

The Teaching of English Literature in the EFL class at Tertiary Level in Bangladesh

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Abstract: There has always been a sense of rivalry and at the time of animosity between literary pursuits and the study of language in linguistics today. Literature in English has been taught as an academic subject for almost a century at tertiary level in Bangladesh whereas, the study of language in linguistics as an academic subject has been introduced only a few decades ago. But since then these two branches are recognized to be sites of contestation and taught almost in isolation, without trying to set any kind of relation between them. The traditional study of literature in Bangladesh involves an approach to texts as aesthetically patterned artifacts with critical appreciation of the texts which in turns draws on historical, socio-cultural or biographical information about texts. This teacher centered approach to literature teaching for students is that they rely on teachers or books of literary criticism which serves the instrumental purpose of passing the exams. Such methods of teaching literature would probably be opposed any notion that literature and language study might be integrated. The goal of this study is to illustrate and analyze present perspective of teaching of literature in EFL classroom at tertiary level and construct pedagogy of studying teaching/learning language and literature where both disciplines interact and help to define each other's relevance.

Keyword: Animosity, Contestation, aesthetically, perspective, pedagogy, relevance.

INTRODUCTION

English is the language of the most important nation in the world. It is the language of power and prestige and all who want a share of power today must know that language. But as Carter and Mc Race [1] maintains "using literature as a linguistic resource involves starting from the fact that literature is language in use and can therefore be exploited for language learning purpose". So, of the two types of approaches of teaching literature as product centered and process centered [2], the later involves a classroom treatment of literature which can be methodologically in language in language teaching and could be complementary and integrated part of one another. Thus process centered pedagogy has some implication such as cloze, rewriting, prediction activities, role playing and texts are manipulated in order to activate student purpose such as literary language and inter language or pragmatics and intertextuality, narratology which come from natural awareness of linguistic form. This study will discuss the dichotomy between foreign language and literature instruction, arguing that the objectives of the language curriculum are at odds with those of the literature curriculum, many students are not proficient enough to cope with many of the texts without additional linguistic support and students deserve linguistic support and instruction in literature classes.

It will also present a proposal to bring literature into the basic program of instruction and make it a meaningful component of the learning process. A model will be described how literary texts can be perceived and studied as performances of a language – literature classes. This discussion will focus on the importance of integrating the study of language and literature in the foreign language classroom and will suggest that the strength of the foreign language experience depends on the interconnectedness of literature, culture, and language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brain Parkinson Helen Reid Thomas [3] focuses on the relationship between language and literature in the context of the classroom. They examine both the language of literature as it occurs in a variety of texts from different genres and the language of the classroom as teachers and learners respond in speech and writing to those texts. While giving specific examples from the main literary genres of poetry, short stories, novels and drama. The authors are also concerned with the wider issues that affect all teachers such as assessment, evaluation, planning and working with a syllabus and teacher development. Exercises and suggestions for further work are included for each section. The book is addressed primarily to students of applied linguistics and practicing teachers and is

relevant both of teachers of EFL or ESL and to those who come from a background of literature teaching. This book covers much of my research area but still does not answer all of the research problems. This study will explore the potential learner benefits of early exposure to literature and suggest instructional guidelines for effective literature study at the beginning level and also examines the nature of literature and surveys how current textbooks guide beginning learners to access literary works.

Haque, M. Enamul [4] in " *The use of literature in teaching as a foreign language*", describes the motivating role and function of literature in TESOL/ EFL classes. He points out how selected material can be helpful in developing TESOL learners need and use literature in such a way as to further the learner's mastery in four basic areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. But this article only highlights the 'use' and 'role' and does not clarify how to bridge the gap between the two rivals.

Sharmin S. and N. Kaiser[5] in their presentation " Teaching Language Through contemporary subcontinent Literature, in BELTA 4th International Conference, Dhaka, shows how contemporary sub-continental literature can help students to learn in an ESL/EFL class. According to them, a prose piece or a poem written in a local context will help students more than texts written by native writers and interest and motivation and cultural links will help encourage them to read, speak and use English more readily. This article, too, only focuses on the lexical and grammatical items which is too narrow to encompass a language competence. A discussion of the benefits of and reasons for incorporating literature instruction into beginning and intermediary, as well as advanced foreign language programs, presents suggested pre-reading , reading , questioning, and post-reading activities to help students enjoy and appreciate authentic foreign literature.

