

**A SUGGESTED SYLLABUS FOR THE COURSE
'INTRODUCTION TO BRITISH LITERATURE I' AT ELT
DEPARTMENTS***

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ÖZET

İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümlerinde okuyan öğrencilerin İngiliz Edebiyatını kavrayabilmeleri için onlara yol gösterilmesi gerekmektedir ve 'İngiliz Edebiyatına Giriş I' dersi onları sadece edebiyatın temel türleri olan şiir, nesir ve tiyatro ile tanıştırmamalı aynı zamanda onlara Britanya halkının dili ve kültürünü de tanıtmalıdır. Ayrıca, bu ders öğrencilere doğal edebi eserleri tanıtarak Britanya edebiyatındaki başlıca edebi eserleri, yazarları ve akımları ders ve sınıf içi tartışmalar ile nasıl eleştirel bir şekilde incelemeleri gerektiği konusunda da yol göstermelidir.

Bu çalışma, Eğitim Fakültelerine bağlı İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümlerinde üçüncü yarıyılı okutulan 'İngiliz Edebiyatına Giriş I' dersi için bir program önermek amacı ile hazırlanmıştır. Altı öğretim elemanı ve 266 öğrenci veri toplamaya katkıda bulunmuştur. Çalışma sadece dersin şu anki konumu ve var olan programları belirli üniversitelerde eğitim elemanları ile yapılan görüşmeler aracılığı ile incelememektedir, aynı zamanda aynı üniversitelerde öğrencilerin görüş, fikir ve gereksinimlerini anketler yolu ile tespit etmektedir. Bu çalışmada, görüşme ve anket sonuçları ışığı altında YÖK'ün sunduğu ders içeriğine koşut bir tanım yapılmakta ve altı üniteden oluşan bir ders kitabı ve örnek materyaller ile birlikte açık hedef ve amaçları kapsayan bir ders programı sunulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Program, Britanya Edebiyatı Öğretimi, İngiliz Edebiyatı Öğretimi, Hedefler ve Amaçlar

ABSTRACT

Students at English Language Teaching Departments need to be guided into appreciating British literature and 'Introduction to British Literature I' has to introduce the learners with the major genres of literature such as poetry, prose and drama, as well as, the culture and language of the British nation.

This study has mainly been conducted to offer a suggested syllabus for the course 'Introduction to British Literature I', a third term course at ELT departments of Education Faculties. Six lecturers and 266 students have contributed to the data collection. It not only investigates the current situation and syllabi in use through interviews with lecturers, but also the views, thoughts and needs of students through questionnaires conducted at ELT departments of several universities. In light of the results it offers an alternative definition to YÖK's definition for the course, and a suggested syllabus with clear goals and objectives accompanied by a six-unit coursebook with course materials covering the course goals and objectives.

Keywords: Syllabus, Teaching British Literature, Teaching English Literature, Goals and Objectives.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Literature is a kind of “intellectual light” (Strouf, 1998, p. 2) which like the light of the sun spots the unknown and hidden parts of the thought, feeling and heart of the human being by means of words. In this way, literature has transmitted world views, social and cultural values through a contact between the writer and the reader throughout centuries. The author interprets, alienates and symbolizes the universe and decodes it into written symbols to transmit it to the readers. Therefore, it is believed that students need to be guided into appreciating literature, and they also need to realize that there should not be a distance between them and the text they read but a transaction (Rosenblatt, 1994). A literature course has to develop in students both an interest in literature and literary competence so that they can respond imaginatively to what they read and appreciate it on their own. Besides, an introduction to literature course has to enable students form background knowledge, awareness and insight about the culture of the writer (poet, dramatist, etc.) they read.

1.1. Background to the Study

In order to improve teacher education, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) in cooperation with the World Bank set up a Teacher Training National Committee in 1997 to restructure the teacher education programs in Turkey. The committee worked in coordination with the deans of education faculties to increase the quality of pre-service teacher training. This committee revised the restructured programs in Faculties of Education, as well as in English Language Teaching Departments, and from 1998 onward YÖK wanted the faculties of education follow the same restructured standard program.

The newly restructured curriculum for English Language Teaching (ELT) departments emphasizes the teaching of English Literature, that is, literature teaching starts in the second grade fall term with the course ‘Introduction to British Literature I’ and goes on with successive courses, such as Introduction to British Literature II; and the analysis and teaching of short story, novel, drama and poetry in the successive terms.

