

The Contributions of Literature Courses to English Language Teaching Programmes*

Edebiyat Derslerinin İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Programlarına Katkıları

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the contributions of literary texts to English Language Teaching Programmes. The study focuses on the changing status of literature courses in the Higher Education in Turkey; discusses the pedagogical benefits of literature courses in language teaching education and intends to examine to what extent literature causes a positive change on student teachers' personal growth and their linguistic, literary, cultural competence, as well as their command of English in reading, writing, listening, speaking, critical thinking skills, and their vocabulary repertoire. The data was conducted with 29 participants who completed their 3rd grade at Gazi University English Language Department. To find out the participants' subjective opinions, experiences and beliefs, a semi-structured interview was used for the survey as a qualitative research method. The findings demonstrate that literature courses have led to a meaningful improvement in the participants both personally and academically. Yet, the results indicated that this positive change expected in the participants had been limited for certain items. Some suggestions were given for further studies.

Keywords: *Literature, language teaching, linguistic competence, critical thinking skills, personal development*

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, edebi metinlerin İngiliz Dili Eğitimi programlarına katkısını araştırmayı hedeflemektedir. Edebiyat derslerinin YÖK'ün yüksek eğitimi yeniden yapılandırma sürecinde değişen konumu, dil eğitiminde faydaları konularına değinerek, çalışmada edebiyatın öğretmen adaylarının kişisel ve dil gelişimine katkıları; okuma, yazma, konuşma, dinleme ve eleştirel

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düşünme becerilerinin yanı sıra kelime dağarcıkları açısından öğretmen adaylarını ne derece geliştirdiği araştırılmaktadır. Çalışma, Gazi Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili Eğitimi ABD’de 3. sınıfı tamamlamış ve programdaki mevcut 2. ve 3. sınıf edebiyat derslerini görmüş 29 gönüllü öğrencinin katılımıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcıların konu ile ilgili kişisel fikirleri, deneyimleri ve inançlarını derinlemesine yansıtabilmeleri amacıyla nitel veri toplama aracı olarak yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler uygulanmıştır. Görüşmenin bulguları edebiyat derslerinin katılımcılar üzerinde hem kişisel gelişim hem de edebi, dilsel, kültürel ve iletişimsel yeterlilik konularında olumlu yönde etkisi olduğunu göstermiştir. Ancak bu olumlu etki belli alanlarda ve sınırlı derecede gerçekleşmiş olup ideal seviyeye ulaşamamıştır. Çalışmanın sonunda gelecekteki çalışmalar için önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Edebiyat, dil öğretimi, dil yetkinliği, eleştirel düşünme becerileri, kişisel gelişim

INTRODUCTION

The place of literature and its integration into second language learning programmes have always been discussed and its appreciation or rejection of its value changed in decades. While with the rise of the Grammar Translation Method in the early 1900s it gained importance, there have also been times when it is completely ignored and nearly disappeared from the language teaching curriculum since linguistic approaches have been found more privileged (Carter, 2007). Literature has especially started to be seen as an important component in English Language Teaching (ELT) programmes since 1980s because in communicative language teaching methodology, literature, with its rich variety of types and the meaningful context it offers, meets the need for authentic learning. Since in those years, language students have been found deficient of basic knowledge and skills, literature was employed as supplementary knowledge (Stern, 1985). Literature met the need for ‘the necessary strategies and study habits to enable them to undergo highly demanding reading requirements in most tertiary level courses’ (Gilroy-Scott, 1983, p.1). The inseparability of the target language and its culture is also another reason for the integration of literature into language teaching programmes. The teaching of culture is seen as a means of ‘developing an awareness of, and sensitivity towards the values and traditions of the people whose language is being studied’ (Tucker & Lambert, 1972, p. 26). Since student teachers will be the future

professionals, anything that contribute to their personal growth and academic knowledge have always been the consideration of the authorities.

In ELT context, using literature is believed to contribute to students' quality learning in higher education (Carter & Long, 1991; Carter & McRae, 1996; Carter, 2007; Collie & Slater, 1987; Ghosn, 2002; Hismanoğlu, 2005; Lazar, 1993; Paran, 2008). It is argued that literature offers student teachers abundant benefits both linguistically and in personal senses. It improves their language skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking; and enhances their vocabulary repertoire and develops their cultural and communicative competence; contributes to their personal growth, increases their critical thinking abilities, improves their imagination, and facilitates their acquisition of diverse point of views.

There are many literary types of texts that can be used in terms of their literary values dwelling on the elements of literature - such as plot, narration, characterization, the use of literary figures of art, themes and main ideas, as well as in terms of their language styles. These texts examine different usages of syntactic patterns and structures that can only be found in the written language. Variety in lexical usages and different expressions contribute not only to student teachers' linguistic knowledge, but also to the enhancement of their vocabulary.

Although different institutions, especially The Ministry of National Education (MEB) and the universities provide the source for teacher education, it is when the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) became the only authority in 1982, a more comprehensive restoration came into being in the higher education system. Since building intercultural communication requires more than grammatical knowledge, in order to meet the contemporary objectives of language learning and teaching in ELT programmes, after the foundation of the Council of Higher Education, literature oriented courses were decided to be included within the curriculum of ELT programmes. However, in years there occurred some contentious views on the quantity and the quality of these courses. For this reason, in 1997, 2006 and 2018 successively, both the content and the names and also the weekly hours and the credits of the courses went through changes.

The importance of this study is that it attempts to investigate the contribution of literature courses to student teachers in ELT programmes with the current curriculum. In accordance with its aim, the present study seeks the answers to these two questions:

RQ1. What are the views of the students who took literature courses at Gazi University ELT Department on the contributions of these courses to their personal growth?

RQ2. What are the views of the students who took literature courses at Gazi University ELT Department on the contributions of these courses to their linguistic competence in the target language?

