

## **The Role of Applied Literature in English as a Foreign Language Pedagogy: Theoretical Assumptions, Applications, and Perceptions**

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**Abstract:** The historic division between literature and language which Short (1996) calls a 'border dispute over territory', has paved the way for teaching of language and literature as two 'disconnected pedagogical practices'. The impact of this superficial dichotomy is strongly felt that some sort of intervention is required. One of the strategies of dealing with this national syndrome could be integrating imaginative literature into the EFL curriculum. Given this as a backdrop, this study was designed to determine primarily the attitude of AAU undergraduate English majors, and English teachers towards the role of literature in the context of teaching EFL and the pedagogical framework thereof. Forty-five undergraduate English majors and twenty randomly selected instructors drawn from different divisions were involved in the study by way of responding to the questionnaire designed for this purpose. The analysis of the raw data revealed a strong and positive correlation between the views of students and those of teachers regarding all the variables in the questionnaires ranging from the demystification of literature to its exploitability.

**Keywords:** *EFL pedagogy, applied literature, assumptions and perceptions, triple models, materials selection, testing strategy*

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### **The Role of English: Prospect and Retrospect**

English, which has become an international medium of communication as a legacy of British colonialism, is said to be 'a window on the world' if not the chosen tongue (Moore, 1969). Consequently, it has been vigorously pursued across the national educational systems of several countries for practical reasons.

Among other things, English is the store house of a long tradition of literature which provides a resource material for creative utilization of the multinational experience. In a globalised world, English dominates international media, creative arts, the cinema industry, higher education, science and technology, international relations and business communication across the board (Gerard, 1986). All the more, it is considered not only as a *lingua franca* but also as a paradoxically neutral language in multilingual societies like India, Singapore, Nigeria, Kenya Ghana, the Republic of South Africa, Uganda and a host of other former British colonies.

In our context, English replaced French as the official second language of Ethiopia and became the medium of secondary and tertiary education as well as the diplomatic sphere and much of the business sector in the aftermath of WWII (Zarandona, 2009, p.37). It has ever since been vigorously pursued across the Ethiopian schools, colleges and universities as a subject in its own right and 'will continue to be indispensable for the modern development of Ethiopia' (Stoddert, 1986, p.1). However, the English language command of our college students does not measure up to the expectations of our stakeholders for a number of objective and subjective factors. They can hardly express themselves with relative accuracy and fluency. Especially, when it comes to academic English, their command of critical reading writing strategies and mechanical skills such as concord, word power, capitalisation and spelling and punctuation conventions is not promising either.

In fact, many academics resent that English has become the medium of obstruction rather than the medium of instruction across our schools, colleges and universities (Stoddart, 1986) since the defunct February Revolution of 1974 presumably ushering in some kind of generational gap. This academic syndrome is, among other things, attributed to the gaps and lapses in the syllabus which neglected literature in its curriculum. This is observable from the contents of course books like (*Freshman English for Colleges* (1990), *College English* (1996) and *Writing for Academic Purposes* (1991) all of which are laden with non-literary reading passages devoid of motivational value. The concern over this kind of syllabus design and production of teaching materials was voiced by some writers like Melakneh (1994).

This national educational crisis which has become a topical agenda of stakeholders is attributed to a range of objective and subjective factors like inequitable resource allocation, the linguistic background of learners, the incompetence and the moral dissolution of instructors, irrelevance of syllabus design and materials selection, the inadequacy of the pedagogical framework itself and the instability of the national curriculum which has been subject to constant revision and experimentation along with government changeovers and their top down policies.

Even worse, much ado about 'Communicative English' at the expense of internalising basic grammar and usage has resulted in the emergence of gibberish English which has rather accentuated the endemic problem. At any rate, the gravity of this problem has reached unprecedented proportions across the Ethiopian school system that the English language proficiency of our students is sliding into a downward spiral by the year. Certain extremists, perhaps out of frustration or sense of nationalism, have even proposed solutions like decolonizing the mind which implies the abolition of the English departments and empowerment of indigenous languages (Ngugi, 1972; 1986) as the medium of instruction across secondary schools and colleges.

However, this kind of racist abrogation appears to be a futile attempt in a globalized world where almost every international communication in every sphere of socio-economic activity can hardly be undertaken without English. In fact, some former British colonies have adopted the strategy of appropriation, thereby, forging new varieties of English involving editorial intrusions as opposed to the Anglo-American standard or Received Standard English (Achebe, 1989). This trend seems to have alleviated the burden of third world teachers, students and writers by liberating them from the demands of RS-English though it remains to be an unsustainable solution for such an endemic problem.

