

## LANGUAGE TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE INTEGRATION OF LITERATURE INTO EFL INSTRUCTION: BLACK SEA REGION CASE

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### ABSTRACT

Authentic, pure literary texts are hardly included in English Language course books in Turkish public schools. This study therefore explores what kind of attitudes the language teachers have towards the use of literature in their classes and also whether the language teachers are willing to use additional literary texts so as to enhance linguistic and cultural efficiency in class. The content analysis of the course books was done in order to examine to what extent literary texts were involved in the materials. A semi-structured interview was held with 33 teachers, currently employed in Ordu, Giresun, Trabzon and Rize in the Black Sea Region. Interviews were tape recorded, and transcribed verbatim. The research shows that most of the language teachers have a positive attitude towards literary texts but the strictly centralized education system in Turkey, also handicapped with various entrance exams, do not allow for adequate incorporation of literature into language classes, and that the English teachers frequently prefer using simplified versions of literary materials for linguistic purposes and practical reasons.

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**İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN YABANCI DİL  
ÖĞRETİMİNDE YAZINSAL METİN KULLANIMINA  
YAKLAŞIMLARI: KARADENİZ BÖLGESİ ÖRNEĞİ**

**ÖZ**

Türkiye’deki ortaöğretim İngilizce ders kitaplarında otantik edebî metinlere çok az yer verilmektedir. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma İngilizce öğretmenlerinin edebiyatın dil öğretiminde kullanılmasına nasıl baktıkları ve öğrencilerin dilsel ve kültürel gelişimini artırmak amacıyla ders kitabı dışında ilave edebî metinlere yer verme konusundaki tutumlarını araştırmaktadır. Çalışma kapsamında yazınsal metinlere ne ölçüde yer verildiğini belirlemek amacıyla İngilizce ders kitaplarının içerik analizleri yapılmış ve Karadeniz bölgesinde Ordu, Giresun, Trabzon ve Rize’de halen öğretmenlik yapmakta olan 33 kişiyle yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatlar gerçekleştirilmiştir. Mülakatlar kayda alınmış ve aynen yazıya aktarılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin çoğunluğunun edebi metinlerin kullanımına olumlu yaklaştığı, ancak muhtelif sınavların baskısı altında olan ve aşırı merkezleşmiş Türk eğitim sisteminin edebiyatın müfredata yeterince katılmasına müsaade etmediği; öğretmenlerin genellikle dilsel amaçlar ve pratik kaygılar nedeniyle otantik edebî metinlere pek yer vermedikleri ya da bu metinlerin sadeleştirilmiş biçimlerini kullanmayı tercih ettikleri ortaya çıkmıştır.

**Introductio:**

There has been a long-standing debate on the integration of literature in English Language Teaching (ELT). Recent research suggests various cogent reasons for the use of literary texts as language teaching material. Tasneen<sup>1</sup> points out the linguistic, methodological, and motivational benefits in the use of literature in EFL instruction. According to Tasneen<sup>2</sup>, literary texts expose students to real life usage of patterns and words rather than artificial settings. Moreover, literary texts provide a lot of opportunities to language learners in that they can make interpretations and make their own understanding of the material. Students can be motivated to express

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- 1 W. Tasneen, “Literary texts in language classroom: a study of teachers’ and students’ views at international schools in Bangkok”, *Asian EFL Journal*, 2010, 12 (4), p.173-187.  
2 W. Tasneen, *ibid*.

themselves when they relate the situations and characters in the texts with their own authentic setting and their own world.

Maley<sup>3</sup> makes a subtle distinction between teaching literature and teaching English through literature. The focus is mostly on non-linguistic elements in the former one, and learners may be regarded at a certain level of language proficiency to get the feeling and pleasure of literary works. By using their current proficiency in the target language, learners work on literary and cultural elements in the subject text. However, in the latter concept, language teachers' focus is on basic language skills, and literary works are regarded as language teaching aids to promote learners' language proficiency. Students are presented with hidden cultural and intellectual elements while they are working on surface meaning and linguistic elements that are interwoven in the text. It is the teacher's choice whether to work on only linguistic features of the text or to direct students to focus on hidden literary aspects of the work. However, Burke and Brumfit<sup>4</sup> hold the view that literature should be treated as a separate subject in order to make readers get its pleasure entirely.

In spite of centrally-controlled syllabi, teachers' attitudes towards the issue and their classroom implementation have an important role in the outcome of the educational process. Teachers' approach can be determined by their personal interests, qualifications, background experience and pedagogical orientations. This study attempts to investigate language teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of literature in English teaching.