The place of literature courses in ELT curriculum in 1997, 2006 and 2018

The Higher Education Council and the Ministry of National Education work in cooperation since teacher education has always been vital for the continuity of our culture in new generations. To achieve standardization and consistency in teacher education system, a series of adjustments have been carried out. The first and the most comprehensive reformation occurred in 1997 as a result of the increasing demand for the classroom and branch teachers in the new structure for the eight-year compulsory primary education (Çalışıcı, 2019, p. 25). Foreign language teaching started to be taught in the primary education at fourth year classes and continued until the 11th grade to achieve contemporary trends in education in the developed countries. As a result, some changes have been done in ELT Programmes in the universities as well (YÖK, 1998).

In the restructured 1998 curriculum, the quantity and also the variety of the literature courses in ELT programmes have been increased (YÖK, 1998). Starting with the second year, until the fourth, students are offered both theoretical knowledge in literature and also a wide range of literary works in different genres. In the second year, in Introduction to English Literature I and II, students are introduced to literature written in English from both British and American literature covering genres such as drama, epic, romance, satire, and poetry. At the end of the two terms, having exposed to some distinctive representatives from different periods – Old English, Medieval Literature, Elizabethan Period, the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and been provided with knowledge for the characteristics of these periods, students are expected to have acquired some

basic information about the literary terms and literary figures of art as well as some historical, and cultural background.

In the 1998 curriculum, apart from Introduction to English Literature courses, in the third year and also the fourth, each term successively Short Story, Novel, Drama and Poetry Analysis and Teaching courses have been included. The duration of all these courses was 3 hours a week and they were all for 3 credits. The aim was with the selections made by major writers, playwrights and poets of the 20th century, to teach students the characteristics of these four genres, how to analyse them thematically and stylistically focusing on the linguistic and cultural structures of the language, and at the end to develop an awareness on how literary texts can be used in ELT classes. The duration of each course was 3 hours a week and they were all for 3 credits.

In 2006 -2007 Academic Year, the context and the ECTS credits of the courses have been restructured to achieve the similar learning outcomes as in the teacher education programmes of the European countries (YÖK, 2007). As a result, the ECTS credits and the total course hours of many courses in Teacher Education Programmes including ELT Programme have been reduced. The second year successive literature courses Introduction to Literature I and II have been changed into English Literature I and II with the same number of credits and course hours. However, all the other six literary courses - Short Story Analysis and Teaching, Novel Analysis and Teaching, Drama Analysis and Teaching, Poetry Analysis and Teaching of the 1997 curriculum structured for the third grade have all been cancelled and replaced by only one course titled as Literature and Language Teaching I and II. The duration and the number of the credits for both the second and third year literature courses remained as they were- 3 hours a week and 3 credits.

The process of updating went on in 2018-2019 Academic Year too (YÖK, 2018). In the new curriculum, nearly all the ECTS credits and the weekly hours of language teaching programmes including the literature courses have been reduced. The duration of both English Literature I and II and Literature and Language Teaching I and II of 2006 curriculum have been reduced to 2 hours weekly instead of 3. The credits have also

been reduced to 2. Besides, the name of the third year course has been changed into Language and Literature Teaching instead of Literature and Language Teaching.

By lessening the number of both weekly hours and the credits of literature courses in language teaching education programmes, it seems literature which not only makes linguistic but also cultural and communicative contributions to the target language learning and teaching has started to be out of priority in language learning and teaching curriculum.

The current status of literature in ELT programmes since the last arrangement made in 2018 onwards is the same. Both in the second and the third years, there are literature courses – for the second grades English Literature I and II and for the third grades Language and Literature Teaching I and II, each term successively and 2 hours weekly with 2 credits.

In the present curriculum, as in 2006, the aim is to expose students to different genres as possible. While in the second year, they are taught about the basic literary terms and theories, and encouraged to acquire a notion about literature and think critically, in the third year with different short stories, plays and poems of some representative classical writers/playwrights/poets of the 20th century, students are taught how to make analysis of these texts considering the influence of the literary movements in question, the historical background and the personal and professional lives of the authors. All these genres enable students focus on different subject matters with different perspectives.

The function of literature

The role of literature in language learning and teaching is undebatable. If we consider the origins of storytelling, it goes back to a time long before the invention of the printing press because human beings' search for meaning continues since old ages. In this sense, literature is a magical tool which offers us many different possibilities of lives in different conditions, historical periods and different places that might have been perhaps impossible for us to experience.

Among several reasons for literature courses in language teaching, students get acquainted with different literary types and the movements in the field and learn how to analyse these texts. In the interaction between the student and the text, different possible

meanings emerge. The world of the text and that of the student intersect somehow and in the creation of the meaning, student becomes the vital participant in the reading process. S/he is motivated and is asked to make 'content-based purposeful learner talk in English' (Brumfit, 1986, p.15). S/he becomes autonomous in meaning construction. With personal relevance, they are involved within the texts and feel more motivated to speak up and discuss the issues. First, they grasp the general meaning, then they make a deeper analysis and lastly evaluate details comparing and contrasting or looking for the cause and effect relations and at the end reach their own analysis. Classroom discussions make them more tolerant to different opinions other than that of theirs. While sharing their own interpretations, they also develop their speaking skills. They add new words to their vocabulary repertoire. Since literature engages and provokes responses in students, with the right selection of literary texts, students become more motivated and feel enthusiastic about following the plot and identify themselves with their favourite characters. The personal relevance of texts enables students to find a connection with the world created and that of their own. Their teachers invite and encourage them to contribute by stating what they make out of the text they read. Literature deals with universal human experiences that affect all human beings, offering students many different attitudes, point of views that they can adopt in their future life. It definitely contributes to their personal growth stimulating both their feelings, emotions and intellect. It changes them into more intellectual, mature, sensitive, tolerant, critically thinking, problem solving individuals.