In its web page YÖK (1998) defines the course ‘Introduction to British Literature I’ as the following:

Studying and understanding the basic concepts of literary analysis and critical appreciation through selected texts from various literary genres, periods and movements.

(see www.yok.gov.tr/egitim/ogretmen/ogretmen_yetistirme_lisans/ing.doc)

1.2. Problem

As can be seen above there is a mismatch between the title of the course ‘Introduction to British Literature I’ and its definition in YÖK’s

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Curriculum. The title focuses on British literature whereas nothing is stated about 'British' in the definition given above. Therefore, the definition needs to be redefined to overlap the title which is used in the ELT departments all over Turkey, but for Boğaziçi University and Middle East Technical University (see Boğaziçi University and METU's web pages).

Further, although lecturers have set some self-determined course objectives in teaching 'Introduction to British Literature I', not many ELT departments have designed a clear cut syllabus for this course. Moreover, although YÖK designed a standardized curriculum which meant to offer equal opportunities to the students of ELT departments, there is not a standardized coursebook which is recommended by YÖK. Each instructor is choosing the most available course book in the market for his/her students. Each of the plentiful books on British Literature in the market has a different scope, focus of interest, volume and academic level, and it is generally meant for the students of English Language and Literature Departments. Since, none of the available materials are tailored for the students who are studying 'Introduction to British Literature' at ELT departments and most of them do not include classroom teaching practicalities, a standardized coursebook with appropriate course materials would be of utmost help for them.

1.3. Aim

First of all, since the definition of YÖK for the course "Introduction to British Literature I" is vague and broad, and there is a mismatch between the title and its description, this study will redefine the definition accordingly and propose appropriate objectives for it. Besides, it aims to propose a syllabus with clear objectives for the course 'Introduction to British Literature I' offered to the second year fall term students at the ELT Department of Hacettepe University, and other universities as well. In addition, because of the lack and the necessity of a single coursebook, the researcher of this dissertation will prepare appropriate course materials for the course 'Introduction to British Literature I'

1.4. Research Questions

1. What is the most appropriate definition for the course 'Introduction to British Literature I'?
2. What are the most appropriate objectives for a syllabus for the ELT department of Hacettepe University, and other universities in Turkey as well?
3. What are the students' thoughts and views about the course 'Introduction to British Literature I'?
4. What additional learning materials do students prefer their instructors to bring into the classroom?

2. METHOD

2.1. Instruments

Since the main aim of both an interview and a questionnaire is obtaining information, the data collection instruments used in the present study consisted of a pilot study consisting of an instructor interview and a student questionnaire, and the final version of the instructor interview and the student questionnaire (Merriam, 1998). Interviewing is selected as it is one of the best methods for eliciting people's personal opinions (Ekmekçi, 1999). The questionnaire was chosen to find out the priorities of the respondents in relation to the topic as well as of its practicality; it took students about 25 minutes to complete.

It should be noted that the language of both the interviews and the questionnaires is English because some of the English terms used in the course do not have their equivalences in Turkish or may not be known by the subject students. Since the students are studying at ELT departments, it is thought that it would cause no problem.

2.2. Subjects

In this study, 6 lecturers and 266 students contributed to the data collection stage. After two informal interviews with 2 professors of the English Language and Literature Department at Hacettepe University, 6 lecturers teaching the course 'Introduction to British Literature I' at Hacettepe, Selçuk, Uludağ and Middle East Technical Universities were interviewed in their rooms for about 50 minutes each to design the questionnaire items. The major criterion in selecting the interviewees was to select those who were experienced and could provide and share their invaluable ideas and experiences with the researcher. Besides, a total number of 266 sophomore, junior and senior students who had taken the course in the third term of their study at the ELT department of Hacettepe, Selçuk, Uludağ and Middle East Technical Universities participated in the questionnaire of the study.

2.3. Data Analysis

The analysis of the data consists from the lecturer interview and student questionnaire. Each question is analyzed one by one and the responses are displayed in lists, graphs and tables.

As Wiener and Bazerman (2000) explain, the purpose of a graph is to show how statistics compare with one another and since graphs present statistics visually with bars, the analyses results and interpretations of the questionnaire are displayed in bar graphs, in percentages, mean values, as well as tables.