### **General Outlook on the Issue**

The long-standing controversy about the integration of literature in language teaching seems to have reached a standstill point, at least to a considerable extent, nowadays, and many authorities emphasize its advantages in their studies. Collie and Slater<sup>5</sup> put forward that literature provides authentic materials to use in the classroom context. They also argue that literary texts are valuable sources to increase cultural awareness on the target society and they constitute good examples of written language and vocabulary usages for language learners. However, all literary authentic

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3 A. Maley, *Down from the pedestal: literature as resource in literature and the learner: methodological approaches*, 1989, Cambridge: Modern English Publications.

4 C.J. Brumfit & R.A. Carter, *Literature and language teaching*, 2000, Oxford: OUP.

5 J. Collie & S. Slater, *Literature in the language classroom*, 1994, Cambridge: CUP.

materials should be regarded as complementary to modern teaching aids that teachers use in their classes frequently.

Maley<sup>6</sup> lists seven basic reasons for the usage of literature in language teaching classrooms. Namely, “universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy, suggestive power, and ambiguity”. Lazar<sup>7</sup> similarly states that literature provides motivating and invaluable authentic materials, which have educational benefits at the same time. Moreover, according to Burke and Brumfit<sup>8</sup>, the general aims of language teachers in using literature in their classes can be classified as developing literal, analytical, social, and imaginative skills; supporting humanitarian attitudes; and giving information about both literature and language.

Literature can also be a valuable source for those who focus on its linguistic benefits rather than non-linguistic ones.

Cruz<sup>9</sup> states in his study:

A literary text provides students with a much clearer idea about the syntactic structure of a written text and to what extent written language differs from spoken language. By getting used to the formation and function of sentences, to the structure of a paragraph, a section or a chapter, their writing skill improve and their speech skill can gain eloquence. Of course, students considerably expand their vocabulary by being exposed to a literary text.

Van<sup>10</sup> also similarly suggests advantages of using literature in EFL classes: It provides meaningful contexts and offers a wide range of vocabulary. In addition to developing cultural awareness, literature encourages critical thinking, appealing to imagination and creativity.

Yet, there are counter arguments on avoiding the use of literature in language classrooms. For example, Leech<sup>11</sup> argues that, despite their value and authenticity, literary texts can present examples of vocabulary, grammar

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6 A. Maley, *ibid*, p. 12.

7 G. Lazar, “*Literature and language teaching*”, 1993, New York: CUP.

8 S.J. Burke & C.J. Brumfit, “Is literature language? or is language literature?”, In Brumfit & Carter (Eds.), *Literature and language teaching*, 2000, p. 171-176, Oxford: OUP.

9 J.H.R. Cruz, “The role of literature and culture in English language teaching”, *Linguística Aplicada*, 2010, 7, p. 4. [http://relinguistica.azc.uam.mx/no007/no07\\_art09.htm](http://relinguistica.azc.uam.mx/no007/no07_art09.htm)

10 T.T.M. Van, “The relevance of literary analysis to teaching literature in the EFL classroom”, *English Teaching Forum*, 2009, 3, p. 2-9.

11 G. Leech, “*A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry*”, 1973, London: Longman.

and other linguistic elements that are too complicated for language learners who are at low levels of proficiency.

Instead of focusing on the rigid dichotomy of whether literature is to be included or not, it would be more appropriate to seek answer to the question of how literary texts can possibly be included in an effort to create a more meaningful atmosphere to encourage students' involvement Collie and Slater<sup>12</sup> underline that suitable texts should be determined based on students' interests and expectations. It is the teacher's role to fine-tune the inclusion of literature in classrooms in order to achieve the main goals of the teaching-learning process. As Brumfit and Carter<sup>13</sup> state, teachers should decide the purpose for using literary texts, and work on possible problematic structures which can be far beyond the students' level. Also, Khatib, Rezaei and Derekshan<sup>14</sup> stress that selection of literary texts is a difficult process in which the teacher should consider language proficiency, age, gender, and background knowledge of the students. In addition to learner factors, features of literary texts are another determiner in the process. Similarly, Khatib and Nourzadeh<sup>15</sup> recommend in their study that the accessibility of texts in terms of content, language, genre, and culture is an influential factor for successful integration of literature. They also argue that teachers' help is valuable for making unfamiliar concepts and items appropriate for students' current competence.

Until the 1997 education reform, language teaching in Turkey was dominated by classical approaches. As Kırkgöz<sup>16</sup> states, the novel curriculum in 1997 is the milestone in the Turkish education system, since it brings communicative purposes into the field of language teaching in Turkey. In her study, Kırkgöz<sup>17</sup> states:

The basic goal of the policy is stated as the development of learners' communicative capacity to prepare them to use the target language for

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12 J. Collie & S. Slater, *ibid.*

13 C.J. Brumfit & R.A. Carter, *ibid.*

14 M. Khatib, S. Rezaie & A. Derakhshan, "Literature in EFL/ESL classroom", *Canadian ELT Journal*, 2011, 4(1), p. 201-208.