Besides, developing critical thinking and communicative skills, literature increases students' affective development. By finding out the opportunity to make a comparison between different lives, genders, cultures, historical times, they achieve self-knowledge both in personal and cultural senses. The multiculturalism literary texts offer, triggers an awareness in them that they are indeed human beings no matter who they are, what class or ethnicity they come from. Their recognition of different cultural aspects makes students more tolerant and sensitive towards others since they perceive the 'other' worlds rather than that of theirs.

Apart from its contribution to their personal development in emotional, intellectual, moral or social senses, as literature is a rich source of valuable authentic material (Ghosn, 2002; Hiřmanođlu, 2005; Khatib, & Rahimi, 2012), it offers real life and meaningful contexts providing many different possibilities for the verbal/non-verbal aspects of communication and enable learners expand their linguistic knowledge. The richness of literary texts in the variety of the syntactic patterns, structures, and the wide range of possible lexical usages and alternative expressions that they provide, improve not only their reading comprehension, speaking, writing and listening skills but also their repertoire of vocabulary. In line with the improvement students achieve in four skills, they are introduced to a new type of thinking- creative and critical thinking.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The purpose of the present study is to examine how much and especially in what ways literature courses contributed to student teachers' improvement – personally and/or academically. In this qualitative research to find out the participants' subjective opinions, experiences and beliefs, a semi-structured interview was used. Participants to take part for the interview were chosen based on voluntariness. Each participant received previously prepared questions in accordance with the aims of the survey. However, the semi-structured nature of the interview enabled the researcher to change the order of the questions and add some other questions sometimes to encourage the participants to share their opinions on the subject. These interviews were recorded and transcribed. For the responses only that were given in Turkish, they were translated into English.

Participants

The study was conducted at Gazi University ELT Programme. The participants were chosen based on a voluntary basis among the 4th grade students, using purposive sampling. Since the framework for these courses is structured by the Council of Higher Education, they already studied the literature courses in the curriculum. There were 29 participants, 17 of whom were female and 12 were male.

Data Collection

As Dörnyei (2007) states, since the researcher is an expert on literature, semi-structured interview was the ideal method of data collection for the present study. As in the list of the characteristics of a qualitative research Creswell provides, in a qualitative research study, there is 'natural setting'; researcher is the key instrument interviewing participants; producing an inductive data analysis is possible; participants' meanings are foregrounded not the researcher's (Creswell, 2009, pp.175-176).

Data Analysis Procedure

Semi-structured interview enables the researcher to lead the participants stay within the frame of the topic and also allow them to focus on any point they desire. All interviewees received questions about their opinions on the contributions of literature courses in their command of English, whether they think they improved themselves in reading, writing, listening and/or speaking, acquired critical thinking abilities, improved their literary and/or cultural competence, or whether they think it contributed them to their personal development in emotional, intellectual, moral, and/or social senses. These interviews were approximately 10 to 15 minutes long and recorded throughout the conversation. The data collected by 29 participants was analyzed in accordance with the content analysis technique.

Ethical Considerations

The current study was approved by Gazi University Ethics Research Centre, with the acceptance number 2022 - 1052 (Appendix B). Besides, participation to the research was completely voluntary and all participants were required to read and approve a written consent form before the participation. They were informed about the purpose of the research and the confidentiality of the information they provide. They were told to be free to leave at any time throughout the data collection process.

FINDINGS

The findings were categorized based on the themes derived from the content analysis of the semi-structured interview and evaluated under the related research questions. The study has the perspectives of the students on how literature courses studied for two years contributed to them personally and/or academically.

RQ1. What are the views of the students who took literature courses at Gazi University ELT Department on the contributions of these courses to their personal growth?

During the interview, in relation to the contribution of literature to their personal growth, the participants mostly focused on the change in their interest for literature, self-knowledge, identification and emotional transportation, achieving new perspectives, universality, learning about human psyche, understanding other people, cultural awareness, the lives of the writers and historical background, love for literature and aesthetic appreciation of literature.

Interest

To check if literature made any positive effect on them intellectually, the participants were asked whether they can evaluate themselves in terms of their interest in literature after the courses. S1, S14, S21, S25, S27, and S29 expressed that they were already interested in reading literary works and literature in general. S25 expressed the extent in her interest for English literature saying, 'I even bought Mina Urgan's *The History of English Literature*.'

Four of the participants admitted that they weren't interested in literature before but with the courses studied, their interest towards reading literary works increased:

S2: I was always a big fan of reading but my interest for reading was mostly non-fictional. I liked reading the scientific papers and articles and those kinds of stuff. After these courses, I started to understand more about how these texts can be interpreted by other people and how those interpretations are just as valuable and just worthy as the texts themselves. I gained a deeper understanding and appreciation for literature.

S3: I was not interested in literature. Last term, we were in pandemic situation and it was more like a task rather than reading and enjoying it. This term with the short stories and poems, I started to enjoy them.

S18: I didn't have a special interest for literature. It definitely increased. Yet, after these courses, I felt that I have shortcomings in this field and even borrowed a reference book *Brief History of English Literature* from the library.

S13: I was not that kind of a person who reads a lot. I read of course but I was thinking that I am especially bad at reading literature and thought that my interest for literature was low. The other literature courses I took might have been influential for that view. Yet, with the literature courses I took this year, my perception changed and I think I am successful at this course and definitely my interest for it increased.

Three of the participants – S7, S16 and S20 were prejudiced against literature but now their opinions changed. S20 expressed her prejudice against English literature saying, 'I had an interest for literature but it was for Turkish literature. With this course, I realized that I could get the same emotional gratification from English literature as well'.