### **Objectives and Methods of the Study**

According to Eagleton (1996), the concept of literature covers the entire gamut of valuable writing on history, poetry, philosophy, essays and letters etc. Operationally, however, imaginative literature is conceived as the whole range of creative writing (poetry, plays and prose fiction), nonfictional literary genres like autobiographical, biographical and historical novels/plays and subgenres such as folk poetry, legend, mythology and proverbial expressions and folk tales.

The role of literature in the EFL pedagogy has been the subject of debate between the adherents of pure EFL and applied linguistics. Consequently, two diametrically opposed viewpoints on the role of literature in the EFL curriculum have emerged.

Some of the reservations are reasonably due to the learners' inability to appreciate literary materials on account of their linguistic background. The constructivist view, on the other hand, maintains that literature could be exploited as a resource material in the language classroom against many odds.

Given the gravity of this academic syndrome pervasive in the English language usage across the Ethiopian education systems, this study

was designed to determine the attitude of randomly selected lecturers and undergraduate English majors towards the integrated approach of teaching EFL and the impact of pedagogical practices such as principles of materials selection, teaching methods, designing pre-reading and post-reading tasks, lesson planning, assessment and reading strategies, development of receptive and productive skills. By extension, it is intended to provoke language teachers, curriculum designers and policy-makers to revisit our educational training policy and pedagogical practice in force.

Accordingly, the study was designed to address the following research issues:

- Why, what and how literature should be taught
- Students' perception of literature and language pedagogy
- Teachers' perception of literature and language pedagogy
- The correlation, if there is any, between students' and teachers' views or convictions
- The kind of pedagogical framework students favour

The major instruments of data collection were the questionnaires designed for teachers and students involving a comparative analysis. More or less similar sets of intriguing questionnaires intended to determine the attitudes of lecturers and students toward the role of literature in the EFL classroom were designed, distributed, collected, classified and analysed.

The questionnaires focused on items like the nature of literature in the language curriculum, materials selection, their favourable literary genre, types of post-reading activities, testing strategies, the classroom practice, and the breakdown of lesson plans, the nature of literary materials and the impact of literature beyond the classroom. For this study, randomly selected university lecturers/professors, Summer-in-Service trainee teachers, undergraduate English majors across the

Continuing and Distance Education and the regular programmes were considered.

Most of the participants responded to the questionnaires as honestly as possible without any psychological embarrassment. The responses to each questionnaire were classified, analysed and compared to each other to determine their correlation and/ or variance. The questionnaire as an instrument of data gathering was employed to solicit the students' and teachers' views without psychological embarrassment as opposed to the interview paradigm which may not allow them to speak their mind. Other tools like experimental approach were not employed due to time constraint.

### **An Overview of Literature in the EFL Curriculum**

In retrospect, the best language departments on earth were pervaded with literature courses though they had to defend and re-defend their position. Some of the rationales include universality of appeal, cross-cultural awareness, motivational value, suggestiveness, ambiguity, variety and authenticity of the material. Thus, second language acquisition or linguistic competence based on authentic materials is more stimulating than can be the case with non-literary texts. It can thus provide the learners with a jump-off point for discussion, representations of authentic styles of writing, vocabulary expansion, and cultivation of the critical faculty.

Since 1980s, literature has undergone an extensive revival in the language curriculum. Its re-introduction to the language syllabus has provoked a series of articles in professional journals, books, conferences and curricular reviews' (Collie and Slater, 1987; Carter and Long 1991; Widdowson 1975; Carter 1989; Lazar, 1993)<sup>1</sup>. The justification for teaching literature in the EFL classes is primarily

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<sup>1</sup> The number of authorities who advocate the integrated approach of EFL teaching is inexhaustible for time and space.

premised on three approaches - the cultural, the language and the personal growth models. In this regard, Tomlinson (1985, p.9), for instance, recaptures the advantages of integrating language teaching with literature as follows:

Poems, stories, and extracts from plays and autobiographies, can involve students as individual human beings who can gain rich exposure to authentic English and opportunities to develop communication skills as a result of motivated interaction with texts and with their fellow classmates.

Many scholars like (Collie and Slater, 1987), also reiterate the benefits of employing literary materials as the bases of imaginative and interactive discussion. For instance, they stress the value of dramatic dialogues and role-play activities in developing not only the learner's oral proficiency and imaginative sensibility but also group-interaction and the resultant validation of each others' opinions. It then follows that exposure to literary texts does compensate for deficiencies of competencies like structure and usage, vocabulary expansion, syntactic and semantic complexities and figurative language as English is found at its idiomatic best in literature (Carter, 1991).

Literary texts are also representational rather than referential (McRae, 1994). Referential language communicates at one level and tends to be informational. The representational language of literary texts involves the learners and engages their emotions, as well as their interpretive skills. In this regard, Carter and Long (1991, p.101) suggest that the integration of language and literature can do "as much for the language development of the student as for the development of capacities for literary understanding and appreciation."