15 M. Khatib & S. Nourzadeh, "Some recommendations for integrating literature into EFL/ESL classrooms", *Canadian ELT Journal*, 2011, 1(2), p. 259-263.

16 Y. Kırkgöz, "English language teaching in Turkey: Challenges towards the 21st century", In Braine (Ed.) *Teaching English to the world: History, curriculum and practice*, 2005, p. 159-169, London: Lawrence Erlbaum.

17 Y. Kırkgöz, "English language teaching in Turkey: Policy changes and their implementations", *RELC Journal*, 2007, 38, p. 221.

communication in classroom activities. The curriculum promotes student-centered learning, to replace the traditional teacher-centered view to learning.

Before the 1997 education reform, ELT course books in Turkey included various reading comprehension activities and texts which were generally long and decontextualized. The texts were generated in order to exemplify target grammatical structures within a context. This prevailing approach which is reflected in not only syllabuses but also language course books used in schools is well illustrated by Kayaoğlu<sup>18</sup>:

The effects of different approaches to language can also be seen in syllabuses in which methods, materials, the roles of teacher and student, and even drills are likely to be based on the assumptions ultimately derived from the approaches. Grammatical syllabuses, for example, appear to give great importance to grammar, assuming that language is a finite set of rules which should be mastered.

In the years following the education reform, the focus shifted to communicative purposes and cultural interaction in the field of ELT in Turkey. This shift has led to the design and application of new course books. At this point, the inclusion of literature in course books and in language teaching has become a significant issue for both teachers and learners. From this perspective, course books are given a pivotal role<sup>19</sup> (Allwright 1990; Ur 1996) since classroom activities revolve around course books that appear to have become the only resources that language teachers are expected to follow as stressed by Kayaoğlu<sup>20</sup>:

Given the fact that a typical language classroom revolves around the coursebook, which in practice means the coursebook becomes the syllabus itself, determining what and how language is to be taught and in what order, the coursebook becomes a very vital element conducive to effective and efficient teaching-learning process. Therefore, the information to be obtained from the analysis of coursebook evaluation is of utmost importance not only for understanding the merits and appropriateness of the current coursebook but also for the effectiveness of language teaching in general.

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18 M.N. Kayaoğlu, "Language in Wider perspective", *Language Journal*, 1998, 73, p. 66.

19 P. Ur, *A course in language teaching: practice and theory*, 1996, Cambridge: CUP.

20 M.N. Kayaoğlu, "A Critical Appraisal of the Language Textbook", *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Journal of Kırşehir Education Faculty*, 2011, 12(4), p. 342.

This issue of strictly-controlled materials is further stressed by Altan<sup>21</sup>, who states that in addition to teaching materials even methodologies “tend to be identical throughout the country”.

The current literature suggests that course books offer a certain ordered framework within which foreign language teachers are guided about what to do –providing some relief to experienced teachers. This is based on the premise that teachers are flexible to choose and adapt the course book in line with their own settings and needs (Chamber 1997, Sheldon 1987, Huthhinson 1987, Ellis 1997, Cunningsworth 1995). However, there is an irony here because;

In EFL settings like in Turkey the primary source and channel of having exposure to the target language has become through a textbook that the teacher has to follow systematically. A coursebook is not a simple tool which can be shaped and modified in the hands of teachers as it should be. Yet, mainly because of heavily centralized education system, unfortunately a material shapes the teachers and formulates the teaching and learning activities... The centralized education system with strictly controlled syllabus in Turkey leaves almost no room for teachers to play any role either in the selection or adaptation process of the coursebook<sup>22</sup>.

Since the integration of literary texts into language teaching is a relatively new issue in the Turkish language education system, this matter seems to have received only sporadic attention in the Turkish context. Türker<sup>23</sup> (1991) states that using literary texts in language teaching is not an easy task for teachers. Literary texts should be selected carefully that vocabulary, grammar and other linguistic elements, represented by them should be suitable for learners’ levels. Comprehensibility and teachability are important factors in each step of language teaching, and as Türker<sup>24</sup> notes “A literary piece is not an end in itself but the means of beginning a creative process in the minds and emotions of the student”.

In their study Akyel and Yalçın<sup>25</sup> state that many language teachers in

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21 M.Z. Altan, “Attitudes toward foreign language learning in Turkey: A Historical-Sociocultural Look”, *Language Journal*, 1996, 43, p. 87.