On the other hand, one participant was not in the same idea with the others. She believed that reading literary texts in English was hard:

S10: I cannot say I'm so much interested in literature as it is cognitively too demanding for me to understand the views of the poets or authors let alone Turkish literature both because of its language and its philosophy. Imagine that somebody is trying to convey their messages but using a different language you are not familiar with and is also playing with the language. This makes me more stressful.

While S7 tried to express her motivation increase saying 'literature was a source of inspiration for me,' three participants, S24, S26, and S27 thought that literature stimulated their sense of curiosity. S5 made a similar comment in the same vein: 'literature improved my imagination'.

Self-knowledge

On the issue of achieving self - knowledge, S2, S3, S4, S8, S9, S25, S28 and S29 perceived personal changes in themselves. S2 and S9 realized the change in themselves in a positive way:

S2: When we were analysing the texts sentence by sentence, I would always jump and make judgements about the characters just with one sentence we read. It really taught me not to make quick judgements both while reading and in life itself.

S9's comment was in the same vein with S2: 'Now I don't judge anyone. I am more tolerant.'

S3 thinks that he changed '[his] way of questioning' and literature 'affected [him] psychologically in 'questioning [his] existence'. S4 and S8, on the other hand, underlined the contribution of literature to their problem-solving abilities:

S4: Let's say, there is a problem in the world. People are trying to fix it. The way literary people try to solve that problem is to bring it to a larger audience by intertwining it with different types of art.

S8: Without being able to discover new worlds and new people, it would be harder for us to make associations with problems and solutions.

S28 backed the same idea that he too achieved some sense of self-knowledge via the texts read:

'When we read about the writers of the texts, sometimes I felt envy for them. Some other times I was grateful for my present situation. It enabled me to evaluate myself even if it was not real, but fiction.'

Identification and emotional transportation

In reaching self-understanding, some participants S6, S7, S12, S19, S22 mentioned that they identified themselves with the characters sometimes:

S6: Emotionally I felt myself close to the main character in *An Inspector Calls*. I was sorry for what the main character had to live. For this reason, I felt empathy for her.

S7, and S12, too supported the same idea that the more they are involved, the more they could internalize the texts and be one with the characters. S19 and S22 shared the same belief especially underlining the point that they improved their empathy skills while reading poetry. S22 said 'I had the chance to view things both from the eyes of the persona and the poet in Lawrence's poem 'Snake.' While S25 stated that the short story *Young Goodman Brown* made her 'turn inwards' and 'discover her own self,' S29 shared her similar experience for the poem 'Ah, Are You digging on my grave?': 'It

started me to question about the themes of life, death, the sense of loneliness and being forgotten.’

S8 and S28 agreed with literature’s power in making emotional transportation possible. S8 said, ‘I managed to find an opportunity to discover new worlds when we read the texts, because I believe every single person has a world inside them to discover. Poets, writers reflect their own worlds onto their own creation. How is that important for my life? Without this discovery, perhaps it would be harder for us to make associations with problems and solutions.’ S8 supported the same idea with S28, ‘It opened a window in life for me.’

Achieving new perspectives

S9, S12, S13, S26 just stated that they have a new perspective after these courses. S14, S18 and S24 went on to more detail. S14 expressed this change in perception of life as, ‘analysing all these different characters in different circumstances made me think on how I would act if I had experienced a similar thing. This caused a change in my understanding of life in general I can say.’ S24 had a similar thought, ‘I had no clue about the possibility of multi meanings that a text could offer. Now, I changed my mind. In life it is the same. That encouraged me to look for more meanings. I achieved a new perspective.’ S14, on the other hand, found herself more interested in the lives of others: ‘I had already an interest in understanding people as individuals. But literature made me think more on the roots of other people’s behaviours trying to relate the reasons for them to their past lives.’ **Universality**

In relation to all these, S1, S8, and S23, S28 also mentioned the universal quality of literature. S8 commented on the positive effect of these universal issues saying, ‘I discovered that some issues can be universal. Despite you having not seen or witnessed them just yet. Just because you didn’t witness them doesn’t mean that those issues don’t exist. I learned that.’ S28 too stated that she learned the same thing while reading the short story ‘Araby’ and the poem ‘The Road Not Taken’, ‘the time or the place these works took place don’t matter. Any child in a big city can experience the same thing just like the schoolboy in ‘Araby’ or ‘The Road Not Taken’ is definitely universal. It gives us the picture of life; the picture of choices everybody has to make.’

Learning about Human Psyche

For S10, S19, S21, S25 learning about human psyche was amazing. They all supported the same idea especially in relation with Hawthorne's 'Young Goodman Brown', and Lawrence's short story 'The White Stocking' and his poem 'Snake'. S10 found this discovery challenging: 'we mentioned Freud's conception of the human psyche a couple of times in our lessons. Discovering the good and also the bad sides of man was really interesting for me. Digging deeper into human's Id was exciting.' S19 too was happy with this discovery: 'Although I didn't feel the same with the writer or the character, literature introduced me to man's dark side.' S21 was so much affected by these texts both in psychological and sociological senses that she said, 'I started to discover my own dark side. I liked Lawrence's works so much that I bought some more works by him.'

Understanding other people

S1, S6, S8, S11, and S14 especially mentioned that literature was helpful in understanding other people. While S1 expressed this saying, 'it helps you put yourself in other person's shoes,' S6 said, 'literature helped me understand the people lived in the past better.' S8 expressed this benefit of literature saying, 'it actually helped me to see how people see the world.' S14 was already interested in understanding the others but it motivated her more to know about their past lives.

Cultural awareness

S6, S13, and S14 underlined the rise in their cultural awareness. The comment of S13 was interesting. He said, 'The works we read took place in different places and different times. While we were reading a story by Joyce, it was as if we were on Dublin streets or in 'The Road from Colonus', we travelled both to Greece and England and all gave us different cultural tastes.' S14, on the other hand, was happy to learn about the culture of a specific time and place only by reading.

