



Attitudes of Language Teachers towards Using Literature in Language Classrooms

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Abstract – This study aims to identify the attitudes of language teachers towards using literature in their classrooms. With this aim, an attitude scale consisting of 15 items was designed and applied in the west coast of Turkey. 30 teachers participated in this study. 22 of them are female and 8 of them are male. The collected data were analyzed through SPSS program and with the aim of analyzing participants' general attitudes towards teaching literature in the classrooms, One Way Sample T-Test was exploited. Related to this, mean value of each question was run by Descriptive Statistics-Overall Means. Subsequently, the effects of the participants' teaching experience and gender on their attitudes towards using literature were examined by Independent Samples T-Tests. According to the results, those teachers have positive attitudes towards using literature. Also, there is not a statistically significant difference in teachers' attitudes towards using literature in terms of their gender and teaching experience. Finally, the study shows that teachers like using short stories, poems and plays in their classrooms. As for the methodological implications, to make investigation more deeply and findings more precise, the number of questions might be increased. Moreover, the questionnaire might be applied to more teachers, so the validity of the research would have been increased.

Keywords – Literature, Using Literature, Attitudes of Teachers, EFL Classes, Foreign Language

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper reports the findings of a study about the attitudes of language teachers towards using literature in language classrooms. The participants are the teachers working as an English language teacher in high schools in the west coast of Turkey. In the first place, the background of the study is presented in terms of what the literature is, teaching literature in ESL or EFL classrooms and teacher's attitudes towards using literature. It is followed by the purpose and significance of the study. Subsequently, the process of the methodology is to be indicated with the procedures for data collection and data analysis. Finally, findings and conclusion will be showed.

A. What is Literature?

The term "literature" has attracted attention of many authors, critics and linguists and made them puzzled in terms of what it is. Their studies mainly were concerned with identification and explanation of literature. All of them have defined it in different ways. It is defined as "stories, poems, and plays, especially those that are considered to have value as art and not just entertainment" in the dictionary of [7]. Reference [6] states that literature shows writer's creativity and includes poetry, drama, novels, fiction and nonfiction stories as a spoken or written material and adds that literature introduces us a different language or

people from different culture and tradition. It could be stated that literature introduces us a different understanding and it represents culture and tradition of where it is produced.

B. Teaching Literature in ESL or EFL Classrooms and Attitudes of Teachers

Reference [2] states that using literature in ESL classrooms is viewed as unnecessary because of the current focus in ESL on meeting the particular academic and occupational needs of the students. However, there is a rationale for including literature in the curriculum. Reference [4] reports the reasons why literature is used in the EFL classrooms. The first reason is its authenticity. Therefore, students who have a chance to expose the unmodified language can use it outside the classroom easily. Another reason is that literature provides interaction. Then, literature creates language awareness, as well. Next, literature helps to become the whole person. Finally, literature is motivating. Reference [8] maintains that literature mobilizes all our faculties of knowledge at once: not just our ability to analyse the outer world but our introspection and intuition, as well. We can understand what is going on in the hearts of others because we know what stirs our own hearts, and what could stir them.

According to [9], there are many reasons why teachers don't feel comfortable with literature in the language classroom. They feel in the recovery stage themselves, with painful memories of literature classes as a curriculum subject at school. Therefore, it might be that they don't read books themselves, gain no pleasure from them, and don't see why they should take the burden into class. Besides, they might perceive a wide gulf between the teaching of a language and the study of the literature of that language. They perceive themselves as not as expert in literature but only in language. Reference [2] states that the teachers who bring narrative and poetry into the classroom often say that it is hard for students to understand the language of the texts because of lack of students' cultural and literacy background. Therefore, they lose their enthusiasm which drives them to want to share with their students. Reference [8] also notes that the biggest cause of excluding using literature from the ESL or ELF

classrooms is that there is not much time in the school syllabus for such studies because teachers have to cover every page in the course book and they do not want to bring extra work to the classrooms.

