Investigating Iraqi College Students> Difficulties in Learning English Literature التقصي عن الصعوبات التي تواجه طلبة الجامعات العراقية في تعلم

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Abstract

This study investigates Iraqi college students' difficulties in learning English literature to enhance their ability and motivation to learn English literature. This study tackles issues revealed during the implementation of English literature as a separate academic subject in Iraqi universities' curricula. Presently, English is the language of the world's largest community, identifying its position as the communication medium in practically all fields, including education and computers, trade and commerce, science and technology, business, entertainment, politics, agriculture, international and bilateral relations, economic affairs, etc. Everyone in today's fast-changing world recognizes the extent and relevance of English. English is the native language of nations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Australia, and others in Europe, but it is a second or foreign language in countries such as Iraq, the Gulf countries, and others in Asia. English has spread at a faster rate in Iraq. yet there are several problems in teaching and studying it. A variety of courses, training programs, workshops, and encounters are available to help overcome these obstacles. In the subject of teaching and learning English, several methods, strategies, and approaches have emerged, and their implementation has been continuing for many years. In the beginning, when learning English became the main topic in schools and colleges, English literature was used as a major tool to learn English. To this day, in the majority of Iraqi universities, it has developed as a greater and more effective method of teaching and learning the English language. The present study discusses the disclosure of an old strategy to learn English with fresh (modern) viewpoints, emphasizing how this approach helps teach-learn the English language in the present situation with an explanation.

The study concludes that the English literature curriculum needs to be changed to measure how well students can speak and write. It also needs to be observed or looked at to emphasize language skills rather than academic growth.



المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التقصي عن الصعوبات التي تواجه طلبة الجامعات العراقية في تعلم الأدب الإنجليزي لتعزيز قدرتهم وتحفيزهم على تعلم الأدب الإنجليزي. تتناول هذه الدراسة عددًا من القضايا التي تم الكشف عنها أثناء تطبيق الأدب الإنجليزي كموضوع أكاديمي منفصل في مناهج الجامعات العراقية . في الوقت الحاضر ، اللغة الإنجليزية هي من اكبر لغات المجتمع في العالم ، حيث تحدد مكانتها كوسيلة اتصال في جميع المجالات تقريبًا ، بها في ذلك التعليم وأجهزة الكمبيوتر والتجارة والعلوم والتكنولوجيا والأعمال والترفيه والسياسة والزراعة والعلاقات الدولية والثنائية ، الشؤون الاقتصادية ، وما إلى ذلك ، يدرك الجميع في العالم مدى التغير السريع وأهمية اللغة الإنجليزية. اللغة الإنجليزية هي اللغة الأم لدول مثل الولايات المتحدة الامريكية والمملكة المتحدة وجنوب إفريقيا وأستراليا وغيرها في أوروبا ، لكنها اللغة الثانية أو أجنبية في دول مثل العراق ودول الخليج وغيرها في آسيا. انتشرت اللغة الإنجليزية بمعدل سريع في العراق لكن هناك عدة مشاكل في تدريسها ودراستها. تتوفر مجموعة متنوعة من الدورات والبرامج التدريبية وورش العمل واللقاءات للمساعدة في التغلب على هذه العقبات. في موضوع تعليم وتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية ، ظهرت عدة طرق واستراتيجيات ومناهج ، واستمر تنفيذها لسنوات عديدة. في البداية ، عندما أصبح تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية الموضوع الرئيسي في المدارس والكليات ، تم استخدام الأدب الإنجليزي كأداة رئيسية لتعلمها. حتى يومنا هذا ، في غالبية الجامعات العراقية تطورت كطريقة أكبر وأكثر فاعلية لتعليم وتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. تناقش هذه الدراسة الكشف عن استراتيجية قديمة لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية مع وجهات نظر جديدة (حديثة) ، مع التركيز على كيف يساعد هذا النهج في تعليم وتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في الوضع الحالي مع تفسيرها.

استنتجت الدراسة أن منهج الأدب الإنجليزي يحتاج إلى التغيير ليأخذ في الحسبان مدى قدرة الطلبة على التحدث والكتابة. يجب إعادة النظر فيه بطريقة تركز على المهارات اللغوية أكثر من النمو الأدبي.