The lives of the writers and the historical background

S9, S10, S13, S14, S17, S23, S24, S27, S28 all agreed that they developed an awareness for the importance of the background information about the writer of the texts– his/her personal and professional background as well as the characteristics of the period the

writer lived, be it in the sociological, political or historical level. S14, S23 and S24 went more into detail focusing on their own experiences. S14 said, 'I used to write when I was at high school. After the courses, I realized that I was adding some autobiographical elements into my writing too.' S23, on the other hand, stated that 'When I read more about the writers, I realized how much important the family we were all brought up'. S24 said that she gained a new habit now, 'before reading a book, I started to check who the writers are.'

Love for literature and aesthetic appreciation of it

While S2 and S4 remarked that they started to love literature more, S8 and S10 declared their appreciation for literature in detail:

S8: Literature is beautiful because it doesn't just make use of the best lexical items but it also manages somehow to use these items in the best way possible. There is not only one way of saying 'weather is cold'. Instead, you may say, 'the weather is as cold as my enemy's breath.'

S10: I was really amazed by Lawrence while reading his poem 'Snake.' The poet's conscious use of 's' sound to reinforce the meaning was amazing.'

S1, S2, S3, S6, S8, S13, S25, S24, S25 and S27 also mentioned that literature courses were enjoyable and fun saying, 'It was enjoyable. The more I read, the more I wanted to read.'

RQ2. What are the views of the students who took literature courses at Gazi University ELT Department on the contributions of these courses to their linguistic competence in the target language?

In relation to the contribution of literature to their linguistic competence, the participants mostly focused on the classroom discussions – their interaction with each other and the texts, other people's perceptions in discussions, the emergence of different possible meanings; and also the development in their interpretative and inferential skills, as well as the improvement in their four skills and vocabulary repertoire. They also stated their favourite genres and mentioned their plans of using literary texts in their classes.

Classroom discussions

Classroom discussions and cooperation with their peers have been appreciated by the majority of the participants. They all agreed with the contribution of group works and the abundant possibility of meanings a text have:

S1: Reading these works together with my friends helped me a lot. When we are in the classroom environment, we have a chance to realize other people's perspectives on different matters and also we have interaction with each other. Discovering the meanings together increased my curiosity.

S4: I started to look for more meanings behind the lines.

S6: You always tried to include us in the classroom discussions. This interaction increased my interest in literature.

S24: I never thought of that many meanings could emerge from a story or a poem before. While I was trying to make inferences on my own, sometimes failing in it, another person says I deduced this meaning. Now I started to think more and imagine my friends' comments in real life situations as well. Even if they are not with me, I imagine them with me and put myself in their shoes and try to see things from their perspectives as different as possible. It is incredible.

Interpretative and inferential abilities and creative and critical thinking skills

S1, S2, S3, S4, S6, S10, S12, S13, S14, S16, S20, S23, S24, S25, S27 and S29 were thinking in the same vein that literature stimulates their interpretative and inferential abilities; their creative and critical thinking skills. The words of S13 voice the other participants' views on this issue:

S13: In the past years, we took critical reading, critical thinking courses, but they were mostly theoretical. However, within this course, we were analysing a wide range of genres- short stories, poems, plays. Every week we were making analysis and critical thinking. It was precious for me and I definitely think that literature is the very tool to practice and improve our creative and critical thinking skills.

Linguistic competence**Reading Comprehension**

Among four skills, most of the participants - S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S10, S12, S13, S14, S16, S17, S19, S22, S24, S26, S27, S28, S29- agreed that they improved their reading comprehension skills a lot better than before. S3, S10, S16, S17, S19, S20, S21, S28 also expressed their realization of the role of literary works in developing their reading strategies:

S3: The more I read, the more I developed. At first, reading these works was a hard job for me because they are not any like twitter texts or Instagram posts. In time, I got acquainted with such texts and started consciously using techniques. Now I read faster and got better understanding of the harder texts.

S10: I improved myself at one of the sub-skills of reading- making inferences. Moreover, I am now aware of the metaphorical usage of the language which I never noticed before.

S13: I started reading things which I would never read before. Now I feel myself successful in reading literary texts and getting new meanings out of them.

Writing

S2, S3, S4, S7, S14, S22, S27 agreed with the benefit of literature in improving their writing skills. S 22 wanted to share his experience saying, 'It improved my writing skill. A couple of years before, I had intended to write artistic texts. In this sense, especially short stories and plays that we read helped me in improving myself in writing.'

Speaking

S1, S6, S7, S14, S26, S27, S28 mentioned that they felt that they improved in their spoken English as well. S1, S6 and S7 wanted to share their views in more detail:

S1: While analysing the texts, we had to express ourselves speaking and at the same time using all the terminology we learned throughout. It helped us sharpen our spoken English.

S6: I tried to improve my speaking skill, as you tried to involve us in the classroom discussions.

S7: The atmosphere you offered us in the classroom made us speak up. This was different from the other classes which we only listen but never speak.

Pronunciation

Three of the participants - S2, S24, S26 voiced the positive change in their pronunciation. S2 wanted to share his positive comments for this issue saying, 'Hearing such fancy words for the first time and hearing how they are pronounced for the first time really helped me better read and better convey the meaning.'

Listening

When it came to the listening skill, it is only three participants - S5, S17, S26 who mentioned the positive effect of literature on this skill. S5 drew the attention to watching the films of the works saying, 'I improve my listening skill, when I watch the film of that story.'

