

Literature and Language Teaching: A Classroom-Centred Study to Improve the Literature Courses *

By Ayid Sharyan **

Abstract

Teachers of literature seem to use their intuitions in chalking out the plans, aims and objectives of teaching literature. The existing syllabi at the Departments of English, Yemeni Universities, do not offer clear aims and objectives to solve the problem of random selection of texts, teaching methods, marking schemas, etc. Since the aims are vague, there is no agreement on the portions to be covered for each course. This leads some teachers to teach summaries of works of literature, saying that it is difficult to teach the original works. Others teach a fragment of a text, saying that students cannot study the whole work. Some go to far to write a short summary of a literary work for exam-taking. This paper has brought together some ideas and observations about an area (various components of teaching literature) that has been much neglected and little work has been done on this topic, at least at Sana'a University. It hopes to generate topics for investigation and prepare the ground for group exploration on the nature of change and innovation in teaching literature, particularly in Yemen. To improve teaching literature, this paper considers the existing condition of teaching literature for Yemenis, attempts to formulate concrete aims and objectives for teaching literature, discusses criteria for choosing a text and proposes a formula for marking exams of literature courses.

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Introduction

Teacher: Hameed, you're doing well in your exams! Why don't you participate in the *Poetry Class*?

Student: I'm not very good at spoken, Sir! I want just to graduate and then I will join some private institute to learn English.

Dialogues like this are often exchanged with students where students give feedback on the process of teaching and learning. This research was prompted by the author's experience of teaching English literature for EFL students in the Departments of English at various places (the University of Sana'a, University of Ibb, University of Saba, University of Science and Technology and Yemenia University). The problem of this paper was felt when the researcher hears some students, as the one in the dialogue above, say they 'will learn English later when they graduate'. It was felt that literature courses, even though they are important in learning language, are not doing much to help those students to acquire a good command of English. This is due, the paper assumes, to a faulty teaching/learning situation: unclear aims and objectives for teaching, inappropriate choice of texts, teaching method and marking scheme that allows an output of 'little learning'. This study then deals with the present situation of teaching literature at the Yemeni universities. On the basis of review of literature, interviews with students and teachers, the study proposes aims and objective for teaching literature. The paper, out of experience, suggests some criteria for choosing literary texts, teaching methods and provides a formula for marking exams. These components are dealt with together on the assumption that they are inseparable in a given teaching situation. Exams, for instance, are directed by aims and objectives but they direct the teaching method.

To tackle the role of teaching literature, the paper divides itself into five parts so as to give a complete picture. It discusses:

- I) The Existing Condition: Teaching and Literature, What Is Literature? Why do we teach English literature in Yemen? Difficulty of teaching literature for Yemenis.
- II) Aims and objectives of literature

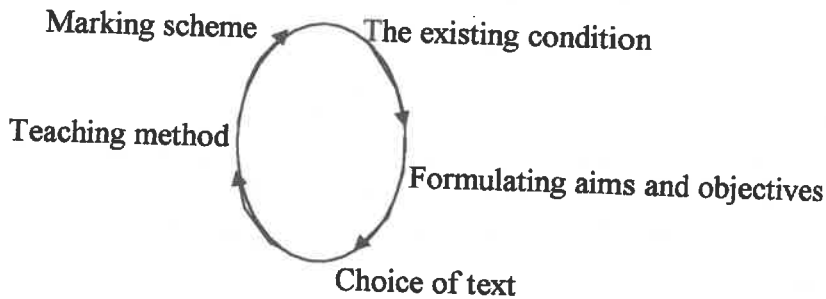
- III) Choice of literary Texts
- IV) Teaching Methods
- V) Marking schemes

Part I The Existing Condition

Yemeni students who join the Departments of English at the university have to study English Literature as a compulsory component. But they enter with little input (entry behaviour) in English language and literature. Most of the time, a teacher of literature at the Yemeni Universities has to teach literature courses for students of large classes. The task for any teacher is hard and challenging. A willing and enthusiastic teacher, for instance, will find it difficult to strike a balance between the language work the students really need and the literary analysis the literary course requires. It becomes a heavy burden to teach the literary language with its complexity of structure, vocabulary, concepts, cultural or religious implications, etc. to students who possess poor English. To minimise language work is to mystify the literary texts and to neglect the primary aim for students, i.e. learning language, not literature. To maximise language work is to fail in one's duty of teaching literature courses. A novice teacher in a situation like this will seek the help of the syllabus to find a solution for such problems. But the syllabus contains some vague statements. The following is a description for *19th Century Novel* in one of those syllabi:

Study of one novel each by Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy. (Any three texts).