2.4. Findings

The data obtained from the interview provided a basis for the questionnaire items. The questionnaire items elicited students' individual views, thoughts, needs and expectations from the course. The following are some of the discussions of the questionnaire results. For example, as can be seen in the

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results of item 1, which asked the question “did you like the course *Introduction to British Literature I* which was offered to you in the third term of your study?” the bar graph illustrates that students liked and appreciated the course ‘Introduction to British Literature I’. To put it in another way, the mean value of 89 % shows that most of the students at the four universities extremely liked this course. Here, it should be highlighted that if it had been for one university, it could be concluded that students liked either the lecturer or the teaching method of the lecturer, but since the results are positive in all four universities it can be interpreted that students generally like this course.

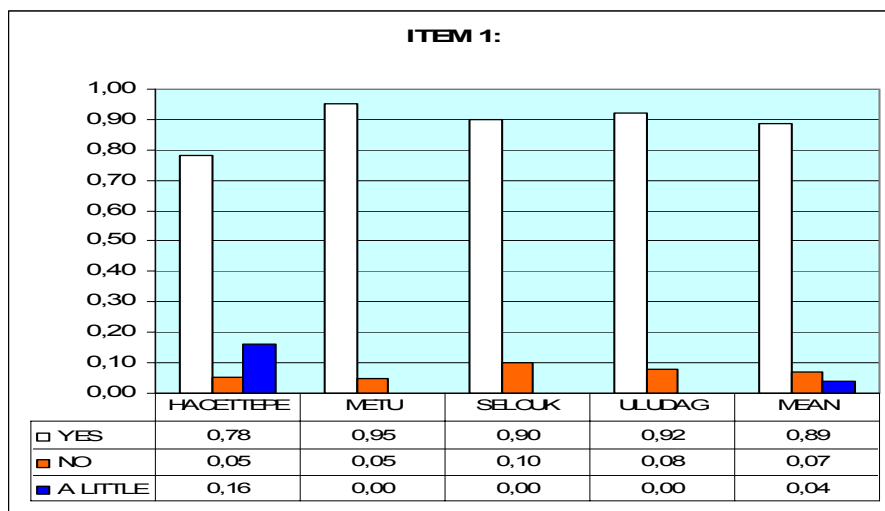


Figure 1, item 1.

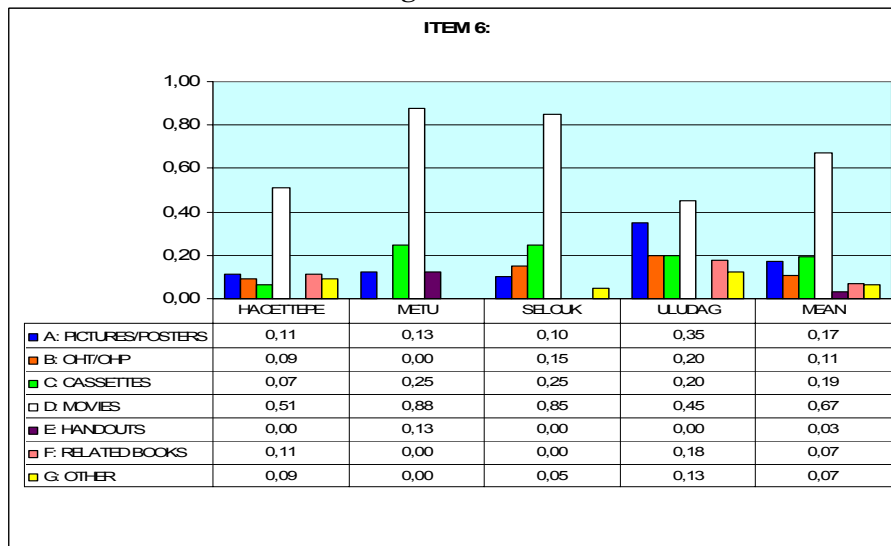


Figure 2, Item 6.

As can be seen in figure 2, item 6 in the questionnaire, the use of ‘movies’ is the most favorite option among the 7 options with a 67 % mean value; that is, using additional materials such as videos would raise the interest in the lecture and enable students better learn and enjoy the course.

Next, the results of item 13 in the questionnaire, “How was literature taught in this course?”, indicate that lecturers used a variety of methods in their classes :