Vocabulary repertoire

Most of the participants - S1, S2, S4, S6, S12, S16, S17, S18, S22, S23, S24, S27, S28 agreed on the positive effect of literary works in the enhancement of their vocabulary repertoire. In general, they said they learned words, especially the archaic ones, that it was impossible for them to learn otherwise. S23 mentioned her own experience which goes in the same vein with the other participants as 'It definitely contributed to my vocabulary store. We encountered some old words not used any more now. Having read the poem 'Hap', for instance I learned that 'hap' was the origin for the word 'perhaps.'

S1 and S18 thought that understanding long descriptive paragraphs are not that difficult any more. S1's comment was very explanatory on this point:

S1: In literary works, we quite often saw vivid descriptions of an object or what goes on in the minds of the characters. In these texts I encountered with difficult words that I could not see otherwise in any other text. I learned different adjectives to describe a person or an object. Considering all these, I can say it really contributed to me by offering a wide range of vocabulary options.

Favourite genres

When it comes to their favourite genre, S4, S6, S7, S8, S12, S18, S19, S20, S21, S22, S23, S27 preferred short stories, while S1, S5, S16, S17, S18, S22, S23, S24, S28, S29 went for drama. S12, S16, S19, S20, S21, S22, S25, and S29 expressed that they liked poetry more.

Using literature in language classes

In the conversation when they were asked whether they are planning to use literature in their classes in future, S22 and S26 rejected it openly since they found literature difficult themselves. S20 admitted that she is already using Frost's poem 'The Road Not Taken' in her classes at a language centre. While S1 thinks of using the writer's background to make his students build the connection with the writer in reading and understanding a literary work, S2 and S24 preferred using literature to make suggestions.

On the other hand, S13, S15 and S27 expressed their willingness to use literature in their classes without stating which genre. S4 and S7 think of using short stories because they are short and practicable; S18 chose short story and drama because they are authentic. While S14 made no distinction between the types and wanted to use all genres, S22, S25, S28 and S29 went for drama.

Differently from the other participants, S11, S12, S13, and S15 mentioned the lack of practice for the strategies in using literature in language classes.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The need for the implementation of literature into language teaching programmes have been agreed by many experts in this area. Considering the significant role it carries out in learning the target language and culture, literature and literary texts have been included into the curriculum of these programmes. In the present curriculum in Turkey, there are two types of literature courses – English Literature I and II, Language Literature I and II only 2 hours weekly for each. These courses aim to contribute to student teachers' improvement in linguistic, cultural and affective senses. The present study aims to investigate how literature courses contribute to student teachers in ELT Programmes- personally or academically.

From the results derived from the semi-structure interview in this study, it can be concluded that the majority of the participants (17/29) developed an interest for literature and feel more motivated. When it comes to achieving self- knowledge, it is only 8 of them who perceived self-awareness and changed in a positive way becoming more sensitive, tolerant, and equipped with new problem solving strategies. 7 of the participants felt changed emotionally identifying themselves with the characters in the texts and developed into some affective responses such as feeling pity or empathy for them. While 8 of the participants achieved new perspectives both in understanding the other people and their own selves, 4 of them emphasized the universality of the themes in the texts serving them for the same purposes. Learning about the human psyche, especially the dark side of life attracted 4 of the participants' attention. The other 5 implied explicitly that the texts they read made them see and understand people much better. 12 of them found specifically the writers' biographies and also the cultural aspects like social, political, historical background information as very helpful in relating them to the texts. The results show that nearly half of the participants developed a positive attitude towards literature by stating that they love and appreciate it.

In terms of its contribution to their linguistic proficiency and critical thinking skills, it can be concluded that the majority of the participants (28) agreed that classroom

discussions were very helpful and that these discussions developed their interpretative and inferential abilities as well as creative and critical thinking skills. When it comes to the change in their linguistic competence, out of four skills, majority of the participants (20) believed that they developed their reading comprehension skills and 8 of them added also that they generated some reading strategies for their future professional lives as well. 13 of the participants consider literature as a rich source for vocabulary enhancement. Both for writing and speaking, it is 7 participants for each who thought it was helpful in developing these two skills. While 3 of them consider literature helpful for achieving good pronunciation, the other 3 thought that they improved their listening skills.

They wanted also to state their preferences for the genres. While 12 of them preferred short stories, 10 of them favoured drama, 8 of them went for poetry. When it comes to their willingness to use literature in their classes in the future, 4 of them stated that the practice for its use was deficient and 2 others, most probably because of the same reason voiced that they would and could definitely not use literature. On the other hand, 1 of the participant shared her experience that she has already been using it in her classes at a language centre where she works part-time. 4 of them agreed that they would use it without stating the genre. Yet, 5 of the participants chose drama, while 3 of them short stories for their future career plans.

The present study is consistent with the previous studies conducted on the role and the use of literature in language proficiency (Carroli, 2008; Collie and Slater, 1987; Duff and Maley, 1990; Frantzen, 2002; Hişmanoğlu, 2005; Kern, 2000; Lazar, 2008; McCay, 2001; Mckennzie, 2000), its contributions to the personal growth as an individual (Carter, 2007; Duff and Maley, 1990; Widdowson, 1982), building an awareness for the social, political, historical, or cultural events happening in a particular society (Duff and Maley, 1990; Floris 2004), and stimulating development in aesthetic appreciation (Nasr, 2001) and critical thinking (Collie and Slater, 1987; Gadjusek, 1988; Ghosn, 2002; Van, 2009). The current research confirms the literature by showing that literary texts contribute to the students at Gazi University ELT programme in improving their

literary, linguistic, cultural and communicative competence as well as their development as individuals in emotional, intellectual, moral and social aspects. The results obtained from the study indicate that literature courses have led to a meaningful increase in the interest and motivation of the participants, enhanced their understanding of the universal human condition, other people and most important of all their own selves in relation to the others. They developed their interpersonal relationships. It encouraged sensitivity, tolerance, emotional intelligence and self-awareness in them. Interaction with these real-life, meaningful, authentic texts, they are presented with new worlds, new perspectives, values, and cultures. Interactive classroom discussions have been quite helpful for them in developing self-confidence in inference making and critical thinking abilities.

