts, and life styles and in time they get used to that target culture through reading and analysing these texts. Each of these literary texts was written in a different period in the history and this helps them to learn about the historical issues as well. As Kramsch (1993: 175) asserted that "by constructing with the literary text a reality different from that of texts of information, students are given access to a world of attitudes, and values, collective imaginings and historical frames of reference that constitute the memory of a people or speech community". Therefore, with the help of findings both from participant students and participant teachers, it is possible to claim that culture, the literature and language teaching always go together.

Conclusions

To sum up, this study showed that it is possible to defend the use of literary texts in EFL classrooms on the basis of some requirements such as using appropriate literary text according to students' level of L2 and integrating literary texts to usual EFL lessons. Therefore, integrating literary texts to EFL classrooms can help students to improve their various skills. Most crucial of these skills involve; vocabulary learning, cultural awareness, motivation and even critical thinking and other language skills. That is to say, an integrated method to use the literary texts in EFL classrooms presents L2 students favourable circumstances to expand not only their linguistic and communicative skills but their awareness about L2 in all its discourse aspects. The analysis of the participant teachers' and students' interviews showed that literature despite some disadvantages provides a motivating reason for L2 learning and teaching with the help of some aspects which cannot be found in other contemporary texts.

Limitations of the Study

There are few limitations to the present study. Firstly, the limited number of participants may not be satisfactory for the generalizability of the results to a larger population. Secondly, teaching with literary texts in a classroom with 19 students was completed in 8 weeks with 50 minutes teaching in each week. This limited time might not be enough to observe all the development of the students. Finally, it was not possible to fully observe students' vocabulary improvement with semi-structured interviews. Therefore, it would be better to also test students' vocabulary learning with some written tests including questions related to vocabulary knowledge.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the present study, there are still some aspects that require further research. The following aspects are suggested for further studies:

It is recommended;

1. to conduct a study with more participants concerning the improvement of the generalizability results.
2. to conduct a study focusing on the other advantages of using literary texts in EFL classrooms such as critical thinking and other language skills.
3. to conduct a study which includes both qualitative and quantitative research methods.
4. to conduct a study without any time limit during the teaching sessions.

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