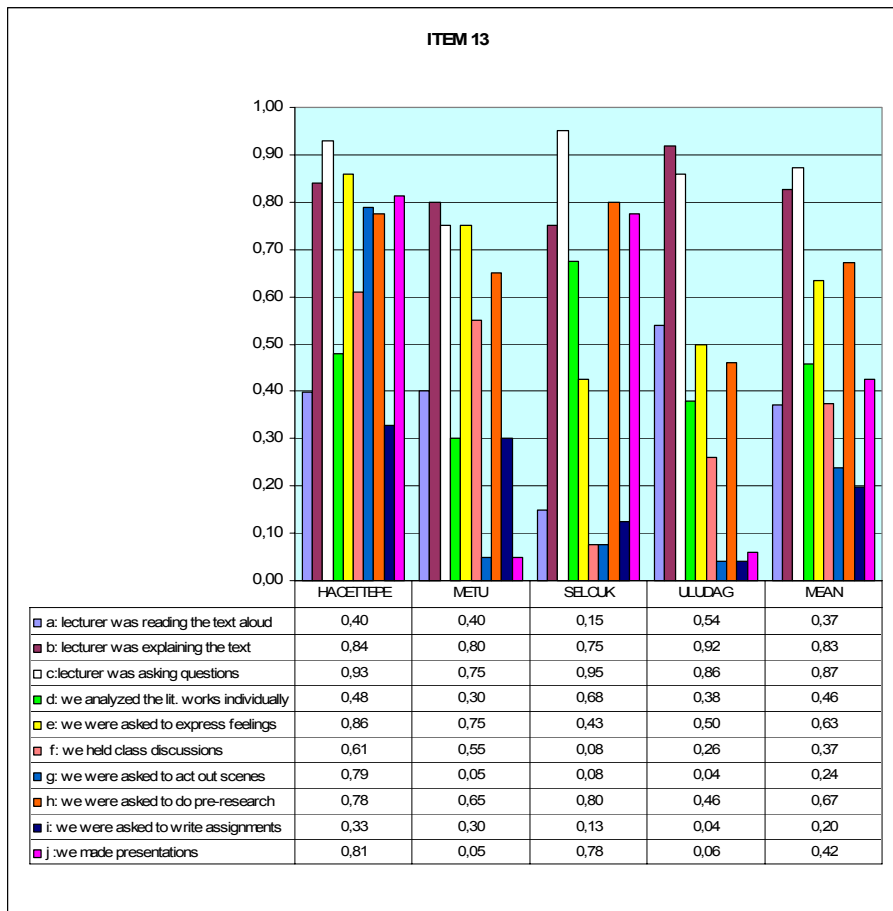


Figure 3, Item 13.

Then, percentage values in item 18 which asked the question “Do you think that this course entitled *Introduction to British Literature I* is necessary in the four-year program of the English Language Teaching Department?” show that students in general (82%) do not have any doubt about the significance of the course for the ELT departments:

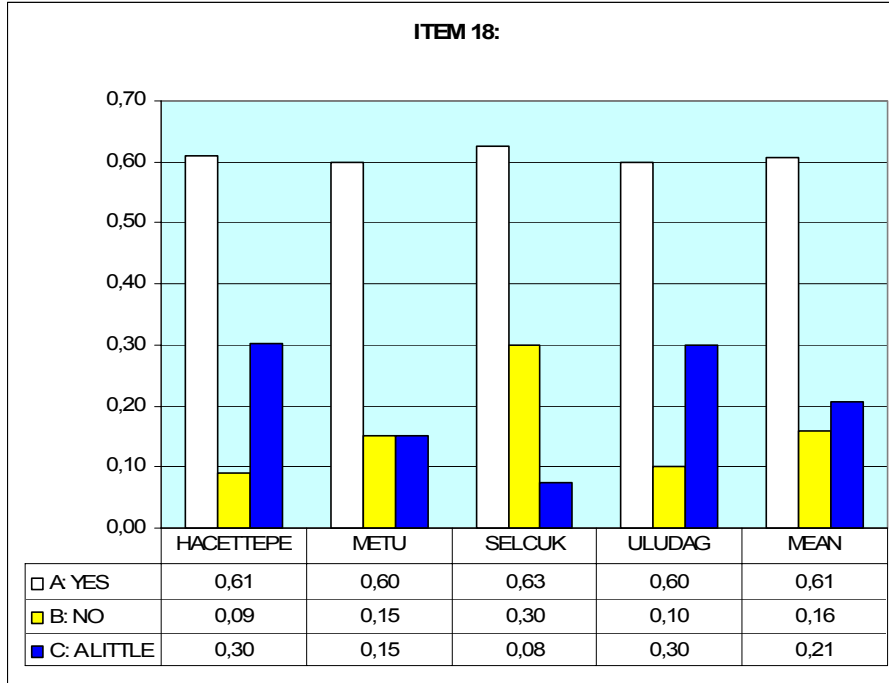


Figure 4, Item 18.