This study indicates that at the end of the 3rd grade, student teachers highly developed their interest in literature and their literacy. Literature made a positive change in their personal growth and also in their inference making and critical thinking abilities. They had the chance to access to the very culture of these worlds which they do not live in and improved themselves understanding the culture of the target language that they are learning and will be teaching. They broadened their knowledge about the social, political, historical background of a certain culture. They have a positive attitude towards life. Besides these benefits of literature in cultural and personal growth, with the diversity of language styles, many different structures and verbal/non-verbal usages of communication it offers, literature enhanced their language awareness and acquisition. The wide range of possible lexical structures contributed mostly to their reading comprehension skills and creating reading strategies, and the improvement of their repertoire of vocabulary. While in listening very little progress has been detected, their writing and speaking skills also improved but not as much as their reading skills.

Study limitations and recommendations for further research

The present study was carried out with the 4th grade student teachers at Gazi University ELT Programme to reveal the positive effects of literature courses in language learning. However, the weekly 2 course hours administered for both teaching literature and its


use in language classes are too much limited both for introducing the learners to the basic knowledge about the literary terms and literary figures of art as well as some historical, and cultural background by analysing various texts written by many different writers in different historical periods. Time allocated for literature courses can be increased. It is only then the desired language competence in all skills can be achieved. The research group was 29 student teachers in the present study. Further studies can be done with larger groups to make generalizations. The data collection method in this study was qualitative. For further studies, quantitative studies can also be carried out. Nevertheless, the insights gained from this study may be of assistance to make the contributions of literature in language classes and the importance of its implementation into teaching language evident.

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APPENDIX A

Semi-structured interview questions

1. How can you evaluate yourself in terms of your interest in literature before and after the courses you took?
2. How do you think literature will contribute to your future life? Personally or academically?
3. Did literature courses caused an emotional, intellectual, moral, or social change in you?
4. Did literature contribute to your achievement of self-knowledge?
5. Do you think you developed different points of view in understanding other people?
6. Did literature courses make you think on the universal issues?
7. Do you think you improved your literary competence?
8. Do you think you improved your cultural competence?
9. In what sense literature contributed to your improvement in target language? In reading, writing, listening, speaking, critical thinking or in your vocabulary repertoire?
10. Do you think these courses make language learning more enjoyable?
11. Did you develop an appreciation for literature?
12. Which genre did you like most?
13. Do you plan to use literature in your classes? If so, which genres? If not, why not?

APPENDIX B

Ethics Committee Approval

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 28.09.2022-E.466305



T.C.
GAZİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Etik Komisyonu

Sayı : E-77082166-604.01.02-466305
Konu : Değerlendirme ve Onay

28.09.2022

Sayın Doç. Dr. Semra SARAÇOĞLU
İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı Başkanlığı - Öğretim Üyesi

Araştırmacı grubu Semra SARAÇOĞLU'dan oluşan "*The Contributions of Literature Courses in ELT Programmes*" başlıklı araştırma öneriniz Komisyonumuzun 13.09.2022 tarih ve 15 sayılı toplantısında görüşülmüş olup,

Çalışmanızın, yapılması planlanan yerlerden izin alınması koşuluyla yapılmasında etik açıdan bir sakınca bulunmadığına oybirliği ile karar verilmiş ve karara ilişkin imza listesi ekte gönderilmiştir.

Bilgilerinizi rica ederim.

Araştırma Kod No: 2022 - 1052

Prof. Dr. İsmail KARAKAYA
Komisyon Başkanı

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GENİŞ ÖZET

Amaç

Yıllardır edebiyatın dil öğretimi programlarına entegrasyonu konusu tartışılmaktadır. Bu programlarda, dilbilim metotlarının daha öncelikli olması sebebiyle edebiyat derslerinin müfredattan tamamen kaldırıldığı da olmuş, ancak 1900'lerde Dilbilgisi Çeviri Yöntemi popüler olduktan sonra otantik materyal ihtiyacı sebebiyle edebiyatın dil öğretimindeki önemi fark edilmiştir. Asıl 1980'ler sonrası otantik oluşu ve anlamlı bağlamlar oluşturmayı mümkün kılması sebebiyle ve de iletişimsel dil öğretiminin önemi anlaşıldığından edebiyat da dil öğretiminin önemli bir unsuru hâline gelmiştir.

İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bağlamında ise, edebiyatın yüksek eğitimde öğrencilere kaliteli öğrenme konusunda katkı sağlayacağına inanılmıştır. Edebiyat sunduğu farklı türler ve farklı konularla aday öğretmenlerin hem kişisel gelişimlerine hem de hedef dildeki yetkinliklerine katkı sağlar. Onlara dilin estetik kullanımıyla yazılmış hedef dilde çok çeşitli dil kalıpları ve ifade kullanımları sunarak dil farkındalıklarını geliştirdiği gibi aynı zamanda zengin bir sözcük dağarcığı sunar. Eleştirel düşünme becerilerini olduğu kadar hayal güçlerini de geliştirmelerine katkı sağlar.