Khanam, M. and M. Nesa in 'Literature a potential Instrument in Learning English Language'. Presented in BELTA 4th International Conference 2007, Dhaka, shows how untrained and motivated teaching community and in sufficient facilities do not bring out satisfactory results and argues the use of literature as an effective tool for learning English. But she has not mentioned what sort of syllabus could be appropriate to fill the blanks which this study attempts and proposes better suggestion that will bridge the gap between theory and practice .But this study will discuss recent research in reading comprehension, discourse analysis and literary theory as it bears on the way in which the teaching of literary texts can be integrated into a general approach to the teaching of language as social discourse. It also suggests a new approach to integrating language and literature in foreign language teaching.

One of the challenges in FL teaching is to prepare students to make a smooth transition from their lower division language courses to their upper division courses. The study will propose a multifaceted approach to incorporating literature in the language classroom that aims to encourage the development of critical thinking skills and advance writing skill, grammar acquisition in context, close reading skills, and speaking skills.

Objective of the study

Literature is an authentic material and it can expand language awareness among the learners easily. Literary texts can facilitate the learners to develop their social values and attitudes. Literature is inspiring for the learners. Literature bears sky-scraping position in many societies and nations. That is why; learners may possess a genuine sense of accomplishment at understanding a piece of highly esteemed literature. Moreover, literature is often more fascinating than the manuscripts found in course books.

Traditional way of literature in an English foreign language class makes the students cram many structures, rules, context and that becomes a great impediment for them to learn the standard and real life use of English. During foreign language classes the learners learn the latest theories and techniques using literary texts as language teaching resources. The literature teaching also analyzes the relationship between language and literature. This study investigates to determine which literary texts are appropriate in the foreign language classroom. It also presents alternative ways to present and use literature in order to broad range of involving activities for our students.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The methodology adopted for the present study can be explained well under the following heads:

- Data collection Procedures
- Data analysis Procedures

Data collection procedures

The student's questionnaires were developed and piloted for the present study. These questionnaires were developed on the basis of the ones designed by Zughol and Hussain [6] by curriculum development cell, IIT Kanpur (nest folder -2)

- The extent of the use of English as viewed by students at tertiary level
- Perception of language ability as prescribed by students themselves
- Language needs as prescribed by students
- Utility of prescribed literature text as viewed by students

The questionnaire carries 10 items. The entire questionnaire related to the above points. The above items in questionnaires are not arranged sequentially.

Rather, they are arranged in a broken sequence in order to clarify the possibility of stereotyped bias in response. These questionnaires were distributed among the students of different public university at tertiary level in Bangladesh with a covering letter assuring that the information obtained will be used for the sole purpose of research and confidentiality of the information and source will be strictly observed. A total of forty students from B. A. (Honors) English in different semester from different public universities participated enthusiastically in our research activity and helped us to reach our goals. Three or Four English teacher from different universities also took part in this exploratory study.

Data analysis procedures

The data collected through the survey questionnaires and finally the results of the quiz test given in the end of the classes which has helped us further information to justify of our hypothesis. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches have been applied for the presentation and analysis of the collected data. Following are the charts of the data that are very closely relevant to the present study.

Chart-1 shows the interest of the students for medium of instruction should be English. The question was “Do you think English should be used as the medium of instruction at the tertiary level?” Out of 40 students from different universities have responded in the following chart.

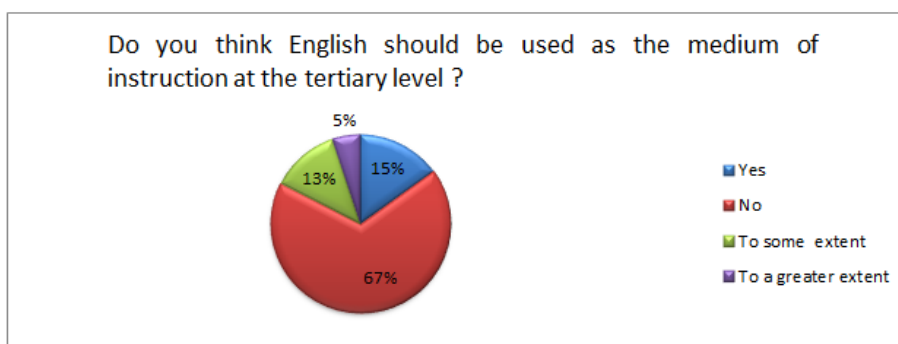


Chart-2

Chart 2 shows the interest of the students should emphasis on particular subjects. The question was “Do you think that the teaching of English at the

tertiary level should be emphasized on – English literature or English language or English grammar?” The students responded in the following chart.