### *Principles of Materials Selection*

There has been a persistent theorisation of materials selection which considerably resonates with literature pedagogy and its interface with

the language classroom. According to (Carter,1989), much of the confusion and controversy surrounding the teaching of literature in a non-native classroom arises from the failure to distinguish between the study of literature as an integral part of the English language syllabus, and the use of literary texts as resource materials for language learning (Carter,1989, p. 12). John McRae (1994) distinguishes between **L**iterature (with a capital **L** - the classical texts like Shakespeare, Swift, Bronte and Dickens - and **l**iterature (with a small **l**), which refers to popular fiction, fables and lyric songs which are memorable and capable of capturing the interest of learners. A case in point is the application of promotional advertisements for commodities like films as in:

Children grow up

Grownups grow older

For memorable pictures, Orow films!!

which could be used for oral practice or recitation.

The literary materials used in EFL classrooms today are no longer restricted to canonical texts drawn from the literary heritage of certain Metropolitan countries like the UK and the USA, but includes the work of writers from a diverse range of Anglophone African and Asian countries and cultures using various forms of English. In this respect, the conceptual frameworks of literature and literary language are bound to be either *ontological* -establishing timelessness of literature or literary language or *functional*-establishing specific and variable circumstances within which texts are designated as literature.

These definitions either embrace or resist the concept of canonical or classic texts. In fact, the selection of canonical texts could be dictated by national examination boards, syllabus designers or teachers who



monitor the national educational and training policy of a given country. In another context of teaching and learning language, literature could be flexibly based on the historical, cultural and social circumstances against which a literary text is produced thus marking a justifiable deviation or deference from the canonical paradigm.

The two developments out of this trend seem to be the introduction of different types of texts to native and non-native classrooms and other creative materials like billboards, slogans advertisements( Bassnett and Grundy ,1993,p.2), news reports, magazine articles, ,web narratives, internet discourse, many multi-modal texts to which we have become accustomed (Cook, 1994;Carter, 2004).After all, these materials are characterised by literary techniques like assonance, parallelism, alliteration , rhythm onomatopoeia and rhetorical questions which embody aesthetic beauty.

In spite of the gradual replacement of canonical texts by more pragmatic concerns, and contextualised theories of language and culture, issues regarding materials selection, syllabus design and curriculum development have essentially remained intact, especially, in the context of English as an international medium of communication. The term 'material' in this context is used synonymously with discourse and text-words which lack semantic precision in the history of linguistic analysis and literary criticism (Wales, 1989, pp. 29-39). Operationally, the word materials in this article is used in the sense of literary resources – canonical or popular - consisting of extracts, dramatic dialogues, short stories, narrative poetry, plays and feature articles, full-fledged novels and advertisements singled out for their aesthetic beauty.

For instance, the following anonymous limerick could be employed to reactivate the learners 'potential for comprehension and appreciation of narrative poetry:

There was a young lady of Niger  
Who smiled as she rode on a tiger  
They returned from the ride  
With the lady inside  
And the smile on the face of the tiger!

This could be followed by a post-reading activity like:

- What does the personal pronoun **they** refer to?
- What does the shifting ride imply?
- What is the central theme of this narrative?
- What kind of atmosphere does it evoke?
- Re-write this narrative in prose.

The checklist proposed by Lazar (1993, p.52) provides two major principles of materials selection: the text-based and learner-based parameters. Under the learner-based criteria, chronological age, intellectual maturity, interest/hobbies, cultural background, linguistic proficiency and the literary background of the student should be taken into consideration.

The text-based approach should also address availability, accessibility, length (abridged or authentic), exploitability and cultural conformity and conformity to the syllabus. Exploitability has to do with the potential advantage of the materials for the construction of multi-dimensional tests and student-centred tasks on grammar and usage, word-building, comprehension and interactive discussion.

Some of the challenges against using literature in the classroom include the linguistic background of the learners and the linguistic complexity and the demanding nature of literature. Duff and Maley (2007) advise that teachers can cope with many of the challenges that literary texts pose if they apply the principles of materials selection and update their pedagogical framework.

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*The Triple Models of Literature Pedagogy*

Although it varies with the national objectives of a given curriculum, literature pedagogy as a means to an end rests on established models which are designed to foster the development of the learners' cognitive, affective and communicative skills. These are the cultural model, the language model and the personal growth model.

*The Cultural/Cognitive Model*

Firstly, the cultural model is related to a teacher-cantered pedagogic mode of delivery which focuses on the text as a cultural product. This orientation emphasizes the didactic-moralistic value of literature in encapsulating the cross-cultural wisdom-the best human ideal that has ever been taught, felt and cherished by celebrities and pioneers.