1.0 Introduction

Literature is an essential component of the curriculum in English foreign language (EFL) courses. It is taught in English departments in Iraqi universities and other language topics. As widdowson (1984) says, the practice of teaching English literature in a non-native setting has been going on since the early 1800s, when literature was seen as important in language study and access to literary works was seen as a goal of language study. Literature is genuine content. Most literary works are not written to teach a language in mind. There are several actual examples of language in real-life circumstances within the freshly constructed course materials. Students learn about real-life language examples in class,

which help them improve their skills. Furthermore, literature can be a valuable supplement to such things, especially once the first survival level has been reached. Literary works expose students to a wide range of language forms, communication functions, and meanings because they have to deal with language meant for people who speak the language already.

On the other hand, Lazar (1999) states that in recent years, literature has gained widespread acceptance as a motivating resource, a window into another background of cultural, a resource for language learning, and a means of increasing learners' knowledge of their language. In this respect, literature has earned a reputation for having a broad-



er educational role that may awaken critical capacities and emotional awareness, raise which would aid in teaching individual overall. Literature plays a crucial role in promoting, maintaining, and increasing literacy and language acquisition. Language and literacy learning cannot be separated from literature, as teachers are well aware. Students learn sign language through speaking, hearing, reading, and writing for their present and future social relationships. One of the most critical current discussions is that literary classics are used in English classrooms for a variety of purposes, including;

1-Broadening students' outlooks by providing them with knowledge of the classics of literature.

2-Increasing students' general cultural awareness.

- 3- Inspiring students' intellectual and literary imaginations, as well as enhancing their literary appreciation.
- 4- Introducing students to literary masterpieces.

One of the most challenging issues is that digital literature is comparable to conventional literature. There are numerous significant variations in the role of literature in improving language and literacy abilities. As the Indonesian author Syafryadin (2020) in his article The Use of Digital Literature in Teaching Reading Narrative Text, points out that digital literature is considered a literary work in the context of the modern media world. The use of digital literature in the classroom to teach the narrative

text is advantageous. Narrative writings often contain a large amount of text that the learners must read and understand (Koskimaa 2007). Reading digital content takes more time, users are more likely to skim or scan content to find information of interest, and users may not interact with non-physical features. That is what people have found out. A significant role is played by digital literature in the development of specific language and literacy abilities that are not relevant or even present in non-digital literature. A big part of learning how to speak and read is using modern digital literature, and it has immediate effects on real-world situations and circumstances.

On the other hand, the study of literature and culture

in English Language Teaching (ELT) at the undergraduate level can be thought of as a link between the target language and the spirit of the target language. Give students a better chance to interact with **English-speaking** countries because they both show the world in a context and show how grammar and a humanistic interactive field are linked together in a complex way that changes over time because the needs of its speakers change. Moreover, literature contributes to (ELT) by providing genuine content, the language in use, beautiful representations of spoken languages, and the language and cultural enrichment. This final factor is what opens the door to a more indepth examination of the culture (or cultures) in which the



target language is spoken.

Furthermore, at the proficiency levels of Iraqi universities, although motivation and self-confidence are seen as critical variables in terms of their impact on student performance, field knowledge and teacher training are regarded as equally important in terms of their effects on teacher efficacy. According to Ganakumaran et al. (2003), teachers who have inadequate training in English literature are to blame for fundamental instructional failures.

1.1The Aim of the study

This study investigates Iraqi college students' difficulties in learning the English language through literature to enhance their ability and motivation to learn English literature.

1.2The Statement of Problem

Literature and linguistic components are taught simultaneously in English departments in Iraqi universities. Teachers are sometimes frustrated and perplexed by their students' lack of development in literary studies. They believe that students have little motivation since they do not involve in-class activities. In general, students appear to be apprehensive about studying literature. As a result, teachers face several difficulties when dealing with academic classes. Therefore, some Iraqi students lack confidence when they speak or read the English language.

1.3 Research questions

1- What, in the opinion of English teachers, is the biggest

challenge in teaching English literature to Iraqi college students?

2-What is a potential overall methodological framework for literary students' training programs for learning the English language at universities?

1.4 Teaching the English Language by Using Literature

Literature has been used in different ways in different parts of the curriculum to teach and learn languages. As a result, it is important to know what literature is and how it works in different situations. According to O'Sullivan, (1990) states that while clarified as a subject of study, literature is an action that incorporates and uses language. Moreover, the study of literature has traditionally been seen as complex and unachievable (Talif 1991). The

increased interest in literature in language courses, to make literature more accessible to students, it must be defined broadly.