22 M.N. Kayaoğlu, *ibid*, p. 352.

23 F. Türker, “Using literature in language teaching”, *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 1991, 6, p. 303.

24 F. Türker, *ibid*.

25 A. Akyel & E. Yalçın, “Literature in the EFL class: A study of goal-achievement incongruence”, *ELT Journal*, 1990, 44(3), p. 171-180.

Turkey use literary texts in order to expand their students' understanding of the world; to increase their cultural awareness, and to help them get pleasure from literature. They also argue that only a few of the language teachers in their study aim to promote their students' language competence by using literary texts.

### METHODOLOGY

This cross-sectional research is based on qualitative data collected through primarily face-to-face in-depth (semi-structured) interviews with English language teachers who have been employed in public state schools in Giresun, Trabzon, and Rize in the Black Sea Region in Turkey. Since the aim was to investigate language teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of literature into foreign language instruction and to examine, in their coverage of literary texts, English course books, namely *Primary Education: Time for English 4-5*; *Spot On 6-7-8*, *Secondary Education: New Bridge To Success 9-10-11-12*, *Breeze 9-10*, currently being used from 4<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grades, we adopted a qualitative perspective, (depending on the nature of the research question, (a) to gain insight into teachers' perceptions of the issue rather than statistical analysis, (b) to generate rich and detailed data that contribute to an in-depth understanding of the matter from the participants' perspectives. Content analysis was limited to (only) the coursebooks' expressive contents. Course analysis was limited to the expressive contents of the coursebooks<sup>26</sup> and used as a checking mechanism to provide triangulation for data gathered from the participants' self-reports.

A semi-structured interview was constructed on the basis of the research question and preliminary findings from the field work. Interviews were carried out by two experienced social science researchers and recorded as digital audio files. Each tape was transcribed verbatim, and the respondents' words were never corrected with the intention of reflecting their thoughts, ideas, and feelings to the fullest extent. The data was organized into relevant categories and recurring themes for analysis<sup>27</sup>. Each category was presented by participants' own self-reports which were followed by an interpretation within the boundaries of the collected data.

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26 Krippendorff, "*Content Analysis. An Introduction to its methodology*", 2004, London: Sage Publication.

27 Z. Dörnyei, "*Research Methods in Applied Linguistics*", 2007, Oxford: OUP.

## RESULTS

Our initial analysis identified that course books consist of “themes” about current issues like the environment, technology, sports, family etc. These themes are divided into sections which address basic language skills one at a time. The content is usually selected to represent particular grammatical structures. For example, there is a unit named as “Daily Routines” in a 9<sup>th</sup> grade course book (*New Bridge To Success*), and it is clear that the aim of this unit and all its activities are geared towards teaching “Present Simple Tense”. There are no original forms of literary texts in the course books in question. Instead, there are simplified versions of some famous literary works. For example, in a course book for 10<sup>th</sup> (Breeze) there is a unit named “Art” that includes a short scene from Shakespeare’s famous drama, “Romeo and Juliet”. There are also some short poems and passages taken from novels and stories in the course books. On the other hand, culture is presented within units like “Culture” or “Values”. It can be said that course books do not use literature to represent the target culture.

### Interview Analysis

The data obtained from interviews was classified into categories organized by interview questions. The responses given to each question were analyzed and are discussed under each question. Certain quotations were used to represent participants’ genuine thoughts.

### The Type of Literary Texts in the Course Books

The participants were initially asked to respond to the question of whether the course books they used contained literary texts. While a great majority of the teachers reported to have some sort of literature in the materials, some interestingly gave “no answer” to the question, indicating that teachers have different perceptions of what a literary text means. To illustrate the picture, some quotations are given below:

- *While working at primary and high schools in Trabzon during 2010-2012, I followed a commonly-used English language teaching coursebook titled as “Spot On” Breeze” and “Unique. In this series, there are some literary texts, though few,, such as “song lyrics”, “short stories”, and “fairy tales”, and “simplified versions of novels.*

- *There is no literary text in our course books, but there are two or three simplified versions of texts or fairy tales.*

• *Infract not, but there are only some simplified versions. For example, a fairy tale in my course books, not can be said a literary text, only simplified versions (8).*