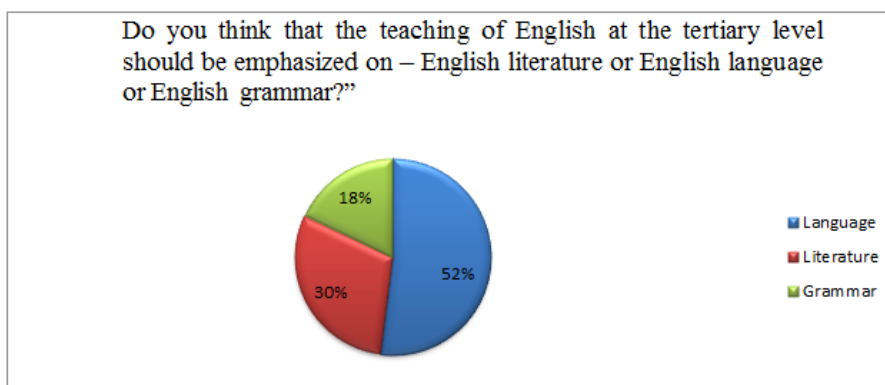


Chart-3

Chart 3 shows the interest of the students’ Textbook carry in particular situation. The question was “Do the Literary text book can carry the situational presentation?”

The responded from the students are given below the chart.

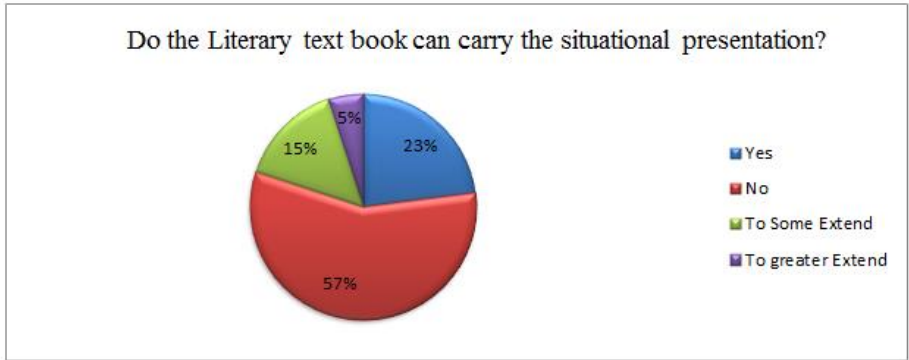


Chart-4

Chart -4 Shows the interest of the students English courses related to their needs and job requirements. The question was “Do the present English

Courses meet up the students’ needs and job requirements? The students responded shown in the following chart.

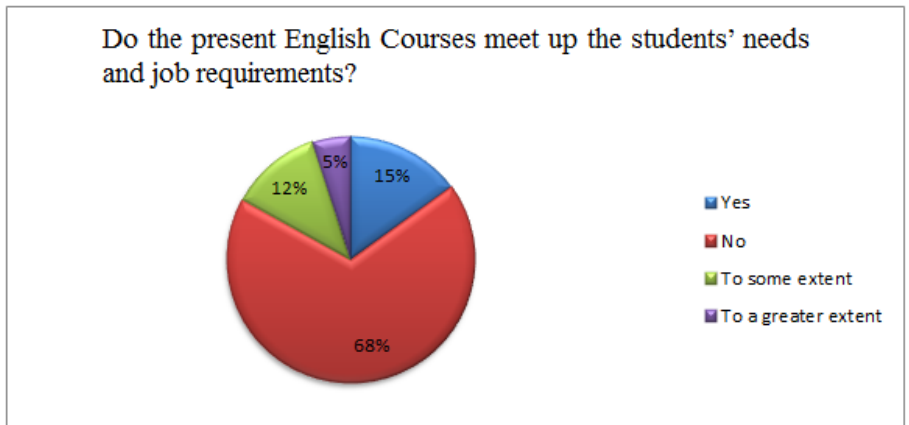


Chart-5

Chart-5 shows the interest of the students’ beneficial role in the foreign language classes. The question was “Is the literature supportive to the learners

in the EFL classes? The students responded are shown in the following chart.