Many courses of literature have similar descriptions. This calls for some change. On the assumption that to suggest any modification, one needs to look at the whole components that compose the learning-cum-teaching situation, this paper takes into account the following components as reflected in the working diagram below. It shows the process of planning or designing a syllabus is circular. It begins by describing the present situation, moves to aims and objectives, choice of text, teaching method and then marking exams. The paper follows the same sequence of the diagram in its argument.



Before elaborating on the difficulties and reasons of teaching literature, it is necessary first to define the key words in the title: *Teaching and Literature*.

Teaching is giving knowledge, skill, instruction, experience, etc to a person with the aim to cause some change in his present behaviour. Teaching is a two-way process: top-bottom and/ or bottom-top relationship. A teacher of literature traditionally talks more than his students, i.e. teacher-centred. Teaching English literature in Yemen is unfortunately still top-bottom. The reason may be due to large number of students in one class, lack of teachers, sources, instructional media, etc. A student-centred approach is what recent trends in teaching look for. In such a view, a teacher is a facilitator or organiser of the learning process. He presents a situation or a problem and helps his students to find a solution. With such an organiser, teaching language or literature becomes an enjoyment. It gives longer time for students to talk and do things on their own.

What is literature?

What is literature? And why do we study it? Such genres as the novel, the short story, the epic poem, the lyric, the play clearly fall within the boundaries of literature. *Oxford Students Dictionary* defines literature as (the writing or the study of) books, etc. valid as works of art (drama, fiction, essays, poetry, biography contrasted with technical books and journalism). Whatever its form, however, literature has at least four major functions: entertainment, as a kind of escaping, moral

and spiritual values, and aesthetic pleasure. Many readers go to literary works for entertainment, which may be elevated and intellectual or which may be of a comparatively less exalted nature. Reading witty plays of Shaw that are full of ideas is not like reading an entertainment story. Some readers use literature as a kind of escaping the oppressive and dull environment. Many value literature for its capacity to inculcate moral and spiritual values. Such didacticism of a literary work may thus be direct as in the stories that preach religion or indirect as in the stories where we understand we are not to behave in this way or that. Literature is capable of acquainting us with the forces which motivate human beings and the place of the individual in society and in the universe. Literature also provides a reader with intense and unique experiences ordered to give him the aesthetic pleasure that accompanies his apprehension of the work (Perrine, L., 1983).

Why do we teach English literature in Yemen?

The importance of teaching literature, the paper assumes, emerges from the premise that literature teaches language itself while language courses, e.g. grammar, teach something about language but not language itself. Thus literature is considered the most important course at the Departments of English at the Yemeni Universities and in most Universities around the world. It has attracted the attention of linguists who care for how English language can be taught to foreign learners (Al-Matari, N 2002: 2). There two basic aims for teaching literature: enrichment of vocabulary and literary appreciation. Literature is seen as a means of learning language. Literary appreciation comes next. Teachers all over the world feel that literature is a rich language resource which can be exploited beneficially (Ambatchew, 1997: 44). Literature provides the reader with unusual syntax, uncommon vocabulary and literary devices. All of them enable the teacher and students to contemplate and think over the painful or beautiful aspects of life and existence. It develops the capacity for individual response to life and people. It provides us with a mock reality where we can analyse the personalities and psychologies of other people, real or imaginary. We reflect our ideas,

beliefs and emotions when we analyse literary texts; we identify with this character or that. We react to a delineation of this personality or that situation. Literature not only provides pleasure, but also develops emotional and intellectual capacity of the learners. It gives a genuine context for communication. Some writers like Hill (1986) are of the opinion that the study of literature begins in delight and ends in wisdom.