Reference [9] maintains that language teachers have misunderstood what literature in the language classroom can be. The very key point what the literature can be a flexible tool for any language teacher, it requires no specialist training, it can be used to enhance, supplement and complement the curriculum, it engages the class in aspects of critical thinking that text books rarely do and open minds onto the world and it can assist with specific language learning and it is an ideal tool for revision purposes.

II. MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study aims to investigate the attitudes of language teachers towards using literature in language classrooms and to find out what kind of literary texts (stories, poems or plays) are used in the language classrooms. Besides, it aims to examine whether gender and teaching experience affect attitudes towards using literary texts. Within this scope, following research questions will be answered.

R.Q.1: What are the attitudes of language teachers towards using literature in classrooms?

R.Q.2: Is there a significant difference between male and female teachers' ideas on using literature in EFL classrooms?

R.Q.3: Does teaching experience affect the attitudes of teachers towards using literature in EFL classrooms?

R.Q.4: Do language teachers use different kinds of literary texts?

A. Setting and Participants

The study was conducted with high school teachers in the west coast of Turkey. 30 EFL teachers participated in this study. 22 teachers out of 30 are female and 8 teachers are male. Their teaching experience varies between 1-10. Therefore, they are called novice teachers. The reason why high school teachers were selected for this study was their opportunity to use literary texts because they are working with young adults in intermediate level of English not with primary school learners in elementary level of English.

B. Instruments

The questionnaire administered in the study to gather data was Attitudes towards Teaching Literature in Language Classrooms Questionnaire. It consists of 2 sections. First section is the attitude scale which is in the form of 5 point Likert scale, ranging from ‘Strongly Agree’ to ‘Strongly Disagree’ and they are coded as (Strongly Agree=5, Agree=4, Neutral=3, Disagree=2, Strongly Disagree=1). The questions were original as they were prepared by the researcher. Only the care-check item (do not respond to this question) was adapted from Motivation-Attitude Questionnaire [5]. Second section includes general information questions in the form of category questions in terms of teachers’ gender and teaching experience. Similarly, questions in this part were written by the researcher.

C. Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

In the first place, the researcher introduced the questionnaire to the teachers. She informed them about the questionnaire. She also asked them to fill in the questionnaire sincerely as it was not related to an evaluation of their classes or schools. Afterwards, the questionnaire was administered to the teachers and they filled in it within 15 minutes. At first, the questionnaires were examined to be eliminated in terms of the 9th ‘care-check question’ - Please do not cross for this question- to make the results of the research reliable. But there were not any questionnaires to be eliminated. Therefore, 30 questionnaires could be analysed and each participant’s answers were fed into a computer through SPSS. Afterwards, the data were analysed by using an analysis of Descriptive Procedures. With the aim of analysing participants’ general attitudes towards teaching literature in the classrooms, One Way Sample T-Test was exploited. Related to this, mean value of each question was run by Descriptive Statistics-Overall Means. Subsequently, the effects of the participants’ teaching experience and gender on their attitudes towards using literature were examined by Independent Samples T-Tests.

III. RESULTS

The purpose of undertaking this study was to examine the attitudes of high school teachers towards using literature in their classes.

RQ1: What are the attitudes of language teachers towards using literature in classrooms?

The means for the attitudes of language teachers working in high schools towards using literature calculated in SPSS are shown in Table 1 below. As can be seen in the table, language teachers have positive attitudes towards using literature with a mean value of 4.03.

Table 1. One-way t-test: Overall mean values of attitudes of all teachers

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Total	30	4.03	0.35

While the teachers’ answers were fed into a computer through SPSS, the negative items (4,7,8 and 10) reversed. However, while examining the mean value of each question, these questions were re-reversed. Consequently, generally the mean values of the questions between 4.20 and 3.80, which means that teachers had positive attitudes towards using literary texts when the mean value of each question in the attitudes’ scale was examined, However, standard deviation is between 0.69 and 0,89, which means the group is homogeneous.

