

## **Literature in Language Teaching**

Throughout the history of language learning and teaching, the use of literary texts has shown fluctuation, starting from Greek and Latin works to its popularity loss with the rise of speaking, and most recently its uptrend in the field (Maley, 2001). Having previously seen as an elite source for teaching languages, the tendency to integrate it as an authentic material in language classrooms has increased over the years (Kramersch & Kramersch, 2000; Paran, 2006; Carter, 2007). Literature stimulates emotions, imagination, experience and dreams that cannot be achieved through other types of texts (Pulverness, 2007), and not just increases language development, but also contributes to education as a whole (Brendella, 2000). Therefore, studies revealed many advantages of integrating literature in language teaching.

The authenticity of literary texts enables learners to engage in a meaningful context that increases student motivation (Ghosn, 2002) and enables them to have fun during the classroom activities. Language learners engaging with literature have been found to be more involved and enthusiastic in their lessons (Yang, 2001; Kim, 2004). Furthermore, both the linguistic and affective development can be achieved with these learners (Liaw, 2001). Literature can also be used to teach and encourage critical thinking (Diaz-Santos, 2000) and develop linguistic (Clark & Zyngier, 2003) and literary (Zyngier, Fialho & do Prado Rios, 2007) awareness. The natural language of literary texts advances vocabulary and reading (Strong, 1996; Lao & Krashen, 2000; Holden, 2003; Ono, Day & Harsh, 2004; Wang & Guthrie, 2004) and fosters higher order thinking skills as well as developing emotional, interpersonal (Ghosn, 2002) and intercultural awareness (Strong, 1996; Ghosn, 2002; Kayaoğlu, Çıraklı, Aykıt & Taş, 2012; Tuncer & Kızıldağ, 2014).

Along with its advantages, some researchers stated some problems that may occur during the integration of literature in language teaching. These studies indicate that in teacher-based instructions, literature is not given much importance, and compared to other texts used in language teaching, literary texts can be demotivating for language learners (Edmondson, 1997; Vandrick, 2003). Moreover, for the development of the genres of academic writing, literature provides little support (Vandrick, 2003). Some other problems that learners can experience with these authentic texts have been stated as the difficulty of syntactic patterns, high level vocabulary, meaning differences, cultural contrasts. Little knowledge on aesthetics and genres may also cause difficulties for language learners (Khatib, Rezaei & Derakhshan, 2011).

When using literature in the classroom, EFL teachers benefit from various genres such as poems, short stories, plays and novels. Due to the different language structures and deviations from the original sentence formation, poetry is the least used genre among the others in foreign language classes (Widdowson, 1984). However, Kellem (2009) suggests that poetry is a valuable source for language learners, since they can benefit from the rich content, creativity, vocabulary in context through poems. She brings a new approach to the field, namely Formeaning Approach, by combining Stylistics Approach and Reader-Response Approach (Kellem, 2009). According Formeaning Approach, language elements are studied by the learners at the same time they react to the poems depending on their personal opinions and background. In terms of the process that learners go through, poetry can serve basically in two beneficial ways. First of all, learners understand the author and his feelings, thoughts and opinions in composing the poem. Second, learners develop themselves in understanding the meanings that words carry, and this leads to an increase in the analytical skills (Hişmanoğlu, 2005).

Short stories are found to be the easiest way of introducing literature to language learners (Spack, 1985). Furthermore, having enjoyable and compelling in essence, short stories motivate students and increase their positive attitudes towards learning a foreign language (Brewster, Ellis & Girard, 2002). There are various advantages of using short stories in teaching. They help learners to comprehend the text easily, since they are short and simple (Arıoğul, 2001). When compared to novels, teachers can meet different students' tastes by using various short stories in their lessons, since they are not time consuming. Furthermore, because of the shortness, teachers may require extra activities for students to comprehend the richness of the story (Collie & Slater, 2004).

Plays enable learners to figure out the usage of language structures and the cultural elements in context (Hişmanoğlu, 2005). Lazar (1993) states some of the benefits of using plays in teaching a foreign language. She indicates that plays exemplify the usage of conversational features for learners by enabling them to practice spoken discourse. Moreover, plays offer a meaningful context for them to learn formulaic structures and chunks (Lazar, 1993). The authentic nature of plays demonstrates the target culture and social structure along with fostering productive skills in language learners (Mengü, 2002).