Literature is more likely to provide the necessary stimulus to incite learners to speak and communicate effectively. The writers communicate to us their feelings, emotions and experiences; we communicate our understanding and interpretation of the writers' experiences. In this way, we may employ everyday language and make learning real not artificial. Thus, teachers use literature as a means to encourage effective teaching of the English language and literature, encourage understanding between cultures by opening a window on the otherness, widening students views, etc.

We read stories for entertainment, thought-provoking or for some linguistic considerations. Dialogues are part of those stories; dialogues are common in our daily use of language. We talk about ourselves or about others. We relate stories and events that are real or made up. The question that rises then is why is it important for a foreign learner to study stories, novels or plays? It is important because stories are part of our daily life. Part of our language competence, one can argue, is to be able to face story telling or comprehending (Collie and Salter, 1987). Without this our language competence is wanting. Stories are obviously everywhere: traditional fairy stories, films and plays, personal anecdotes, rumours, and stories from our imagination, literary stories, folk tale collections, newspaper reports, etc. We have stories from our own childhood, from the childhood of our friends, students and colleagues, etc. Telling a story is one way of learning and practising a foreign language.

Literature can be used as an aid in learning and practising a foreign language by integrating all skills of language. The authenticity of the topic and material provide us with immediacy and life-like situations. We read to these stories in different ways. We identify ourselves with some characters; or take a stand against undesired

behaviour or action. The conventions of the target language are clearly demonstrated in a literary text (e.g. the conventions of 'punctuations,' applications of grammatical rules and various uses of vocabulary).

A literary work offers a world with a certain atmosphere. In the creative endeavor of interpreting the author's universe, students inhabit a new universe. This universe, so to speak, yields various sets of life experiences that act as a device to enhance the individual's awareness both of his own responses and of the world created in the literary work. This is what makes such material a rich source for learning a foreign language. Unlike language learning texts that are neutral, literary texts are coloured with emotion, purpose, and moral. Literature helps teachers at all levels of education to create an environment in which a variety of good teaching methods are used. Therefore, the reasons that make teaching literature necessary for Yemenis are, among other things, learning English language, improving one's mind, better understanding of life, pure enjoyment, culture and exam-passing are all reasons for studying literature.

Difficulty of teaching literature for Yemenis

The usual input for the Departments of English is 'students' with little knowledge of English, let alone English literature. The large number of students makes it difficult for the teacher to convey his message to all students. The individual differences among those students are wide. The lack of sources and instructional media (e.g. video-films, computers, etc) hinders the will of change. A student-centred approach is what recent trends in teaching look for. In such a view, a teacher is a facilitator or organiser of the learning process. He presents a situation or a problem and helps his students to find a solution. This needs a well-kept and up-to-date library. Techniques of teaching like pair work, group work, discussions require a reasonable number of students in one class. Giving feedback for students is not easy since the number of students is large. Some teachers, for example, do not give any evaluation during the term, except for the final exam. Thus students do not fulfil their expectations of learning English or literature.

The basic goal of the foreign learners of English is the communicative competence. To use Chomsky's terms, foreigners look for "performance", not only "competence". Literature fulfils this need if it is taught properly. It provides an effective means of expanding the learners' vocabulary and cultural knowledge. No one who learns a language is immediately capable of responding to the complexities of literature in that language. A response to the textual devices is not enough. The study of the content is as important as the form or structure of the text to respond to the complexities of literature. Literature demands more skills than ordinary reading and writing. The more we develop those skills, the more enlightening, enriching and enjoyable our experience of literature becomes. Writers create an imaginary world to arouse our sympathy and curiosity about it. This process of engaging our interest in an imaginary world is one of the major uses of language in literature; no doubt it is an important means of communication. All literary and dramatic enjoyments involve, in some degree, the readers' imaginative identification of himself in the situation and the role described. But the reader must be able to recognise the ideas, attitudes and feelings which are put explicitly or implicitly in the text; otherwise studying literature will be useless; and the purpose will be defeated (Al-Matari, N. 2002: 2).