3. CONCLUSION

As aforementioned, this dissertation study has been conducted to propose a suggested syllabus for the second year, third term course 'Introduction to British Literature I' at the English Language and Teaching Department of Hacettepe University, as well as other ELT Departments of other universities in Turkey.

In the light of the questionnaire results the following objectives have been set:

1. at the end of the course students will be able to read and understand literary texts from various periods;
2. at the end of the course students will be able to analyze literary texts;
3. at the end of the course students will identify significant personages in British literature;
4. at the end of the course students will be able to comprehend and enjoy movies related to British literature;
5. at the end of the course students will be familiar with the major genres of literature such as; poetry, prose and drama.

Further, in the light of the literature review this study has tried to redefine the course description as an alternative to YÖK's course description which was vague and did not cover its title. So, the course description suggested for the course 'Introduction to British Literature I' here is the following:

'Introduction to British Literature I' aims to give an overview of historical development of British Literature from Anglo-Saxon period into early seventeenth century by exploring and analyzing ideas, movements, historical and social contexts, themes and literary characteristics of masterpieces of British Literature and their authors through a brief introduction to the genres of poetry, prose and drama.

Then, after having covered the steps of syllabus design, a coursebook is adapted to the course to meet the objectives of the course. The coursebook is designed in the light of a syllabus that takes students' needs, interests, opinions and preferences into account because it is believed that the available books on English Literature in the market are too broad in scope and thus insufficient to fulfill the requirements to be suitable for the second year, third term course 'Introduction to British Literature I'.

Finally, the researcher of this study has both integrated films covering British Literature as supplementary materials to the suggested syllabus and coursebook, next to the selected modern versions of the authentic English Literary works, in order to trigger students' interest and thus motivation.

The course also involves literary criticism because the course description defined by YÖK aims at studying and understanding the basic concepts of literary analysis and critical appreciation. Recent studies favor the integration of literary criticism into literature courses at English Language Teaching Departments because interpreting and understanding literary works is the basis of literature studies. The course requires close study and careful reading to understand and interpret literature and thus encourages appreciation of literature. Historical context, literary movements and the author herself/himself are the crucial parts of literature because they contribute to comprehension, interpretation as well as appreciation.

Unfortunately, the teaching of literature in most ELT departments in Turkey has been traditional where teachers spoon feed the learners with the interpretation of the text and expects the student to reproduce it in the exams which usually test their ability to memorize rather than appreciate what they have read (Eaglestone, 2000). To put it differently, they are not guided to formulate their own ideas, feelings and thoughts about literary texts.

Since recent studies show that there is no correct interpretation of a literary work (Rosenblatt, 1994), in this study students are allowed to utter their opinions, feelings and thoughts freely by responding openly to literary works through the use of Reader- Response criticism next to the use of other theories of literary criticism such as Modern Theory, Historical and Biographical criticism. Moody (1983) emphasizes that using both efferent (intrinsic) and aesthetic (extrinsic) approaches to the study of literature is crucial for EFL students. As they study literature in a second language, they need to be given some input by the teacher before they start interpreting the text. By using not only efferent but also aesthetic approaches they will be enabled to gain knowledge base concerning effective use of literary principles while at the same time enabling them gain literary competence.

3.1. Suggestions for Further Research

It is also believed that suggestions would be appropriate for further studies in relation to this study. Initially, the most important phase in syllabus design is considered as the needs analysis phase, and therefore should not be ignored. It is beyond doubt that before designing a syllabus first the needs and preferences of the students should be diagnosed. Then, based on those needs and preferences a suitable syllabus can be set.

A factor worth paying attention to is the length of the units since they can be expanded, modified and shortened according to the number of the school weeks and teaching hours.

Since the scope of this dissertation is the second year, first term course 'Introduction to British Literature I', the syllabus has been designed for this course. However, this kind of a course syllabus can be applied to the 'Introduction to British Literature II' too and therefore, a similar syllabus can be designed for the second year, second term course 'Introduction to British Literature II'.

In addition, a suggestion can be made on the issue of assignments. Although some assignments have been issued throughout the course material, each unit can be expanded in terms of these. Since this course covers extensive readings on British literature, topics can be very helpful to improve students' literary competence.

All in all, an ideal course syllabus is suggested to be made up of needs analysis, course design and materials development. Therefore, in this study the above mentioned steps have been used in the design of the syllabus as well as the adaptation of the course material. Moreover, in the light of survey literature, a pilot study, main study and data collection it is believed that this study will serve as a model for course design and application of the course 'Introduction to British Literature I' in ELT departments.

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