



**Original Article**

## The Survey of the Advantages of Literature Genres in TEFL

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### Abstract

Language teaching has followed lots of ups and downs. The application of literature to language teaching has been under suspicion for many years. This paper via theoretical argument approach and based on library search has tried to show the possible and potential benefits of using literature and literary genres in TEFL. Specifically, it has tried to present the most agreed-upon ideas regarding the application of literary genres to TEFL from students' viewpoints. This reveals a better selection of the most applicable genres in applied linguistics. It highlights the accompanying characteristics of literary genres to be tailored for the implementation in English language teaching courses. Hinging on the survey of a host of articles and books and centralizing on the real practice, observation, and real utilization of literature and literary genres by the researcher in Farhangian University classes, it has endeavored to present the most commonly agreed-upon features and characteristics of literature and its genres to provide curriculum designers, managers, instructors, and even students with hints and guidelines to turn to the use of literature and its genres courageously and warmly. Implicitly, the survey suggests the deployment of literature and literary genres in academic settings and more specifically Farhangian University.

**Keywords:** Advantages, Application, Genres, Literature, TEFL

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### 1. Introduction



In the past, literature was mainly studied for sheer literary practice. Later on, it was deployed for highly delicate and difficult language practices in the process of language translation and practice. Literature served both entertaining and transactional purposes. Literary sentences formed the major challenging exercises of language teaching and learning at that time. Formalists and thereafter pragmatists set these demanding exercises aside and paid attention to other areas of language learning and teaching. With the collapse of the tyranny of methods and the appearance of elective and collective methods and entrance into the post method era, literature again gained attention. This time many more academic features were enumerated for it and proved to be one of the key sources for language learning and teaching. This paper via content and library search as well ideas of the participants as learners have tried to deal with theoretical grounds and backgrounds for language teaching and learning. It has tried to sum up the most agreed-upon elements of language learning and teaching features through which literature can contribute to the field of TEFL. This paper offers hints on the application of poetry, short stories, novels, and drama to teaching and learning languages. Moreover, it mainly takes into account these ideas that “interest, appeal, and relevance are all more important” (Collie & Slater, 2011, p.6). This provides instructors, curriculum developers with insights for inserting literature and literary genres in teaching languages.

The area and scope of the research are somehow novel in approach and coverage. Theoretically, the base of the research lies on the idea of what has been collectively presented by applied linguists. Practically, few real trials of the area have been done by researchers. Some literature genres have received a greater portion of attention than other genres. For example, short story and fiction genres have received major focus and attention in Iran's educational setting than the other genre. As the field is somehow new, in Iran educational settings, many researchers are trying to investigate different aspects of utilization of literature in language teaching and learning. The applicability and efficiency of literary genres to TEFL have gone under scrutiny and search in academic and educational settings. The introduction of the elements of literature to teaching language forms the core of their implications and suggestions. In Iran, in Farhangian University whose primary and sole mission is training teachers for the ministry of education, a rare search has been carried out regarding the applicability of literature in the curriculum of training to-be-teacher-students. Knowing the fact that, the applicability of this powerful academic source and its diverse

genres can lead to better results and practical outputs, not many alluring searches have been carried out in this University. The major practical and theoretical justification can be detected in this great academic setting respectively. The major implications of this research can be centralized upon this as well.

## **2. Literature Review**

Research in literature has followed mostly a library-based procedure for many years. Hence, the majority of the researches done have been based on the analysis and interpretation procedure. Literature has been studied for two major purposes, that is, entertainment or interpretation (Thornley and Roberts, 1984). The study and analysis of literature have been done using different theories and approaches of literary criticism; therefore, the analysis of the works of art in this way has got profound consideration and reappraisal of the already tried techniques and procedures. Meanwhile, Zengin, Et. Al (2019, p. 156) has asserted that “due to the shifting focus to the functional use of language, the use of literature has seen a decline in popularity in language teaching”. Ganesan et al. (2016) highlighted the use of novels to teach ESL to the technical students in Engineering Colleges which is considered as an academic orientation level. However, to show the possible and potential benefits of using literature and literary genres in TEFL, care has been taken to detect many aspects of researches including the novelty in the design and procedure of this research which may lead to a better understanding of literary pieces and may bear better results; such studies would clarify the possibilities and merits of using literature in TEFL. This provides us with hints and visions whose understanding would be out of the question in any other way round; this is, to a large extent, because “the urge of human feeling to express them and to encourage its interest in humanity aspects has forced human to make a literary work” (Kurniawan and Khudlori, 2018, p.117) and has always been the safe source of inspiration and salvation for the better being of human life.