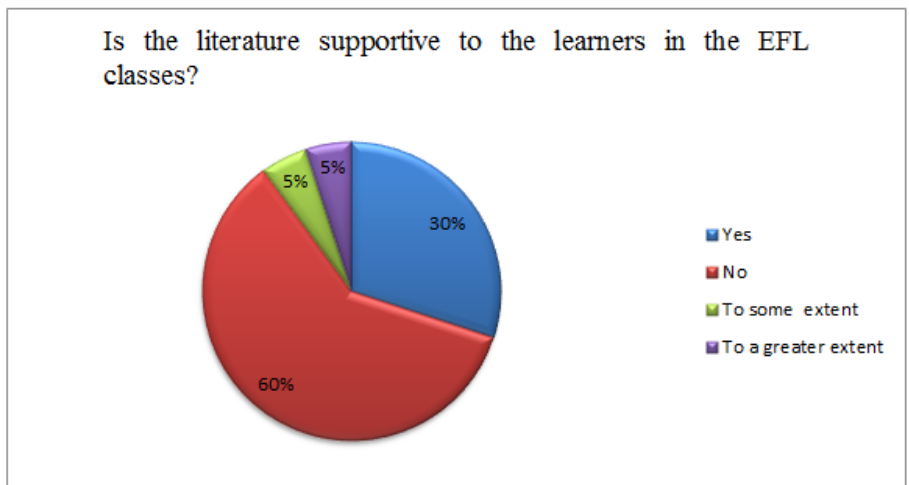


Chart-6

Chart-6 shows interest of the students about our curriculum. The question was “Is the curriculum developed enough for increasing the literary skills or

communication skills of the learners? The students responded are shown in the following chart.

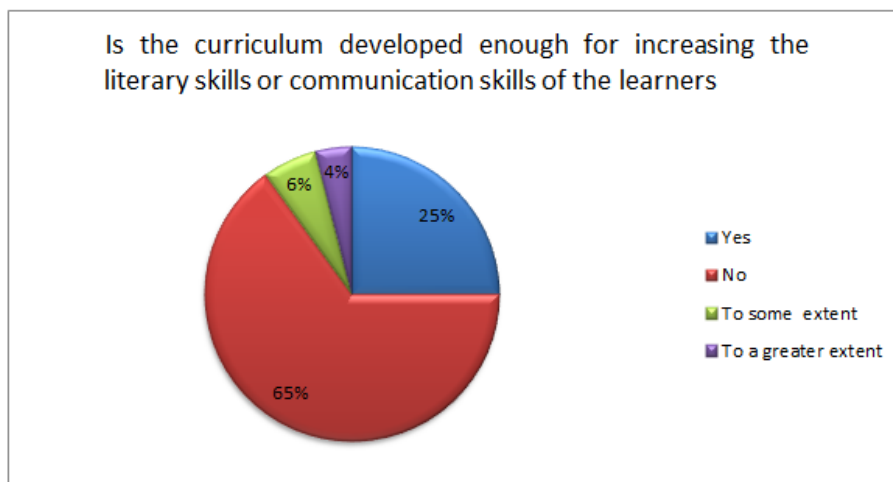


Chart-7

Chart-7 shows the interest of the students about the study of literature for real life situation. The question was “Do you like to study literature for real

life situations? The majority students responded negatively are shown in the following chart.

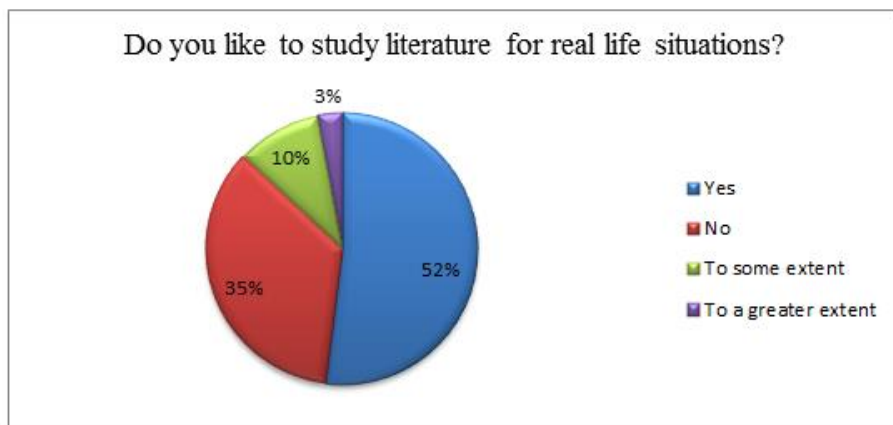


Chart-8

Chart-8 shows the interest of the students' use of literature in critical situation. The question was “Do you use literature in order to present you in a critical

and self- reflective manner? The responded from the students are shown in the following chart.