This model also enables learners to grasp a range of thematic universals, and thereby, creating cross-cultural awareness, and sense of literary appreciation. The cultural model thus examines the historical, socio-economic and political background of a text under consideration for a thorough understanding and appreciation. This has been the case with the exposure of learners to classical drama, Shakespearean tragedy, the Victorian novel, colonial and post-colonial African literature and Romantic poetry over the years.

Thus, the course objectives of teaching such canonical literary genres are essentially didactic in intent since the emphasis is laid on the catastrophic effect of pride (as in Greek tragedy) and credulousness as in *Othello*, and ambitiousness as in *Macbeth*. Victorian novels like Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* are political satires which expose social and behavioural wrongs like the vice of the British nobility and humanity in general. In the African context, the study of colonial and post-colonial African writers who are preoccupied with the triple burdens of colonialism and disillusionment with the post-colonial scenario is intent upon the re-education of Africans. Accordingly, the course objective

appears to be skewed towards thematic analysis rather than formal experimentation.

### *The Language/ Communicative Model*

Secondly, the language model, which is alternatively known as the communicative model, is associated with language based-approaches intended to promote the development of macro and micro language skills. It involves not only building word- power and grammar and usage but also the subtle and creative uses of language ranging from idiomatic expressions to rhetorical figures.

All the more, the main impulse of language-centred literature pedagogy is to develop critical reading skills and enhance comprehension so that learners would come to grips with meaning and general awareness of the English language which is characterized by irregularities. This covers the whole range of variable spelling, number and gender, comparison and pronunciation conventions. The more students read, the deeper their critical faculty and insight into the world, and the better their exposure. Skills like analytical reading, inference and prediction of meaning; critical appreciation and word-building are cultivated through a skilful guidance and an everlasting motivation for sustainable reading and writing habit.

One of the strategies by which this goal could be achieved in the EFL classroom is the application of the stylistic approach to teaching language and literature. Regarding the significance of language-based approach to the demystification of literature in the non-native undergraduate language classes, Carter (1985, p.9) maintains that stylistics is an approach to texts which allow ideas, intuitions, and initial interpretations to be explored by a linguistically principled analysis of the functions of grammar, lexis, phonology, and discourse in the creation of meaning.

The pedagogic value of stylistics in the teaching of representational language and the textual function of such language in the native and non-native contexts has resided in an explication of the linguistic organization of a text and the demystification of literature (Short, 1995). Similarly, Jakobson (in Brumfit and Carter, 1997, p.5) reasserts that a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to linguistic problems and unversant with linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms.

By implication, language and literature are complementary modes of communication characterised by organic unity.

Stylistic analysis begins with intuition and applies linguistic techniques to arrive at a better understanding and appreciation of literary texts. It involves an explication of repetition, parallelism and deviation which lead up to foregrounding. The following text, for example could be employed to facilitate reading comprehension by moving from structural analysis to semantic interpretation.

### **Where the Mind is Without Fear!**

By Rabindranath Tagore (India)

- 1) Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
- 2) Where knowledge is free
- 3) Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls
- 4) Where words come out from the depths of truth.
- 5) Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sands of dead habit
- 6) Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever widening thought and action.
- 7) Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

**Task: Interactive discussion**

1. Analyse the structure of each sentence.
2. What is the word common to all lines?
3. What does it denote and connote?
4. What does the capitalization of **F** on the word Father stand for?
5. Is this poem prayer, dream or hope by classification?
6. Mention and describe some examples of metaphorical expressions.
7. What kind of India does the poet envisage?
8. What does the word **Thee** refer to?
9. What is its implication for Ethiopia?
10. Paraphrase this poem into plain prose.

**Step I: Description**

Structurally grammatically, this poem could be broken down into three parts: the subject, the verbs, verb phrases, complements which follow the verbs. It could be parcelled out as follows:

**Step 2: Interpretation**

To begin with, the word **where** is common to all lines except the last one. Naturally, it denotes a place described as “that heaven of freedom.” The sort of heaven and freedom the poet talks about is abstract though it definitely implies a free and democratic society where freedom, a strong sense of unity and sincerity prevails. When it comes to classification, this poem may be described as a wish, a prayer or dream.

For instance, the reference to “My father with capital ‘**F**’ supports the view that is a prayer. The fact that the place wished for is just utopian makes it a mere dream. It could also be argued that is a hope since Tagore appears to be concerned or worried about the state of India. In

sum, the poet envisages a strong, united and prosperous India rather than balkanized regional states (based on Negara, 1989, p.32).

In fact, the stylistic approach is criticized for its seductiveness, mechanical approach and emphasis on structural elements which overshadow the socio-historical context which is not always the case. This gap could in fact be bridged with the introduction of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which accounts for ideology and power relations in addition to formal features and its reception by the reading community. This approach could be fruitfully exploited by students and teachers alike by adopting the maxims of conversation analysis (viz. Of quality, quantity, relevance and manner) and the principles of inter-sentence cohesion (parallelism reference, collocation etc.) and coherence.