The books contain simplified versions of short stories, fairy tales, scenes from drama and plays, short poems, biographies and riddles. As indicated in the quotations above, some teachers, though few in number, had low image of simplified versions, bringing us to the fundamental issue. Once literary texts are modified and simplified to meet a pedagogic purpose, to what extent they represent real and authentic samples of the original language and the real world is open to discussion. On the other hand, simplified versions of texts may be useful for providing comprehensible and attractive teaching materials for learners. As Gilroy<sup>28</sup> found in her study, the teachers generally mention short fictions as literary materials; they do not deal with longer texts such as novels or dramas/plays. Short stories are especially regarded as valuable teaching aids since they promote reading comprehension skills as well as analytical thinking within a limited time. Arioğul<sup>29</sup> and Hişmanoğlu<sup>30</sup> state the benefits of short stories in their studies. They state that short stories are easy and time-saving as a teaching material compared to other literary genres. Literary texts are claimed to promote critical thinking and creativity skills; they also motivate students to read authentic materials. Also, it has been argued that language learners regard novels, stories, and short fictions as effective literary texts in developing their language skills<sup>31</sup>.

### **The Type of Literary Texts Preferred by Teachers**

To the question of what type of literary texts the teachers would prefer to use in their classes, all of the teachers appeared to be in agreement upon certain types such as poetry, short stories, short novels, and tales.

• *I would use them for the students at primary level, because the vocabulary and structures in these texts were highly likely to be asked in*

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28 M. Gilroy, "An investigation into teachers' attitudes to using literature in the language classroom", *Edinburgh Working Papers in Applied Linguistics*, 1995, 6, p. 1-17.

29 S. Arioğul, "The teaching of reading through short stories in advanced classes", *Unpublished MA thesis*, 2001, Ankara: Hacettepe University.

30 M. Hişmanoğlu, "Teaching English through literature", *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 2005, 1(1), p. 53-66.

31 A. Akyel & E. Yalçın, *ibid.*

*Level Determination Exam (SBS). In addition, students used to enjoy following the lyrics of the song while listening to the song. To be honest, at high schools, we were teaching just “grammar” to regular classes; therefore, we would skip some parts, such as difficult pieces of texts as reading exercises.*

- *As they are too less, I do not skip, however, I do rarely. To put into perspective, in the 8 the grade in Unit 10, ‘Modern Version of Cinderella’ and ‘Hansel and Gretel’ are included and they are expected to be studied in one week, ie. four hours, however their vocabulary coverage and syntactic structures are completely new for the students. So, I skip one of them and I use the other by applying some adaptations resulting from the difficulties mentioned in F 1.*

- *Generally stories, short stories, of course. Maybe some articles about technology or sports, we can use during the class.*

- *I think novels or stories could be. For example, a fairy tale. And, they could read it, and then I could use “Wh- questions” to comprehend the meaning.*

- *I would like to use any kind of literary text from poems, short stories, excerpts from some novels (adult or young adult), myths, legends to autobiographies, plays and animated stories. This will provide variety of texts which means the course can appeal interests of all kinds of learners.*

- *It does not matter as long as the text is appropriate for the students. If the level is right, the kind can be determined from the feedback of the target students as one class may like poems while another class likes novels.*

However, what is interesting to note from their their self-reports was that most teachers appeared to have been stimulated in their desire to use literary text by their methodological and pedagogic concerns rather than by their value as aesthetic representations or source of pleasure. Yet, it is not fair to blame language teachers for pursuing practical purposes in the use of literary texts in a system where the contents are haeavily centralized and controlled.

### **Do teachers use “literary texts” willingly?**

There are apparently some simplified versions of known literary works in the course books, though this is limited. It would be informative to know whether the teachers felt that they had to use them because of the strictly-controlled syllabus or whether they were enthusiastic about utilizing them of

their own will. With the exception of five participants, all of the subjects expressed positive feelings about the use of literary texts

- *Yes, I use them willingly, because I think that students should have a general idea about world classics and literature.*

- *I'd like to use stories. For example, real stories, action stories, shortly stories that will take the attention of the students.*

- *I use them willingly, if the literary text is suitable for students understanding.*

- *Yes, in my lessons I use them willingly. First of all, they arouse my students' interest. Most of the students have background knowledge before they read the texts, so they try to understand the texts whether something will change in the story or not.*

- *My aim is promoting students' skills in target language, so I use every material suitable for my students' levels.*

- *I like using them. Because students are familiar with them. They can use their guessing abilities especially in vocabulary studies.*

### **Do your students like them?**

In response to the question of whether students liked the literary texts used by the teachers, most participants report that students liked certain literary texts that appeal to students' interests. They do not prefer literary texts if they are too complex in terms of word choice and structures. They like literary texts that they feel comfortable reading and that are appropriate for their level. So, they conclude that students like the texts only when they understand them. One of the participant teachers, working in a primary school, states that *"If the text is too long and complex for them, students do not want to participate in the lesson, or they just do it to finish the activity."* Most participants report that they first examine texts to evaluate their complexity, and then they decide whether to skip or to use those texts.