According to Table 2, Q13 has the highest mean value of 4.20. Therefore, it can be said that language teachers like using short stories in their classrooms as a part of target literature.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of all items

No	Items	N	Mean	Std.Dev.
Q1	While teaching foreign language, teaching literature is very important.	30	4.00	0.83
Q2	It will be motivating for the learners to teach literature while learning a language.	30	4.03	0.85

Q3	I think that teaching literature is necessary in language classrooms.	30	4.17	0.74
Q4	I believe that teaching language and literature cannot be separated.	30	1.13	0.77
Q5	I believe that there is enough time to work on the literature text in classrooms.	30	3.90	0.75
Q6	I believe that using literature fits with my syllabus.	30	3.97	0.89
Q7	I think that learners are not able to deal with the literature tasks because of lack of their cultural and literary background.	30	1.00	0.69
Q8	I do not feel comfortable while using literature in my classrooms.	30	1.20	0.71
Q10	I believe that my learners do not need to learn literature.	30	0.90	0.84
Q11	I think that the level of language in the text is too difficult for my learners.	30	3.80	0.76
Q12	I believe using literature texts in the classroom could be relevant to the learners.	30	3.97	0.66
Q13	I like using short stories in my	30	4.20	0.71

	language classrooms.			
Q14	I like using poems in my language classrooms.	30	4.10	0.71
Q15	I like using plays in my language classrooms.	30	4.10	0.71
Valid N (Listwise)		30		

RQ2: Is there a significant difference between male and female teachers' ideas on using literature in EFL classrooms?

Table 3 shows that gender did not have a statistically significant difference ($t(26)=0.58$, $p=.56$). It was assumed that female teachers would have a tendency to use literacy texts more than male teachers. However, the results show that male and female teachers have roughly the same attitudes.

Table 3. Differences in mean values between gender

Gender	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	df	Sig.
male	4.09	0.31	0.58	26	0.56
female	4.00	0.39			

RQ3: Does teaching experience affect the attitudes of teachers towards using literature in EFL classrooms?

As it is illustrated in Table 4, having taught more than 5 years does not affect teachers' attitudes towards using literature in their language classrooms. The mean value of the results collected from 19 teachers having 0-5 years teaching experience is 4.06 while the results of others (10 teachers having 6-10 teaching experience) have 3.98. It can be said that teaching experience does not affect the attitudes of teachers' towards using literature ($t(27)=0.57$, $p=.57$).

Table 4. Differences in mean values between teaching experience

Teaching experience	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	df	Sig
0-5	4.06	0.35	0.57	27	0.57
6-10	3.98	0.38			

RQ4: Do language teachers use different kinds of literary texts?

To investigate teachers' attitudes towards what kind of literary texts they have a tendency to use, Q13, Q14 and Q15 were prepared for the questionnaire. As Table 5 shows, there are not great differences in terms of literary texts. Mean values of the questions mentioned above are: Q13 is 4.20, Q14 is 4.10 and Q15 is 4.10.

Table 5. Differences in mean values between the literature types used by teachers

		N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Q13	I like using short stories in my language classrooms.	30	4.20	0.71
Q14	I like using poems in my language classrooms.	30	4.10	0.71
Q15	I like using plays in my language classrooms.	30	4.10	0.71

IV. CONCLUSION

The findings of the study demonstrate that teachers have positive attitudes towards using literature in EFL classrooms. There is not a statistically significant difference in teachers' attitudes towards teaching literature in language classrooms in terms of their gender and teaching experience.

As the participants have positive attitudes towards using literature, they can integrate literary texts into the course. And they can also provide students with different materials and events in order to teach literature of target language. Another

advantage is presented in the study of [1] as in the following "literary texts enrich vocabulary, grammar and reading, and they also help to raise cultural awareness and develop intercultural sensitivity against the other cultures" (p.1191). However, using literature will not be easy as stated by [3], "learners have a growing number of teachers who cannot serve as role models of readers and role models of enjoying literature, thus contributing to this downward trend" (p.36). Therefore, both pre-service and in-service teachers should be trained how to use literary texts in their EFL classes.

As for the methodological implications, to make investigation more deeply and findings more precise, the number of questions might be increased. Moreover, the questionnaire might be applied to more teachers, so the validity of the research would have been increased.

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