#### *The Personal Growth/Affective Model*

Thirdly, the Personal growth model is also a student-centred or process-approach which focuses on the acquisition of comparative and universal wisdom through literature. This model encourages learners to draw on their personal opinions, feelings, convictions and experiences. It engages students with the reading of literature not only for examination purposes but also transports them into the gallant world of extra-curricular adventure and wish fulfilment. It involves a lasting pleasure and a deeper satisfaction with reading creative works and regaining a memorable, individual and collective experience.

Pleasure refers to the psychological satisfaction aroused in the reader as a result of artistic manipulation of language which ranges from the unconventional arrangement of words to the rhythmic harmony manifested in the construction of dialogues, evocation of mood and arousal of suspense, surprise and self-identification with the experience of fictional characters.

Besides reading and oral proficiency, the writing skill which is much more than an orthographic symbolization of speech demanding intense concentration can be developed through literary studies. Writing involves a purposeful selection and organization of experience: logical thinking, refutation of an argument, organization, planning, assertion of a viewpoint and contention. That is perhaps why medical practitioners and other professionals have turned out to be famous writers, celebrities, critics and national figures irrespective of their educational background. Any one of these models could be employed in combination or independently depending on the specific or general objectives of the national curriculum. In the light of these assumptions, I share the views of all authorities who argue in favour of incorporating literary genres into the English language syllabus for the sake of academic excellence at any grade level.

#### *Presentation of results*

This section presents the results of the SPSS data analysis with an independent sample T-test. In the first section, the background characteristics of participants are presented. Secondly, the responses of the participant groups would be descriptively analyzed. Thirdly, the response of the student participants ranging from second year to third year would be comparatively analyzed to determine the in-group variation and correlations which could be attributed to background differences or similarity of perception.



**Table 1: The Profile of participants**

| <b>Sex</b> | <b>Year</b> | <b>Regular</b> | <b>Evening -<br/>Extension</b> | <b>Summer</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|------------|-------------|----------------|--------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Male       | Year II     | 0              | 0                              | 7             | 7            |
|            | Year III    | 5              | 5                              | 0             | 10           |
|            | Total       | 5              | 5                              | 7             | 17           |
| Female     | year II     | 0              | 0                              | 2             | 2            |
|            | Year III    | 18             | 8                              | 0             | 26           |
|            | Total       | 18             | 8                              | 2             | 28           |
| Total      | year II     | 0              | 0                              | 9             | 9            |
|            | Year III    | 23             | 13                             | 0             | 36           |
|            | Total       | 23             | 13                             | 9             | 45           |

Table 1 shows the profile of a total of 45 UG students who were drawn from three different programs (regular, evening extension, and summer); 50% of the respondents are regular students. Participants were drawn from two year levels (years II and III); where 80% of them are III year students. Gender-wise, 62% are female participants.

**Table 2: The profile of teachers**

| <b>Variables</b>       | <b>Categories of<br/>the variables</b> | <b>Respondents<br/>Sex</b> |          | <b>Total</b> |
|------------------------|--|----------------------------|----------|--------------|
|                        |  | Male                       | Female   |              |
| Academic<br>rank       | Lecturers                              | 4                          | 4        | <b>8</b>     |
|                        | Assistant<br>Professors                | 7                          | 2        | <b>9</b>     |
|                        | Associate<br>Professors                | 3                          | 0        | <b>3</b>     |
|                        | <b>Total</b>                           | <b>14</b>                  | <b>6</b> | <b>20</b>    |
|                        | < 10 years                             | 6                          | 0        | <b>6</b>     |
| Teaching<br>experience | 10 to 19 years                         | 4                          | 0        | <b>4</b>     |
|                        | 20 to 29 years                         | 7                          | 0        | <b>7</b>     |
|                        | >29 years                              | 3                          | 0        | <b>3</b>     |

On the other hand, Table 2 shows that a total of 20 EFL teachers were involved with academic ranks ranging from lectureship to associate professorship; only 6 of them being female participants. The minimum year of service is 7 years while the maximum stands at 43 not to mention the mean average.