- *My students like them very much, but as long as they understand, and this is the main reason for adopting or changing the texts for me.*

- *If they are chosen appropriately taking student variables such as age, level, needs and interests into account they will most probably like them.*

- *They would not have a problem with song lyrics; however, I cannot say the same things with short stories they would not understand. They would like especially the fairy tales which they were familiar with, such as Cindirella. Moreover, when the short stories were about interesting ad*

*mysterious event, e.g. detective stories, they tended to read them willingly and do the activities.*

- *Since literary texts have its own unique concept, sometimes my students have difficulty in understanding them. But, as I have mentioned above those texts are not far more different than other materials that I use in my classes. Students always like what they understand and what they are involved in; they don't like difficult and complex materials, texts and activities.*

- *This depends on the genre of the literary texts. While they could take great pleasure in dealing with the songs, they could get bored easily while learning the language with the longer texts (in this case, the stories).*

- *Some of them like literary texts and materials, yet the ones who are not really good at English and thus will fail to comprehend what is meant in the piece of art will definitely hate it.*

- *Students like integration of songs and stories in their learning process; on the other hand they can easily give up in case of encountering difficulties because of the indirect and figurative language in these texts. In these cases, there occurs a great responsibility for the teacher to include the students to the lesson.*

- *If they are chosen appropriately taking student variables such as age, level, needs and interests into account they will most probably like them.*

- *My students like them very much, but as long as they understand, and this is the main reason for adopting or changing the texts for me. So far, I have witnessed that my students do not like and do not want anything which they cannot understand. Also, as they like new and different things, they can enjoy a lot if the text suits them.*

As for the problems posed by the issue, some of the teachers say that they have difficulties in finding suitable literary texts. They list difficulties such as, complexity of vocabulary and structures, crowded classes, different learner styles, time limitations, and standardized curriculum. A participant says that:

*“My classes are crowded a bit. For example, in one of my classes there are thirty students, and their learning styles are different from each other. And also their levels are different from each other, so it is a bit hard to find it.”*

*Attracting the attention of the students was a problem of mine*

*sometimes. In addition, the difficult words and structures would be a problem sometimes. Also, the negative attitudes towards English and the lack of aims at high school were real troubles for me.*

*The first difficulty comes from the allotted time like the mentioned example in Second difficulty lies behind its unorganized vocabulary coverage and syntactic structures as two linguistic aims are too much within one texts. In other words, if vocabulary coverage is mostly unfamiliar for the students, at least new syntactic structures should not be aimed to teach, too. In the example of 'Cinderella', the syntactic structures of 'so...that' and 'such....that' are introduced firstly for the students and it is expected to enable the students acquire the structures with a new vocabulary. The third problem for me is to compensate for the creation of authentic situation. For this, I generally use 'role-play' or 'chatting' if time is enough; otherwise I searched from the Net for shorter and more comprehensible versions of the texts or videos, etc. The fourth problem for me is the texts (only 1 or 2 mostly) in the course books hinder the advantageous of using them as the texts do not involve any cultural information, or natural language use, and as the level of the texts in their vocabulary and syntax is above the level of the students. The inappropriate level thus hinders to make students enhance their critical thinking abilities, too.*

It is remarkable to note that most of the problems and difficulties reported by teachers are very much related to the syntactic and linguistic aspects of literary texts. The entertaining aspect of literature seems to have been very much ignored. Instead of utilizing ideas or values presented in indirect or "symbolic" form in literary texts, the participants were preoccupied with the lexical and linguistic features of the works. So it is quite reasonable for teachers to stress the structural methods, with emphasis on discrete-point teaching, "correctness", repetition of graded structures, and restricted lexis though there is relatively more emphasis on language use in the new course books because of the European Language Framework. Some teachers justified their linguistic focus in the classroom with literature's structural complexity and nonstandard use of language, which deviates from the prescriptive language and the language's prescriptive conventions". For their reluctance to use literature in class, teachers refer to the lexical and structural –based LDE (Level Determination Exam - high school entrance exam) which millions of primary school students prepare for at the age of 12 or 13 to enter good high schools. Some think that it is a waste of time since

their aim is not to get an appreciation of literature, but to prepare their students for the LDE. For instance, a participant claims that *“As they study lessons for the LDE, they don’t pay attention to English very much. So, they don’t want to use literary texts.”* Similarly another participant states, *“As you know the students are going to have an examination at the end of the year which is called LDE. That is why I focus on grammar and vocabulary instead of other points”*. A commonly stated problem was that literary texts contained new concepts and words that the teachers had to explain in detail *“In some texts, there are concepts that are unfamiliar to students, so I sometimes have to explain these terms or these concepts, and most of them do not have enough vocabulary to understand the text. So, I have to explain them”*