More recent attention has focused on engaging functions like brainstorming, role-playing, a word association, situations, and prediction; literature can be utilized to teach language. In this respect, literature instructors should be able to help their students improve their linguistic abilities and language competency. Furthermore, by incorporating literature into language classrooms, students have opportunities to express their opinions on a variety of topics, become involved in conflicts, and act out direct responses. When they are used in different situations, they understand ab-



stract or unfamiliar concepts and think about common or unique issues. That will help students improve both their language and literary skills as a result of this project (Ozlem, 2004).

Literary texts, in general, serve a variety of functions during the language instruction process. Brumfit and Carter (1986) claim that the literary text is practically the only "context" in which diverse types of language may coexist and be accepted. A literary work that employs a true text or real language in a situation which the reader may immediately interact. The investigation and debate of the text provide an opportunity to gain first-hand experience evaluating a language in context. Students read literary works that use many language resources, and the reader is encouraged to play a role in how they interact with and make sense of language.

Besides, literary texts offer several benefits over informative or factual texts in prompting individual reactions from students and engaging them in dialogic interaction with readers. The instructor will then be able to move beyond lower-order inquiries and complete the objective of encouraging students' creative thinking and socialization abilities based on the subject addressed in the readings. Furthermore, literary texts stimulate students' interest in material arising from their surroundings and aid in developing their confidence in using the language verbally and in writing back through it.

1.4.1Using a Different Literary Genre to Improve students' Language Skills

The literature on teaching English has highlighted several genres. Poetry can prepare the way for the acquisition and teaching of fundamental language abilities. The most visible relationship between learning and poetry is a metaphor. As a result, poetry is a great way to learn. Most poetry makes use of metaphor as one of its main tools. One of the benefits of studying poetry is that it can help students learn. They understand how a writer puts together a poem, which students learn by looking at poems by their parts. They develop a sense of words and new things that could later become an even more profound interest and better

analytical skills. Furthermore, Sarac, (2003) illustrates that the rules of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary are not always apparent in poetry, giving the reader a new perspective on language use by going beyond what they already know. Readers who are not motivated because they are so open to new ideas and different interpretations are prompted by the book. It makes them feel and think in their hearts and minds. Because these figures of speech are used all the time, students become familiar with them. That is because they are used in everyday language use.

Literature has been an important concept in the study of languages. Writers and poets choose the right words and the most powerful words in literature since it is their com-



munication medium. The classics are reproductions of the finest writing, and they help students prepare a model for their writing by providing them with information about the best reports. The intense poetry of William Wordsworth, W. B Yeats, and T. S. Eliot, as well as outstanding books by Charles Dickens and plays by Shakespeare, William undoubtedly had a significant impact on the fragile minds of young students. Literary works have the strength, originality, and capacity to encourage students. Moreover, most students go the wrong way and lose patience. They placed themselves in a dilemma. That is because they lack control over their minds. However, literature prepares, encourages, and teaches people to con-

front any adversity in life.

The benefits of teaching literature in the foreign language classroom are ten-fold. These are: cultural enrichment, linguistic model, mental training, extension of linguistic competence, authenticity, memorability, rhythmic resource, motivating material, open to interpretation and convenience. Besides, literature also leads to the enlightenment of the mind (Parkinson and Reid Thomas ,2000: 9-11).

The realm of poetry is always a happy place. Poetry warms the reader's heart with tremendous joy and a sense of deep spiritual delight. When the poet waves his magic wand, everyday items become beautiful.

On the other hand, Sage (1987) says that the short story

is an excellent guide for examining not just language but also life. Actors in the short story do all of the functional and symbolic activities that people perform in their everyday lives, and they do so in a variety of registers and tones. Human experiences are mirrored and illuminated in the realm of short stories. Listening to stories is usually enjoyable for students. Furthermore, Ariogul (2001) argues that compared to other literary genres, the short story makes the students' reading tasks more accessible because they are brief and straightforward. It broadens the advanced level readers' viewpoints about diverse societies and groups of people; it inspires students to read because it is a natural material and encourages critical thinking abilities. It also helps

students from various perspectives communicate with one another because of its universal language, and it allows students to go beyond the surface meaning.

For the most part, employing a short narrative appears to be a highly effective teaching strategy in todays foreign language courses. It is brief and facilitates both the student's reading assignments and the teachers coverage of the material. The fact that short fiction is universal is an essential characteristic of the genre. Students from all over the world have had personal experiences and can connect with stories. Another good thing about reading short stories is that it helps you improve your cognitive and analytical skills by making



you think about an event that happens in a specific place and time.