Novels reflect the daily lives of individuals by opening a mirror into real life settings, and in this way encouraging learners to deepen their understanding of the target culture (Hişmanoğlu, 2005). Studies conducted on language learners engaging with novels suggest that novels provide more meaningful and valuable discussions than responding to comprehension

questions (Yang, 2001). In integrating novels in language teaching curriculum, Lazar (1993) offered teachers to consider their learners' cultural, linguistic and literary background. In terms of cultural background, she suggested that teachers should consider novels whose culture is not too distinct from the learners, since they may have difficulties in relating and understanding the target culture. Even though learners' linguistic abilities are highly developed in foreign languages, they may not cope with the difficulties of language in the novels. Therefore, teachers should consider choosing motivating and linguistically similar text for their learners. Lastly, language teachers should realize how hand in hand linguistic and literary competences can go, since having mastery in one of them does not mean the learner is capable of the other. Even though learners can understand the words and linguistic structures in a novel, they may lack behind the literary content. For this reason, teachers should consider activities that help students balance these abilities (Lazar, 1993).

Teacher involvement in literature integrated language classrooms are found to be beneficial (Boyd & Maloof, 2000) and their roles as a facilitator are seen quite important for supporting student engagement with their friends and with the text (Kim, 2004). However, because of time limitations in the classroom (Paran, 1998) and difficulty in selecting appropriate literary works for their students (Dawson, 2005), language teachers do not favor using literature in their classes. Although some studies have found that pre-service teachers are mostly lack training on how to integrate literature in language teaching, and develop negative attitudes towards this issue (Paran, 1998; Weist, 2004; Fonder-Solano & Burnett, 2004), some teachers have been found to be eager to merge literature and language teaching without having any training just by depending on the personal intuitions in preparing courses (Minkoff, 2006).

Studies conducted in Turkey mostly revealed that although pre-service and in-service teachers favor the use of literature in teaching English (Arslan, 2001; Arıkan, 2005; Çıraklı & Kılıçkaya, 2011; Kayaoğlu, et. al., 2014), they state some problems for the implementation of these texts. In line with the findings of previous studies (Paran, 1998), time limitations (Tuncer & Kızıldağ, 2014), centralized curriculum and entrance exams (Kayaoğlu, et. al., 2012) have been stated as the main problems these teachers face. These texts, when used in the classroom, have been found to be integrated just for practicing linguistic skills rather than stylistic and literary purposes (Kayaoğlu, et. al., 2012).

Scholars in the field of pre-service teacher education state the importance of studying teacher perceptions and views as they see it as a significant part of preparing teachers (Britzman, 2003). Pre-service teachers experience various challenges in building their personal teaching beliefs when shifting from a student to a teacher (Alsop, 2006). This process may even start

way before the enrollment at a university (Marshall, 1999). The difficulties that can be faced during these processes may even result in attrition due to the intricacies pre-service teachers live through (McCann, Johannessen & Ricca, 2005; Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008). Therefore, considering all its advantages stated in the literature and the significance of shaping teacher views as early as possible, it is important to study pre-service teachers' views on integrating literature in language teaching. Most studies conducted in the field of foreign language teaching have focused on teachers' views on literature as a whole. However, the scarcity of studies investigating teachers' genre-based views stands out.

Reference: Zeybek, G. (2018). Turkish pre-service EFL teachers' views on integrating various literary genres in teaching English. *Language Teaching and Educational Research (LATER)*, 1 (1), 25-41.

1. According to the text, which genre of literature is considered the least used in foreign language classes?

- a) Novels
- b) Plays
- c) Short stories
- d) Poetry

2. What is one advantage of using short stories in language teaching?

- a) They provide opportunities for meaningful discussions.
- b) They offer a mirror into real-life settings.
- c) They foster productive skills in language learners.
- d) They enable learners to practice spoken discourse.

3. What is a potential problem that language learners may face when engaging with literary texts?

- a) Lack of cultural understanding

- b) Limited vocabulary development
- c) Difficulty in understanding the author's feelings
- d) Inability to relate to the target culture

4. What is the main reason some language teachers do not favor using literature in their classes?

- a) Lack of appropriate literary works
- b) Limited classroom time
- c) Negative attitudes towards literature
- d) Insufficient training on integration techniques

5. What is the significance of studying pre-service teachers' views on integrating literature in language teaching?

- a) It helps shape their personal teaching beliefs.
- b) It improves their linguistic competences.
- c) It promotes cultural awareness among teachers.
- d) It encourages the use of stylistic and literary purposes.

Answers:

1. poetry
2. they provide opportunities for meaningful discussions
3. lack of cultural understanding
4. limited classroom time
5. it helps share their personal teaching beliefs.