### **Do you wish that the literary texts are integrated in your coursebooks?**

Most of the participants say that they wish literary texts were integrated in course books to a certain degree, but they also think that literary texts would take time as they are more complex. They argue that extra times should be given for them, or these texts should be simplified. Also, a few participants say that they do not wish for literary texts to be integrated into course books since students do not have time for them. The result provides further evidence in agreement with previous studies that indicate the lack of pedagogically oriented literary materials, along with the lack of training and background knowledge about the use of literature in EFL class. Gilroy (1995) concludes in her study that many teachers have to ignore literature in their teaching because of time and syllabus restrictions although they tend to benefit from the advantages provided by valuable literary works.

- *I wish, but as long as they are integrated in an organized way and as long as their numbers are increased to practice them consistently. I mean, if the texts do not involve real language use, cultural information, if the texts are not given enough time, if the level of the texts with its unfamiliar vocabulary and syntax is too above the level of the students, and if the texts do not provide authenticity, literary texts become a huge learning burden for the students. And I can find more easily and more appropriate sources from the Net instead of wasting time while trying to adopt the whole text*

- *Absolutely Yes, but with caution, considering the age, level, needs*

and interests of the learners.

- *If they are chosen appropriately taking student variables such as age, level, needs and interests into account they will most probably like them.*
- *My students like them very much, but as long as they understand, and this is the main reason for adopting or changing the texts for me.*

From the self-reports we understand that teachers do not have a clear idea or clearly defined aim when and how literature is integrated into the language classroom. This may be partly because curriculum developers or the course books fail to provide adequate information, strategies, and guidance about the way in which literature can be utilized.

Almost all participants agree upon the idea that simplified versions of literary texts can be integrated into language teaching to some extent. They list the literary texts they would like to use as fairy tales, short stories, and modern versions of them. One of the respondents says that *“I think literature is a very enjoyable resource to learn a language, a good resource for increasing word power and it enriches the students’ word knowledge, and also representations of various authentic uses of the language.”*

**Do you bring any literary texts from other sources and have difficulty in finding literary texts appropriate to your students’ level?**

- *Yes, but not usually. I can rarely (i.e. once in two months) bring because of the limited time. I mostly use the Google scholar.*
- *I sometimes bring song lyrics, excerpts from some young adult novels, short stories, plays.*
- *Yes, I believe literary texts for the classroom should be chosen meticulously. You cannot bring any literary text to the classroom and study it. Moreover, to be able to choose an appropriate text for the classroom requires some background knowledge and field expertise. The teacher should be aware of the fact that he should take learner variables into account while choosing a text for the classroom. He should definitely be aware of the characteristics or variables of his immediate teaching situation.*

Few participants reported bringing in literary texts from other sources. They used the Internet and short story books which represent simplified versions of popular texts. An interviewee states that *“I use websites about fairy tales like ‘britishcouncil’ and some other sites.”*

### **How can the literary texts contribute to your students' language learning?**

In response to the question of how literary texts can contribute to their students' language learning, teachers seem to divide into two groups:

- *First of all, literary texts of any type can provide various content in different areas. Thus, instead of studying stilted dialogues and any other text prepared with pedagogical concerns the students will be studying language in its natural form. If the students are interested in the subject matter their motivation will increase and they will be more willing to study. Moreover, literary texts are not only good sources of linguistic material but can also provide cultural information. The students will be able to notice and learn the cultural elements of the target language and understand the whole concept. This is very important in EFL situations where the learners have not much chance to be exposed to natural or authentic language.*

- *The texts can enable my students to have exposure for natural language use within a real context. Also, my students can learn some linguistic structures, fixed expressions, etc. with a focus. Moreover, as the texts generally cover authentic language, they are helpful for teaching culture for my students. Their critical thinking skills can be enhanced if used in a planned way. Lastly, if appropriately organized, while learning, my students can have a real fun without being aware that they are learning.*

- *I think they are improving students' reading skills, and students are having fun while reading these interesting texts.*

- *Students like rhythmic and poetic patterns, probably because they like music and as they have short-term concentration they like gripping stories. They are also interested in learning different cultural practices of English people especially the ones which sound quite absurd to Turkish culture, this may be stemmed from the fact that I give importance to target culture and literature, and this attitude may have affected my students' attitudes too. Therefore, I try to enrich my course with literary texts to draw their attention as well as to provide my students with cultural background which I think will help them to better understand English and achieve in learning it.*

- *They can be used for linguistic and non-linguistic purposes For instance, a song can be used to entertain the students; therefore, increase their motivation and teach or review some structures or vocabulary items. Thus, I think they are versatile in this aspect. If the students are interested in*

*the content of the text, the students' attention shifts from forms of language to the real content of the text which increases their motivation. Thus, any other literary text other than songs can also be versatile in the classroom. They are also good source of authentic materials; not written for pedagogic concerns but for pleasure of reading.*

- *If I use the correct story, they are eager, and they can improve their reading and comprehension skills; they are more motivated*

Those who have a positive attitude towards the integration of literature into a language class appear to focus on the contributions of literature to students' language learning as follows:

- Reading is an important part of language learning that can be promoted by working on valuable literary works.