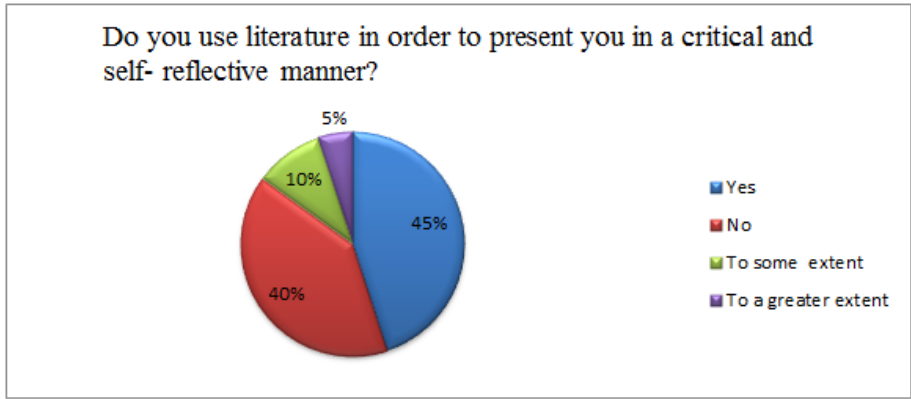


Chart-9

Chart-9 shows the interest of the students about teaching of literature in their classes. The question was “Do you think that if literature is taught

properly in foreign language classes then the learners’ language abilities can be developed? The students responded are given below in the chart.

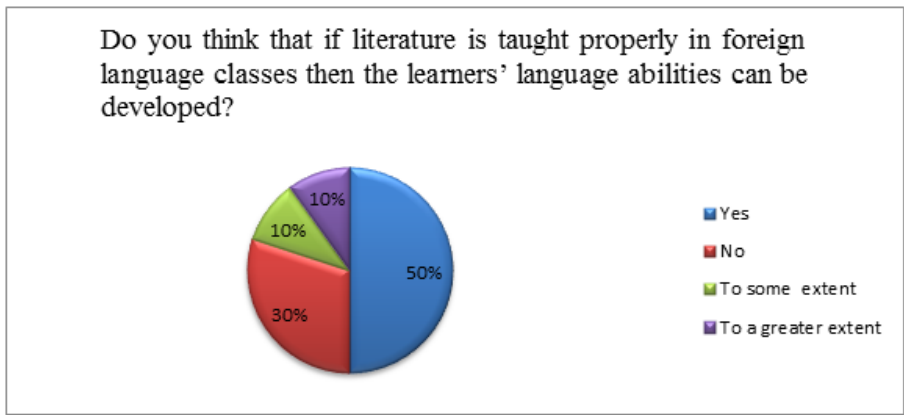


Chart-10

Chart-10 shows the interest of the students about Text book literature. The question was “Are the present literary texts appropriate in the foreign language

classroom? The responded are shown in the following chart.

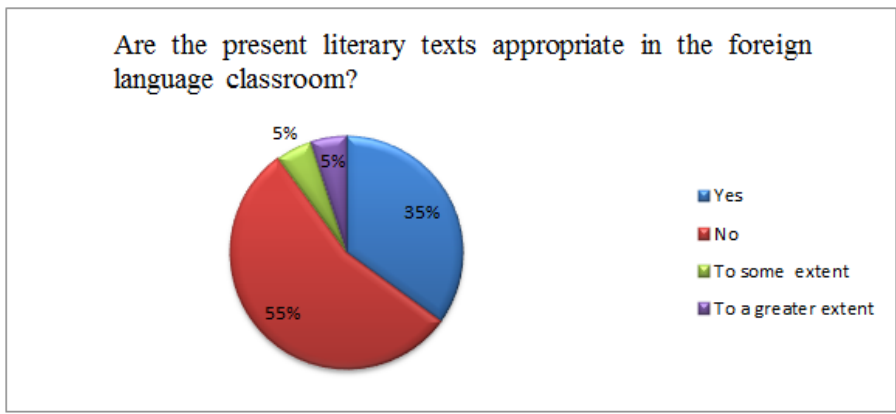


Chart-11

CONCLUSIONS

Teaching literature is one of the critical issues of language teaching and learning. Literature plays an influential role in many language teachers’ lesson. But

there is controversy whether literature should be exercised constantly in the way of teaching learning process. However, teaching literature has various rewards and it might be the part of EFL classroom.

Literature serves as a helpful tool to change students' perceptions about literature and to make them aware of the immense value of literature. Another reason for teaching literature is that the pieces of literature itself are to be considered as authentic examples of language as authenticity is naturally existent in literature. Literature is not primarily produced to teach language.

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