Along with, drama in the classroom is an excellent resource for teaching English. Drama allows students to become acquainted with grammatical structures in context while also learning how to utilize language to express, manage, and inform. Drama increases students' comprehension of the target language and culture. In this respect, using drama as a technique rather than aiming to teach a foreign language becomes essential. However, there is one obvious threat: cultural imposition. It should be avoided at all costs since it often results in the loss of language ego and original language identity. Students must use drama to learn more about life events, think about specific situations, and make sense of their non-linguistic world (Saricoban, 2004).

Drama education is essential in language lessons because it promotes participatory learning. When students participate actively in drama lessons by portraying various characters, they develop a strong interest in studying while also enjoying the lecture. Language learning in drama classes will become more exciting, interesting, and motivating as students learn more about how to communicate with each other in different languages. Furthermore, Lenore, (1993) conducts that; education enhances drama imagination and encourages creative thinking. Including the senses as an essential part of the learning process improves

critical thinking abilities, inlanguage developcreases ment, improves practical listening skills, and strengthens understanding and learning retention. Enhances empathy and understanding of others, promotes social respect and group collaboration, reinforces good self-concept, and gives instructors a new viewpoint on teaching. Generally, Mengu (2002:1-4) states that the use of drama in language teaching in classes:

Drama adds authenticity to the classroom by exposing students to the target culture and the societal concerns that a society may be facing. It assists students in improving their degree of proficiency in listening and speaking skills, creating a good foundation for students to bridge the gap between their listening and speaking skills, and provides students with the space and time to work on their projects, among other things.

The above quotation shows that drama appears to be a successful strategy in today's communication-based. student-centered foreign laninstruction environguage ment. Because it is accurate content, it aids students in improving their comprehension of the verbal and nonverbal parts of the target language they are attempting to acquire through increased exposure to it. Teachers, in particular, who aim to make language learning more colourful, engaging, and fascinating for their students can include drama into their language sessions with success. Because drama is a replay



of social events, students better understand their personalities and codes of behavior. As a result, teachers will be able to give more interesting and realistic instruction, which will help students a lot.

Besides, the employment of a novel is a practical strategy for acquiring the linguistic system and life in connection to the target language. Characters in the narrative represent what individuals do in their daily lives. Novels not only depict but also enlighten people's lives. Students who study a foreign language with the help of a novel get the assistances such as like that a novel A novel expands readers' advanced knowledge of various cultures and groups of people. It increases students' motivation to read because it is authentic material and provides real-life or real-life-like settings. Students' ability to express themselves creatively is encouraged by the story, which also enhances critical thinking abilities, paves the way for teaching the target language and culture, and allows students to go beyond the written word and dig deep into what is intended. Therefore, Helton, C.A, J.Asamani and E.D.Thomas (1998:1-5) state that

Novels enhance students' imaginations and help them recognize the characters' emotions. They may learn how others deal with similar events and issues to their own, and they can help them perfect the skills that will allow them to collect knowledge. That will be processed command; will identify challenges, develop

alternatives, meaningful, considered, effective decisions and solutions will be reached, spoken and will create written language skills, and act as a springboard for further study.

According to Helton, C.A, J.Asamani and E.D.Thomas (1998) commenting the above quotation that teachers may use unique exams to measure the understanding that requires students to improve written language sub-skills such as spelling, handwriting, grammar, and punctuation. Teachers create essay-style assessments to help students gradually enhance their writing skills and organize content into paragraphs with appropriate sentence structure. Moreover, While choosing a novel for use in a foreign language class, the language instructor should consider if the story has an exciting tale that will attract the interest of the entire class. The content of the selected novels should incorporate themes and places that capture their imagination while also addressing the human condition. The story should have a strong, rapid storyline with fascinating, well-delineated, and recognizable characters. The novel's material should be appropriate for the cognitive and emotional levels of the students. It should also be integrated. Specific topics and concepts are addressed in class.

In today's foreign language schools, the employment of novels is a beneficial strategy. Using a story in a reading session may make it more motivating, fascinating, and amus-



ing for students if it is chosen wisely. Even though many students find reading a story written in a target language complex, uninteresting, and unmotivating. The novel is a very proficient technique for increasing vocabulary and enhancing reading comprehension abilities. Reading allows students to extend their views, become acquainted with other cultures, and enhance their intercultural communication skills, learning how to see the world from many viewpoints. Consequently, students will be able to think critically and write effectively.