Regarding genres, Widdowson (2007) has defined the literary genre as “a use of language which conforms to certain schematic and textual conventions” (p. 155). In Bhatia’s (1993) words, this term has been introduced as a recognizable communicative opportunity that can be used for different class activities and practices. A good study, for example, has been done on drama techniques which refer to “all those techniques which accompany a dramatic discourse to help a better understanding and better performance of the text”

(Masoumi-Moghaddam, 2018, p.63) Accordingly, Askehave and Swales (2001) analyzed genres found in different professional areas. Muthmainnah et al. (2020) state that “literature can be used as a medium to motivate students in learning English” (p.396). That is why theoretically, many applied linguists and instructors are trying out different aspects of literature and literary genres to literature. Hence, their applicability to TEFL has got to serve the major core of this research. On this line, the following research questions emerged.

1. What are the advantages of using literary genres?
2. What are the most commonly suggested guidelines for the use of literary genres?

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Design and Context of the Study

The design of this research is a content analysis of many searches done on the application of literature and literary genres to teaching English. Hence, the design would be action research in nature. The course at hand was general English weighed 3 credit course in Farhangian University which was held two sessions a week.

#### 3.2. Participants

The real pilot study of this research was carried out questioning and receiving feedback from Ilam Farhangian University students aged 18 to 24, all female, in 2020.

##### *Demographic Background of the Participants*

No. of Students	32 Undergraduate
Gender	Female
Native Language	Persian
Major	English Non-major
University	Farhangian University
Academic Year	2020

#### 3.3. Instruments

The recent books, articles, and searches done on the use of literature and literary genres to TEFL form the core of the materials deployed in this research. The corpus of the study dealt specifically with poetry, short story, drama, and novel which were delicately surveyed and implemented practically.

### **3.4. Data Collection Procedure**

As the subjects were training to become teachers in the future, they were informed of the procedure of the research. While assigned some short stories or pieces of poetry for analysis during the class, they learned about the nature of language learning. They cooperated with the researcher in the process of article collection, appraisal, and provided appropriate feedback on the process of English class and English language learning. It was a new experience they were going under through. Instead of offering the regular academic textbooks, the researcher assigned them some pieces of literature and different types of literary genres on the line of English teaching and learning. They cooperated warmly; provide feedback on the efficiency and applicability of theoretical and practical guideline lists and procedure for the use of literature and literary genres in TEFL. Their active participation and appreciation of the nature of the materials and their impact gave rise to the selection and recognition of the best strategy and procedure for the use of literature in language learning and teaching. Due to the nature of their profession, they welcomed the procedure and honestly were required to share their real understanding of the materials, guidelines, and the quality of English language learning accordingly. The observed and collected data were taken into account for the analysis and judgment of the data.

## **4. Results**

### **4.1. Genre Appraisal**

#### *Poetry*

Poetry has a long history of use and application in the field of language teaching and learning. Among the four major literary genres, some of them turn out to be more useful for implementation in the process of language learning and teaching. “Poetic language aims not only to work out a sensitive purpose but also to stimulate the spirits of its reader” (Misbah, et al., 2020, p.2080). Some of these skills lend themselves to being deployed in the process of class management and administration easier than the others. Researchers started trying out some skills sooner than the others. To the best of my recollection, poetry was one of those which were first deployed in kindergartens for teaching nursery rhymes and some linguistic elements such sound segments, images, and certain words and expressions. Different advantages of poetry have been tried out with different age levels and proficiency

grades. As the research was an action one in nature, when discussing over the question of application of poetry to teaching English at Farhangian University with the students, many interesting ideas emerged. As the major purpose of the study was the detection of the application of literature and literary genres to language teaching and its skills, many interesting feedbacks and points were observed. For example, some found that they would use poetry for other purpose in their future classes. Appraising the students' written and oral comments, regarding the immediate use and advantage of poetry in the process of their general English learning, what they ultimately presented was this idea that they were not of great help in their English learning. Their assertions were, to a large extent, to the point as some of literary genres such as poetry may not be appropriate for deployment for teaching general English. To many researchers, it is obvious that instructors should find the best applicable genres for the intended purpose in the class in the process of teaching and learning English. Llach (2007) has introduced two major functions have been put forward for the use of poetry in teaching which include the way the poet has organized the poem and what can be learned and understood through the use of poetry for teaching and learning purposes. He has investigated teaching language through literature and has focused on *The Waste Land*. Realization of these two types of functions, for certain, would lead to better understanding of the real nature of language, its constituents and its illocutionary meanings. Moreover, poetry ignites emotions, revitalize thoughts, acquaint the learner with the hidden layers of meaning of the words and those aspects which can be seen and taught directly. Clearly, poetry has proved to be the best mode of presentation for teaching and learning different types of figures of thought and figures of speech.