**Table 3: The Nature and Role of Literature**

| Variable  | Responses      |               |               |                |       |
|---|----------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|-------|
|   | Strongly agree | Agree         | Disagree      | Strongly agree | Total |
| Literature is a valuable resource for EFL classroom                       | 30<br>(46.2%)  | 32<br>(49.2)  | 2             | 1              | 65    |
| Literature is a mysterious product of art that can't be exploited for ESL | 3              | 8<br>(12.31%) | 40<br>(61.5%) | 13<br>(20.0%)  | 64    |
| Literature is more demanding than other types of materials                | 9<br>(13.8%)   | 36<br>(55.4%) | 14<br>(21.5%) | 4              | 63    |

The participants who were asked to rate the extent of their agreement regarding the use of literature in teaching English language have responded favourably. As indicated in Table 3 above, over 95% of them expressed its importance while over 80% of the respondents maintain that literature is neither a mysterious product of art that hardly contributes for EFL nor a more demanding genre than the other types of materials employed for teaching English<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> One participant for the second item and two participants for the third item have not responded.

**Table 4: Methods of Literature Pedagogy**

| Variable  | Optional responses                | Responses |       |
|---|-----------------------------------|-----------|-------|
|   |                                   | Freq.     | %     |
| What is the best criterion for materials selection?                             | Learner-based                     | 6         | 9.2   |
|   | Text-based                        | 7         | 10.8  |
|   | Both Text-based and learner-based | 52        | 80.0  |
|   | Total                             | 65        | 100.0 |
| Pre-teach vocabulary or encourage students to predict contextual meaning?       | No                                | 18        | 27.7  |
|   | Rarely                            | 13        | 20.0  |
|   | Yes                               | 34        | 52.3  |
|   | Total                             | 65        | 100.0 |
| Breakdown the daily lesson into pre-reading, reading, and post-reading sessions | Never                             | 10        | 15.4  |
|   | Sometimes                         | 47        | 72.3  |
|   | Always                            | 8         | 12.3  |

As tabulated under Table 4, the data on literature pedagogy reveal that (80%) of the respondents are in favour of the combination of learner-based and text-based approaches in contradistinction to a few others who recommended either learner-based (9.2%) or text-based (10.8%). In the same way, (52.3%) of the respondents have indicated the need for pre-teaching vocabulary and prediction of contextual meaning alternatively. Over 80% of the participants have also agreed within the range of 'sometimes to always' that their instructors breakdown the daily lesson into pre-reading, reading, and post-reading phases.

**Table 5: Assessment Strategies**

| Variables  | Optional responses     | Responses |      |
|--|------------------------|-----------|------|
|  |                        | Freq.     | %    |
| Engage students with comprehension questions or interactive decisions? | Comprehension          | 9         | 13.8 |
|  | Interactive discussion | 18        | 27.7 |
|  | Mixed                  | 38        | 58.5 |
| Kind of testing strategies devised                                     | Bottom-up              | 15        | 23.1 |
|  | Top-down               | 4         | 6.2  |
|  | Mixed                  | 44        | 67.7 |

Unlike a few respondents who opted for an independent comprehension (13.8%) or interactive discussions (27.7) as a good strategy for engaging students in learning language through literature, the majority (58.5%) have subscribed themselves to the combination of both assessment strategies under Table 5. A comparable proportion have also properly delineated the preference for a flexible use of bottom-up as well as top-down testing strategy (67.7%) compared to the polarised employment of either bottom-up (23 %) or top-down (6%) approaches which may not accommodate slow-learners or demotivate fast-learners. Two of the respondents were undecided about the testing strategy.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Note that two participants did not respond to the second item.

**Table 6: The Life-Long Impact of Learning Literature**

| Variables   | Optional responses | Responses |       |
|---|--------------------|-----------|-------|
|   |                    | Fre<br>q. | %     |
| Reading literary works<br>beyond the classroom as<br>a consequence of<br>previous exposure? | No                 | 5         | 7.7   |
|   | Rarely             | 15        | 23.1  |
|   | Yes                | 45        | 69.2  |
|   | Total              | 65        | 100.0 |

Regarding the life-long impact of language learning literature, an attempt has been made to cross-check the extent to which participants believe that learning English language through literature in the classroom has a motivational value for engaging students in reading literary works beyond the classroom. While closer to 70 % of them have responded affirmatively, (7.7%) of them responded otherwise without prejudice to possible differences between the views of students due in part, to their personal experience and level of qualification.