- Literature is a highly valuable representation of the culture that it belongs to, so students can become familiar with elements of the target culture through literature.

- Works of children's literature such as fairy tales or short stories may be more attractive and enjoyable than ordinary course book reading texts.

- Literary texts are good sources to activate students' imaginations.

- If texts are suitable for their level, they help students develop reading comprehension and vocabulary. Students can learn how meanings are structured in different ways.

- Literature helps students improve their logical thinking. When students become involved in the text that they read, their ability to make interpretations is improved. In other words, it expands their horizons.

- Students also learn about English speaking cultures' culture through literary texts. Those who are skeptical about the value of teaching any kind of literature appeared to be concerned with their classroom experience. They stated literary texts should be carefully planned according to the students' level and interest.

- *I have been teaching for three years. To be honest, it would be wrong to say that the literary texts have worked very well in my classroom context so far.*

- *If they are carefully planned according to the level of the students, and if the students are told the real aims of them, they may feel more motivated and a teacher can reach the aims. In addition, the organization of these texts and their physical format should be attractive.*

Linguistic difficulty was brought to our attention again as a main

argument against literature. This perhaps may stem from the pre-supposition that to understand literature requires knowledge of the “literariness” of its language and an inherent ability to interpret the writer’s intended meaning.

### CONCLUSION

The interest to include literature in foreign language instruction has been revived in recent EFL curriculum studies. Research conducted so far lays considerable stress on the advantages of literature in language teaching with some precaution. As indicated earlier in the paper, literary texts enhance mental skills, analytical and critical thinking, and acculturation. Moreover, they are valuable as they provide us with diverse examples of linguistic features and non-linguistic concepts of the target language. Interaction between language and literature is reconsidered with new questions addressed to researchers. This might be a significant issue in reviewing and renewing the views of language teaching in public schools.

This study indicates a paradoxical situation prevailing in current literature for some time. The notion of literature is perceived as a highly academic discipline with its own priorities and for this reason a substantial number of teachers have been avoiding incorporating literature into their instruction. However, the study of literature, in Widdowson’s terms<sup>32</sup>, is to a great extent “a study of language in operation.” The conception of literature as such may help learners to appreciate various aspects of literature and language “in the fashion of a harmony employing appropriate kinds of language with practical and everyday messages. Literature, therefore, may provide students with abundant samples of linguistic elements and non-literary discourses for communicative purposes. As the present study has already shown, the participants think that literary texts may enhance creativity in language use and activate the students’ imagination providing that the literary texts are chosen carefully. Although some teachers appear to develop somewhat negative attitudes towards the use of literature or are at least reluctant to use it (or “are at least reluctant to use it”), this may not be necessarily due to their stance against literature itself but the way in which literature is presented and treated in the coursebooks.

As it becomes clear from the findings, the English teachers under consideration in this study theoretically have a positive attitude towards

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32 H.G. Widdowson, “*Stylistics and the teaching of literature*”, 1975, London: Longman.

literary texts. They also conceive of literature as having an important role in language teaching. However, the research reveals that these teachers have some practical problems because of a strictly centralized education system that offers a very shallow, limited use of literature in language teaching service. Furthermore, the educational system in Turkey is handicapped with entrance exams that do not allow for adequate incorporation of literature into language classes as the study of literature gives priority to profound interpretive skills rather than preparing for multiple choice exams. It seems that most teachers cannot get out of this shell of dilemma. On the one hand they want to involve literary texts in their language classroom, even if with only simplified versions; on the other hand they are institutionally and pragmatically forced to persist in mechanically designed linguistic activities. To this end, the participants were observed mostly to prefer using simplified versions of literary texts and use them particularly for mere linguistic purposes. The research also indicates that the teachers find authentic literary materials and pure literature of some benefit for non-linguistic purposes.

The question that can be raised at this point is not whether literature should be included in language syllabuses but to what extent and how it should be incorporated into language teaching programs. It would be wise therefore to search for appropriate techniques, strategies, and pedagogic frameworks within which literary texts can be utilized to the fullest extent.