To Çubukçu (2001), poetry creates “a rewarding and enjoyable experience which is accompanied by poetic elements of different types for diverse purposes” (p.1). It enables the learner to feel the nature and real paralinguistic elements. To the participants of this research, although these suggestions sound interesting and alluring academically, due to their current understanding of the nature of language, these advantages come in handy not that much for their language learning.

When introducing poetic expressions and elements like images, setting in time and place, point of view, narrator, metaphor, simile, and many more aesthetic elements, the participants found them demanding on their minds. Some revealed the degree of their familiarity with English poetry and how this genre can help them learn English language.

The investigation of the works done on the nature and applicability of poetry to teaching and learning English gave them a host of hints on the way of academic research is being done in other countries and inspired them to follow these strategies for better learning and teaching in their future jobs. They found the current guideline highly difficult but suggested some of the elements and procedures interesting but their applicability was peripheral. This has been confirmed by Sage (1987) who revealed that “many cultural elements—allusions, vocabulary, idioms” (p.13) were not easily translated into other languages as well. Collie and Slater (1987) academically indicated that poetry results in a “creative expression in the foreign language” (p.226). This aim is achievable via the use of short poems which incorporate great portions of meaning, which reveal historical, ethical, moral, social, personal, and even instructional messages and themes.

As poetry is different from the normal language exchanges, it calls for special taste and interest. This was debated over with the participants as the materials were collected and the procedures were surveyed. In second language learning conditions, for sure, such a portion of poetic knowledge may work well with the learners but from the viewpoint of this research’s participants as foreign language learners, the results would be highly peripheral. If instructors want to gain the utmost impact and effect, they have to modify the role and form of poetry for ease of use in the classroom like what Ramsaran (1983) has suggested being done on poems. He has tried to assign imaginative meanings to words to convey the intended meaning which is only possible via poetic structure.

An already tried poem called *The Waste Land* was introduced to the participants in the research. It had been tailored academically as much as possible for ease of administration in the class. Many questions emerged regarding its uses. It proved to be a good example that can stand as an alluring landmark for the teachers to turn to in their classes or deploy similar poems respectively. The key touchstones in the use of this poem can be the intended features detected by the instructor in the poem which can be also detected in other poems too. This question can be taken into account when using another or other poems for use in the process of language instruction. McKay (2001) regarding the use and application of *The Waste Land* makes some of the key advantages of poetry known whose best implications would be poetry’s great pedagogical opportunities for its rich language and language use as well as it is controversial underlying for and backgrounds.

Alongside the question of poetic semantics, poetic structures and elements are of great academic attention which has attracted many academic researchers. Khan et al. (2018) show the significance of literary texts in English language teaching programs. Cassany (1999) expanded this idea and concluded that it can also pave the way for the deployment of imaginative writing.

Providing the learners with some more background information to develop their understanding of the text, its context, and its accompanying instructional and pedagogical implications, Lazar (1993) came up with this idea that what clarifies the impact of this genre's contribution lies in the "pedagogical effect of the activities carried out". Additionally, many more ways of presenting this information can be detected as a "minilecture, as a reading or listening comprehension or as a research project for students to implement" (p.38).

Many other researchers, too, have illuminated other areas and aspects of the application of literature and poetry genre in other words and expressions whose holistic meaning roughly go together; these ideas can best be detected in the work of Maley (2001) as well.