1.5The Attitudes and Perceptions of Iraqi University Students Towards Literature Learning

Chart (1) illustrates the study's general findings on college students' attitudes and perceptions about learning literature in the English language. The students were asked twenty questions about how they felt and thought about reading literature in English. The college students had positive views and perspectives on learning literature in the English language. For instance, when it comes to their stance on literature learning, more than 70% of college students believed it was essential to learn literature in English. In addition, students 92 % stated that literary reading texts in English would allow them to acquire many new terms. More than 80 % of the students believed that literary reading texts in English would allow them to increase their competency level in the English language. Most students said that literature could make them want to learn English because more than 70% of students said they liked their literature lessons.

Chart (1) Students' questionnaire

Chart (2) Stadents questionnal	,	,
	Yes	No
I. I enjoy reading books about English literature.	67.4	32.6
2. I believe that learning English literature is essential.	74.6	25.4
3. Literature classes, in my opinion, are enjoyable.	74.6	25.6
4. I'm interested in studying English literature.	71	28
5. I believe that students should really be given the chance to choose literary materials that they enjoy reading.	90.6	9.4
6. I believe that teachers can utilize poetic approaches to explain literary topics.	60.9	39.1
7. I believe that teachers should enable students to employ poetic elements to express their comprehension of the literary work read	56.6	43.4
8.I believe that teachers should enable students to employ poetic elements in activities and exercises during literature classes.	42.8	57.2
I believe I can progress my skill in the English.9 language through literature trainings		11.6
10.I like to read literary text that use simple English language.	81.1	18.9
11.I enjoy reading literary works written in Old English.	21.7	78.3



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12.I enjoy reading poetry.		63
13.I enjoy reading short tales.	92	8
14.I enjoy reading literature.	81.9	18.1
15.I enjoy researching literary phrases and components.	52.2	47.8
16.Most of the concepts in the literary works that I read in class appeal to me.		36.9
17.Reading literature may teach you a lot of moral ideals.	94.2	5.8
18.When I read a literary work, I learn a lot of new terms.		7.2
19.Through reading, I can learn about various cultures and ideals.	89.1	10.9
20.Literature has the potential to stimulate my interest in learning English.	79.7	20.3

On the other hand, the inspiration and strengthening the English language, more than 90% of students believed that they would be able to learn more about moral values through literature. Furthermore, more than 80% of students thought that literature might help them understand more about diverse cultures and beliefs. Based on students' attitudes regarding students taught in the English language, more than 80% usually read literary works written in basic English. In contrast, fewer than 30% wanted to read academic materials written in Old English. When asked which genres of academic literature they favoured. Several students said short stories and novels rather than poetry. About half of the students didn't want to look at any literary elements in

en to them to read. Furthermore, the data shows that almost 90% of students believe that students must be given a choice to choose literary texts that they enjoy rather than reading assigned texts that have been selected for them to read.

Besides the results about students' attitudes and perceptions regarding literature learning, the study also tries to identify potential challenges, students may encounter when studying the literary component. That is important because it could show if there is a connection between how students think and feel about literature and how difficult it is for them to learn.

1.6 Conclusion and Suggestion

1.6.1Conclusion

This study aimed to look into the usage of English literature in teaching and learning the English language. How does an English teacher at Iraqi universities handle studying the English language through English literature? how do students feel about learning the English language through the use of literature in the classroom?. Concerning the first study question, the teacher's use of the English literature inspired and improved the students' comprehension of the English language learning. Furthermore, the teacher demonstrated a scientific approach to learning exercises. The teacher uses English literature in the observation stage while the



students pay close attention. The teacher asked several fundamental questions, and the students correctly replied to all of them. The teacher and the students examined the reading passage together, and the students responded to the teacher's questions. The teacher provided a whole piece of paper and several questions, and the students discussed their thoughts on the content. Finally, the instructor asked the students to recount Hamlet's narrative in front of the class, and the students did so. As a result, the learners are more motivated to study narrative literature. An English teacher was discovered to have used English literature as a teaching medium in teaching and learning to read a narrative text. Aside from that, most of the

students replied "yes" to every item on the survey.

Consequently, the students were able to attain their learning perceptions by including English literature in their English language learning experience, which was noteworthy. According to the researcher, students used to get bored when studying the English language in the past. Still, the use of literature is increasing the implementation instructors' in their teaching narrative and improving the students' perspective based on their argument, which is a good thing. Finally, because of English literature, both the teacher and the students become more excited and motivated to learn English.

1.6.2 Suggestion

Regarding the conclusion, the researcher makes various recommendations for English instructors, students, and scholars. In the beginning, it was proposed that the English instructor use English literature to help students learn the language. Second, students should be more interested in learning and teaching the English language through literary genres like drama, novels, and short stories, which are all forms of the language.

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