YÖK'ün 1982 senesinde tüm yükseköğretimi bünyesinde toplamasıyla, kültürlerarası iletişimin sadece dilbilgisi ile mümkün olamayacağı anlaşılmış ve dil öğretiminde, özellikle İngiliz Dili Eğitimi alanında, çağdaş hedeflere ulaşmak için bu programların müfredatına edebiyat dersleri eklenmesi kararı alınmıştır. Ancak yıllar içinde bu derslerin hem niteliği hem de sayısı konusunda çekişmeli görüşler ortaya çıkmış; sonucunda da sırasıyla öğretmen eğitiminde iyileştirme yapılması bağlamında 1997, 2006 ve 2018 yıllarındaki yeniden yapılandırma sürecinde edebiyat derslerine ayrılan haftalık ders saati, kredileri ve de ders içerik ve isimleri de değişikliğe uğramıştır. Bu çalışma hâlihazırda ders çeşit ve saatleriyle edebiyat derslerinin İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Ana Bilim Dalındaki aday öğretmenlere katkısını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Araştırmanın amacına uygun olarak aşağıdaki araştırma sorularına cevap aranmıştır:

1. İngiliz Dili Eğitimi programında edebiyat dersi alan öğrencilerin edebiyatın kişisel gelişimine katkıları konusundaki görüşleri nelerdir?
2. İngiliz Dili Eğitimi programında edebiyat dersi alan öğrencilerin edebiyatın hedef dil gelişimine katkıları konusundaki görüşleri nelerdir?

Yöntem

Amacına uygun olarak, bu çalışmada nitel araştırma metodu kullanılmıştır. Çalışma, Gazi Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili Eğitimi ABD'de 3. sınıfı tamamlamış ve programdaki mevcut 2. ve 3. sınıf edebiyat derslerini görmüş 29 gönüllü öğrencinin katılımıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcıların konu ile ilgili kişisel fikirleri, deneyimleri ve inançlarını derinlemesine yansıtabilmeleri amacıyla nitel veri toplama aracı olarak yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler uygulanmıştır. Her katılımcıya daha önce araştırmanın amacı doğrultusunda hazırlanmış sorular yöneltilmiş, katılımcıdan katılımcıya soruların sırası değiştirilmiştir. Dörnyei (2007)'nin de belirttiği gibi araştırmacı alanında uzmanı yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler en ideal olanlardır. Bu yüzden de bu çalışmada nitel veri toplama yöntemi tercih edilmiştir. Görüşmeler 10 ila 15 dakika sürmüş olup

tamamı kayıt altına alınmıştır. Daha sonra 29 katılımcıdan elde edilen veri içerik analizi yöntemiyle birbiriyle karşılaştırılıp değerlendirilmiştir.

Bulgular ve Sonuçlar

Görüşmenin bulguları, edebiyat derslerinin katılımcılar üzerinde kişisel gelişim, edebi, dilsel, kültürel ve iletişimsel yeterlilik konularında olumlu yönde ancak belli alanlarda ve sınırlı derecede etkili olduğunu göstermiştir. Kişisel anlamda katılımcıların edebiyata olan ilgileri ve motivasyonlarının arttığı, edebi yetkinliklerinin geliştiği, başkalarını ve kendini anlama konularında da farkındalık geliştirdikleri gözlemlenmiştir. Edebiyatın katılımcıların hedef dildeki gelişimleri, eleştirel düşünme yetisi geliştirmelerindeki faydası açısından da, sonuçlar gösteriyor ki, sınıf içi tartışmalar onların hem okuduğunu anlama, çıkarımlarda bulunma ve yorum yapabilme kabiliyetlerine, hem de konuşma, yazma ve dinleme yetilerinin gelişmesine yardımcı olmuştur. Dilsel yetkinlikleri açısından detaylı değerlendirmek gerekirse de 4 dil becerisinden sırasıyla en çok okuduğunu anlama ve okuma stratejileri geliştirme, sonra sözcük dağarcığını zenginleştirme, daha sonra konuşma, yazma ve en son olarak da dinlemede etkili olup gelişime katkı sağladığı ortaya çıkmıştır.

Tartışma

Edebiyatın hedef dili ve kültürünü öğrenmedeki rolü düşünülünce dil öğretimi programlarının müfredatına dahil edilmesi gereklidir. Türkiye'deki son müfredatta iki tür edebiyat dersi bulunmaktadır: 2. sınıfta İngiliz Edebiyatı I ve II, 3. sınıfta Dil ve Edebiyat Öğretimi I ve II. Çalışmada çıkan sonuçlar, edebiyatın dil öğretimine katkısı konusunda daha önce yapılan çalışmaları onaylamaktadır. Bu dersler, Gazi Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili Eğitiminde öğrenim gören aday öğretmenlerin hem dil, hem edebi, hem iletişimsel, hem de kültürel bağlamda akademik olarak gelişmelerini sağlamış olup; bireysel olarak da onları duygusal, entelektüel, ahlaki ve sosyal alanlarda daha olgunlaştırmıştır. Otantik metinlerle, sınıf arkadaşları ve öğretmenleriyle oluşan etkileşim kendilerine olan güvenlerini, konuşma ve eleştirel düşünme yetkinliklerini artırmış; daha duyarlı, başkalarına karşı daha anlayışlı, öz farkındalığı gelişmiş bireyler olmuşlardır. Hedef dilin kültürünü öğrenerek, o toplumun toplumsal, siyasi, tarihi geçmişi hakkında bilgilenmiş, hayata karşı pozitif bir tutum geliştirmişlerdir. Ayrıca, dil çeşitliliği ve farklı kullanım tarzları ve yapılarla en çok okuduğunu anlama yetilerini geliştirmiş; okuma stratejileri oluşturma konusunda da epey yol kat etmişlerdir. Okudukları metinler, sözcük dağarcıklarına katkıda bulunduğu gibi konuşma, yazma ve az da olsa dinleme yetilerinin gelişmesinde olumlu etki yapmıştır. Ancak, veri sonuçları gösteriyor ki bu gelişme yazma, konuşma ve dinleme becerileri konusunda istenilen düzeyde olamamıştır. Çalışmanın sonunda, ders sürelerinin uzatılması ve ileride yapılacak çalışmaların daha geniş gruplarla ve nicel olarak da ele alınabileceği konusunda öneride bulunulmuştur.