### *Short story*

They lend themselves to deployment in the class for teaching purposes easier. A closer look at the real implementation of the use of short stories can also be a good initiator of the use of literary genres in TEFL. Many other researchers have tried to present their guidelines for the use of short stories in teaching and learning English. Many guidelines and procedures were presented by Arıoğul (2001) which provide spoon-feeding and to-the-point procedures for language teachers and learners to use short stories directly in the class. The appraisal of the comments and ideas of the participants on these procedures and some other researchers' guidelines showed that the participants in this research most favored the use of short stories for learning general English. General reading abilities, translation knowledge, authentic linguistic expressions, constituents, and real lexical meaning of the words which have been roughly defined by the ministry of higher education as well could best be captured via the use of short stories. This genre, to the participants' best recollection, corresponded well with what they were required to learn in a general English course. All in all, it became clear that short fiction, like all other types of literary genres, pays its share to the flourishing of

cognitive analytical abilities (Sage, 1987). These procedures and guidelines help the teacher and learner out to take refuge in the use of short stories for language learning courageously.

### *Drama*

Alongside other genres of literature, drama, too, has paid its contributions to teaching and learning languages. Using drama enables learners to become familiar with grammar and grammatical structures implied and presented in contexts and also learn about how to use the language functionally and pragmatically. Drama can best make cultural and social elements crystal clear. To put it differently, many researchers assert that language learning should be culture-free but what cannot be avoided is the idea that language is necessarily culture-biased and loaded. For this reason, the context of drama and its stage has proved to be of great potentiality for the illustration and clarification of these cultural and social norms. Students can make the best use of drama in an attempt to exercise their reappraisal of life experiences, think about their idiosyncratic obsessions, and assign meaning to “their extra-linguistic world in a deeper way” (Sarıçoban, 2004, p.15). Similarly like other literary genres, the educational and instructional advantages of drama have been enumerated and presented differently. What (Lenore, 1993) has come up with captures the gist of what other researchers have had in their minds which can be recapitulated as follows: drama activate the imagination and improves creative thinking, it enhances critical thinking skills; it develops authentic language learning, it intensifies appropriate listening skills; it expands comprehension of language skills in a native-like manner.

The introduction of the list of activities to be deployed and the advantages conveyed via drama in teaching and learning languages has got remarkable consideration. Mengü (2002) has tried to highlight authenticity in the process of language learning and teaching and expose the learners to the target culture as the main and focal activities which are achievable via the use of drama.

The application of drama to language teaching, to the best of the researcher and the participants’ understanding, has received second place in attention and academic accomplishment.

What acts as the key element of the deployment of drama is, for certain, its applicability to language teaching. What is most welcomed, from an applied linguistic

viewpoint, is the fact that literature-based dramatic activities are greatly appreciated in the field of applied linguistics. Among the many useful and impressive activities which drama offers, the ones presented here have come up with flying colors from the viewpoint of the researcher and the participants of this research. Regardless of the way drama is deployed in the classrooms, these three main procedures including dramatization, role-playing, and improvisation have proved to be of a wider potential and use.

As for the implementation of these three procedures and activities, dramatization best can involve the learner passionately and effectively in the process of language learning and teaching. Students are encouraged to hinge upon their ideas and roles for staging in the class or their scenarios. Based on the story, they are required to predict what the characters utter and how they would behave. On the stage, other types of literary genres and materials can be welcomed as the building block of what is supposed to be staged. They can turn to different scripts adapted from poetry, short stories, pieces, or themes of novels to be the basis of the stage trends.

Improvisation and role-playing can best be centralized around the characters, plot, and themes of a literary work and many other aspects of literary genres. Improvisation proves to be a more systematic procedure. In role-playing, the activity sound to be more flexible and changeable. However, its use and deployment sound more learner-centered and easier in the case of implementation to convey the intended linguistic features.

### *Novel Genre*

The use of a novel as an aid for teaching reading comprehension has a long history. In the novels, characters mirror what people do in their real lives. Hence, more alluring in the case of content and climax, the novel's prime purpose is to illustrate human lives and their characteristics. After reading and searching with the help of research participants as language learners in this research, the application of novels in second and foreign language learning and teaching following procedures and tips was generally accepted and appraised. They found it useful for better language learning. It paved to pave the way for enriching learners' language understanding and learning, it crystalizes culture and culture elements more vivid, due to its alluring climax, it can be more motivating, it captures the highest level of material authenticity, it involves the learners in real life and socially oriented activities, it encourages students to make use of their creativity and critical thinking capabilities. Last but not the

least, Helton et al. (1998) have highlighted the educational benefits of the novel as imagination stimulators and the genres which best empower the readers to sympathize with the characters.