**Table 7: The In-Group Mean Variance between Teachers and Students on the Role of Literature in the EFL Pedagogy**

| Variables  | Year level of students | Differences by Year Level. |      |       |      |    | Sig. (2-tailed) | Sex    | Differences by Sex |        |       |       |    | Sig.(2-tailed) |
|--|------------------------|----------------------------|------|-------|------|----|-----------------|--------|--------------------|--------|-------|-------|----|----------------|
|  |                        | N                          | Mean | St. D | t    | df |                 |        | N                  | Mean   | St. D | t     | df |                |
| Importance of using literature in teaching English | Year II                | 14                         | 8.57 | .85   |      |    |                 | Male   | 16                 | 8.5625 | 1.03  | 1.369 | 40 | .179           |
|  | Year III               | 34                         | 8.24 | .96   | 1.14 | 46 | .260            | Female | 26                 | 8.1538 | .88   |       |    |                |
| Methods  | Year II                | 14                         | 4.64 | .50   |      |    |                 | Male   | 17                 | 4.118  | 1.32  | .745  | 43 | .460           |
|  | Year III               | 37                         | 3.76 | 1.36  | 2.36 | 49 | .022            | Female | 28                 | 3.821  | 1.28  |       |    |                |
| Assessment   | Year II                | 14                         | 3.43 | .85   |      |    |                 | Male   | 15                 | 2.8000 | 1.21  | .520  | 41 | .606           |
|  | Year III               | 35                         | 2.51 | 1.20  | 2.60 | 47 | .012            | Female | 28                 | 2.6071 | 1.13  |       |    |                |
| Impacts beyond classroom                           | Year II                | 14                         | 1.71 | .47   | 1.34 | 49 | .186            | Male   | 17                 | 1.6471 | .61   | 1.196 | 43 | .238           |
|  | Year III               | 37                         | 1.43 | .73   |      |    |                 | Female | 28                 | 1.3929 | .74   |       | 40 |                |

As could be observed from the table, a significant number of student participants seem to have grasped appropriate and favourable views about the use of literature in English language teaching at large. However, this shouldn't be mistaken for absolute unanimity. There could be possible differences between the views of students, due in part, to cultural background and personal taste. Hence, their in-group

differences or similarities, if any, have compared and contrasted by year level. Accordingly, Table 7 reveals that no significant difference between second- and third-year students on general views about the importance of using literature in teaching English ( $t_{46} = 1.14$ ,  $P < .26$ ) and impacts beyond the classroom ( $t_{49} = 1.34$ ,  $P < .19$ ) was observed. But, surprisingly enough, second year students held significantly better views than third year students when it comes to methods ( $t_{49} = 2.36$ ,  $P < .02$ ) as well as assessment strategies ( $t_{47} = 2.60$ ,  $P < .012$ ). Gender-wise, no significant difference was observed between male and female respondents across four dependent variables.

### Discussion of Results

Given the controversy over the role of literature in the EFL classroom within and without, and the data gathered from there participant groups under viable categories was descriptively analyzed. In the present study, forty-five undergraduate English majors and twenty English teachers were involved. The instructors were classified by year of service in academic rank and sex while Participant students were also classified by year/class, gender and programme type.

Both groups were required to respond to more or less similar questionnaires on the role and methods of teaching literature, the parameters of materials selection, the classroom practice, assessment strategies and the impact of literature beyond the classroom. The study revealed that the role of literature in the EFL classroom or the contribution of literature to the development of the learners' affective, communicative and cognitive skills was favourably considered by students and teachers alike.

It has a direct/curricular and indirect /extracurricular bearing on the learners: intellectual development and the development of the whole person and integrates cognitive affective and communicative skills. Thus, 80-95% of the respondents have endorsed the view that literature should be integrated into the language curriculum for its

multidimensional contribution though the preference for genre swayed from the short story to dramatic texts for obvious reasons such as magnitude and entertainment values. Some of them also graded the genres from the short story to the novel in a descending order of structural and conceptual complexity.

In fact, the instructors emphasised the need for proceeding from simple to complex texts (structurally as well as conceptually) depending on the linguistic background, the cognitive development and the grade level of the learners. The materials range from extracts-to full-fledged texts as the case may be. In fact, unless the material are selected and graded carefully, the undeniable complexity of literature was reasserted by some respondents. Thus literature could be demystified so long as it is exploited skilfully.

Though the nature of literary materials and the level of learners is bound to vary, a significant number of respondents (80%), favoured the mixed criteria of materials selection which combines text-based and learner-based considerations unlike marginal respondents (who opted for learner-based (9.2%) and text-based approaches (10.8%).

This package is so flexible that it could vary with the objectives of the lesson and the national objectives of the curriculum. At any rate, whatever the instructor endorses as the end of the day is right without prejudice to the pedagogical principles of materials selection. Even adaptation and abridging longer or more demanding texts is permissible for lower or intermediate classes.

Regarding, the classroom practice, pre-teaching vocabulary to facilitate the pedagogical process or the student-teacher interaction, and enhance reading comprehension was highly recommended at the initial stages by both groups. The advantages of predicting the contextual meaning of unfamiliar words in the process of reading were also recommended at advanced levels, which is, pedagogically sound enough.



Similarly, the practice of breaking down the daily or weekly lesson plan into three successive stages modelled on the British teaching-learning style was also strongly recommended. In fact, the mode of delivery is variable within the range of pedagogical principles since teachers could be born or made as a mark of individuality.

In so far as the nature of classroom activities and tasks are concerned, a significant proportion of respondents (27.7%) preferred interactive discussion to comprehension type of post-reading activities which is an essential component of developing interpersonal communicative skills and the learners' self-confidence. The former warrants a relative freedom for deference, exchange of ideas and validation of the other's views apart from fostering interpersonal communication. In contrast, (13.8%) some students and teachers are in favour of comprehension types of tasks which are less demanding. However, it is observable from the classroom experience that certain students suffer from a debilitating anxiety or group allergy that they can hardly interact with their classmates with relative ease due to lack of self-confidence. Especially, when it comes to presentations or panel discussions, they are embarrassed due to nervousness or bankruptcy of ideas or low self-esteem and lack of experience- all of which could be improved with constant practice, counselling and proper guidance.

By the same token, the superficial dichotomy between bottom-up and top-down strategies of assessment was hardly appreciated. Thus, (67.7%) of the respondents opted for a flexible approach of testing which caters for slow learners, fast learners and mixed ability group. By contrast, the bottom-up approach (simple to complex continuum) was supported by (23%) of the respondents while some 6% of the respondents were in favour of the top-down approach. Consequently, English teachers are advised to adopt the mixed strategy of testing though it depends on the nature of the reading material and the composition of the class. Both bottoms-up and top-down approaches would be employed as flexibly as possible. In fact, class activities and

interactive tasks should be well designed and graded to maintain the momentum the teaching-learning continuum.

The other aspect of methodology is the question of employing multimodal texts. According to student-respondents, audio- visuals, film stripes and recordings are used more often than not! Instructors similarly commented that multimodal education is the order of the day to motivate the learners and stimulate their interest since 'action speaks louder than words'. But they should be previewed for cultural non-conformity and ideological conflict before presentation.

The impact of literature on the students' reading habit formation beyond the classroom was also rated (70%) which marks a stride from 'illiteracy' to literacy and validates the anonymous dictum which runs, "a literate man ignorant of literature is still illiterate." Thus, the learners' reading habit is not only constricted to examination purposes. It rather contributes to personal growth manifested in the development of their cognitive, affective and communicative skills. Thus, students are required to comprehend, describe, assimilate and interpret their reading materials. In the process, they develop their critical faculty or sense of judgement; expand vocabulary and power of self-expression over time.

Regarding the in-group variations and correlations, the students at different levels seemed to be as concerned with the assessment strategies as the pedagogical significance of literary genres which calls for the implementation of continuous assessment. Unlike other academic disciplines which may dwell upon rote memorization, testing literature involves, production of factual accounts and character sketch, dramatic significance, discussion of opposed viewpoints such as comparison and contrast (Dutton, 1986)

Thus, testing literature does not present the student with questions for which there is one right or wrong answer nor does it involve the banking mode of examination based on rote memorization. It is rather

about personal perception, communication, response and critical imagination. An essay question could be tackled in a number of ways each of which may be reasonably acceptable depending on the strength of one's argument. Whatever the answer for a given question may be, adopting a standpoint is worth the accuracy of the interpretation of a given test item.

In addition to the substance, the mechanics of writing should not be undermined. Mastery of mechanical skills like clarity of expression, economy of words, and cohesion between the parts, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling and citation conventions are equally important and should by no means be undermined. Thus, subjective questions involving paragraph writing or examination essays could be more demanding for average learners with a poor command of vocabulary, concord and other mechanical skills.

### **Conclusion and Implications for EFL Pedagogy**

In the foregoing discussion, the attitude of students and teachers towards the significance of applied literature and pedagogical practice in the EFL pedagogy has been descriptively discussed. The participants were required to respond to a set of intriguing questions on the role of literature in the EFL pedagogy, modes of delivery, testing strategies, principles of materials selection, application of multimodal teaching aids, and the lasting impact of exposure to literature beyond the classroom.

The analysis of the responses revealed that literature is a means to an end so long as it is properly exploited or applied to the EFL pedagogy. Thus both participant groups have predominantly endorsed the view that literature is an effective vehicle for the enhancement of macro and micro language skills development and communication competence, cross-cultural awareness, generation of motivation and personal growth. They also emphasized the modalities of materials selection and application, flexibility of the pedagogical framework, the

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introduction of multimodal teaching aids, mode of delivery, flexibility of testing strategies, fostering the learners' reading engagement and cultivating their critical faculty. The misconception that literature is a mysterious genre to which students and teachers fear to tread was also challenged.

By implication, our English language planners, syllabus designers and policy-makers and language teachers are strongly advised to integrate teaching English with carefully selected and graded literary materials not only to achieve the national objectives of teaching English as a foreign language in Ethiopia but also to foster the linguistic competence and performance of our school-age children both for academic purposes and the wider arena of interactional and transactional communication.

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