## 5. Discussion

When trying to detect the advantages of the contribution of literature and literary genres to teaching, one tries to have a review of findings theoretically and achieve the tangible and research-confirmed real practices. This area of interdisciplinary research was one self-explanatory based on the commonly practiced teaching methods at that time. For half a century or so, it was called into questions drastically and was roughly set aside for utilization in language teaching and learning. In the last few decades, it gradually attracted the attention of researchers in applied linguistics. In this research, theoretical and practical findings under the classification of the contribution of literature to TEFL were presented and debated over with the participants who were to-be-teacher-students studying in Ilam Farhangian University. Teaching general English in Farhangian University roughly resembles what is being done in other universities. This is somehow in sharp contrast with the real and special mission this university has got to accomplish. The necessity for the full English language command of to-be-teacher-students illuminates their future teaching career success greatly. To incorporate and implement literature as a rich resource, this paper intended to pave the way for appraising the efficiency of literary genres theoretically and practically. This real appraisal and research which was collaboratively carried out led to this idea that the introduction of the collected ideas and principles were appreciated as promising and enlightening both by the participants and the instructor similarly which add to the encouragement of using literature in the process of teaching and learning foreign languages. Literature and literary materials can be deployed rigorously in the class; this can be strongly recommended for utilization in Farhangian University classes. Short story, poetry, drama, and novel can per se be good sources for language teaching and learning with minute tailoring and adaptation procedure. The introduction of these materials can fulfill the expectation of the readers and instructors as Maley and Duff (2002) have pointed. The findings of researchers in different parts of the world and their appraisal and implementation by Iranian language learners corroborates with what can academically be taken into account as great and practical implications. This research and what were achieved as the results of

the observation, brainstorming, comments, all roughly, confirmed the use and presentation of the most frequently used criteria for their utilization in language learning and teaching courses. The participants, whose future career would be teaching, cooperatively gave rise to the summarization of what was academically acceptable in the field of language learning and teaching.

In the past, literature formed the core of the majority of exercises for language learning and teaching. During modernism and postmodernism or to call it to post methods, it lost its widespread applicability in language learning. In the last few decades, it regained its use in TEFL. Many advances have been detected regarding the use of literature in the field of applied linguistics. The findings of this research had a high correlation with what the other researchers have come up with. It shows that what Kurniawan and Khudlori (2018) have come up with is roughly true. The findings best confirmed Askehave and Swales's (2001) analysis of genres found in different professional areas. What Muthmainnah, et al. (2020) recently investigated in their study; its real manifestation was also clearly noticeable in this research too. The participants best agreed with what Helton et al. (1998) have suggested for the use of novels for learning English and the use of novels instead of regular academic textbooks. This paper introduced the most commonly applicable suggestions and implications for language learning presented by many intellectuals in language teaching and learning circles. These implications have gone as far as the applicability and potentiality of literature and its genres in the field which conveys many suggestions to curriculum designers, managers, instructors, and even students. The presentation of the most agreed-upon elements has given rise to the encouragement of experts to stabilize the role of literature and its genres in TEFL. In the case of Farhangian University, this area of language teaching and learning has become one of the novels and an interesting area to be taken into close consideration in material development and language teaching and learning.

## **6. Conclusion**

The question of the application of literature-based materials and approaches to teaching English language has been a matter of concern in the last few decades or so. With the advent of modern approaches and methods, literature and its feasibility as a resource for teaching English language faded away. During the post-modernism and post-method era, the application of literature in TEFL was reconsidered for possible incorporation in the

curriculum and the language classes. In this research, the ideas and the guidelines presented by many researchers were appraised and practically deployed through an action research approach in Farhangian University English classes. Theoretical and practical discussions during the classes and with the selected participants revealed significant results regarding the commonly agreed procedures and guidelines. The rigorous and impressive impact of the procedures and guidelines which were deployed in the classes and from the viewpoint of the participants as language learners proved to be highly promising for further utilization and application; this enables the researcher to put forward some suggestions and tips for the better class management and language learning and language teaching in academic centers and more specifically Farhangian University. Due to the nature of the mission of this university and the future career of its students, it becomes crucial to give new approaches a try for better enhancement and development of critical thinking activities and task-based tips and approaches in English classes. Through the deployment of these resources, capturing PCK objectives for training students would sound highly easy and accessible. Hence, the deployment of literary materials and literature-based teaching approaches is strongly recommended to material developers, curriculum designers, managers, English language instructors, and Farhangian University students.

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