Part II **Aims and Objectives for Teaching Literature**

Aims and objectives of teaching literature are unlike aims and objectives of teaching language courses. In literature, they are more slippery, subjective and difficult to formulate and measure in terms of behavioural objectives: entry or terminal. Since aims and objectives of teaching literature are the starting point for any modification or remedy of a syllabus, the author finds it necessary to seek views of students, teachers and writers in the field. The researcher interviewed many students while teaching literature courses to check their needs (aims) to study literature. They suggested a number of needs.¹ (A full analysis of students' needs in studying literature is to be found in Al-Dhubaibi, J.; 2002). Students' answers were used as the starting point for formulating the following aims and objectives of teaching

literature. To get views of experts in the field, the researcher had discussions with teachers of literature at various departments of English. Students' observations were examined with those experts to put together some concrete statements. After reviewing literature, interviewing the random sample of students and teachers, using personal observations and experience in the field, the researcher proposes the following statements as aims and objectives of teaching literature. Thus literature courses, according to the paper, are to:

- i) focus on developing learner's linguistic competence more than knowledge about history of English literature. Literary works are to help students achieve some kind of fluency and comfort with authentic language. Literature helps learners practise the target language by writing and speaking creatively, by developing the ability of expressing their feelings or conveying feelings of others. This is to be achieved by integrating all language skills while dealing with literary texts. Literature thus should provide a better awareness of the nature of language and how it works in literature by transferring their experience to new situation or contexts;
- ii) develop learner's critical and analytical ability to respond to unseen literary texts;
- iii) give knowledge of language about literature as human activity;
- iv) promote healthier attitudes to the world outside the range of the learner's contact and interaction;
- v) provide a wide scope for experiences besides developing the learner's linguistic and cognitive skills. It enables the learners not only to keep up but also enrich their English through contact with language skills;
- vi) motivate students for comprehension, interpretation, and enjoyment of literature;
- vii) stimulate reading habits (both extensively and intensively) because reading "is regarded not as a reaction to a text but as interaction between the writer and the reader mediated through the text" (Widdowson 1979:174) ;
- viii) encourage students to feel free with the texts, to comment, speculate, criticise and, above all, to employ their own language.

- ix) give value to students' opinions, not received, ones by offering them a number of open-ended questions that elicit personal response to sharpen the students' own response to the literary work;
- x) encourage students to see a literary text as a stepping stone to fully acquire the target language through personal involvement in the literary work that enable students to communicate;
- xi) contextualize literary texts by introducing, when necessary, some basic information about literary trends, movements, school of thoughts that are important in approaching literary texts.

Part III Choice Of Texts

The above aims and objectives of teaching literature can be achieved better if they are supported by choosing suitable literary texts. The present situation is only limited to the choice of English literary texts, at least at the Department of English, Faculty of Education. The choice of texts to meet student's needs is not easy in Yemen for the limited availability of literary texts. Teachers, however, have a lot of scope in the area of English literature as a whole. It is better to choose texts that are relevant to students' age, interests, culture, level of study, etc. Texts from the native and other literatures are bound to appeal to students.

Teaching literature is a continuing process of appreciation and understanding to keep each student's own interest of the literary work alive by encouraging them to share views and reviews. This can be achieved by selecting a good literary text, not a plain text but a text that contains varied exercises. The availability of a variety of enjoyable activities enables the teacher to concentrate on meeting students' weakness in particular skill areas as well as literary appreciation. The activities integrate language and literature, bearing in mind learning is promoted by involving as many students' faculties as possible. They also provide the teacher with a chance to diagnose students' needs for language repair work in the literature lesson. The stories are chosen to create a whole new world inside the reader's

imagination, a world full of warmth and colour. We exploit the emotion dimension that is a very integral part of literature. This approach increases students' confidence within the Foreign Language; students attempt to personalise their contact with it. A choice of every text needs to reflect the features of language in use that is needed most for foreign students. Such features are always available in literary works; the features of language in use can be illustrated in the multi-exercises that can follow each literary text. It is better for the teacher who chooses literary works to select texts on the basis of brevity, simplicity, availability, with exciting plots and comprehensive characters, e.g. the selections in Sharyan's *An Introduction to Literary Forms I: Fiction and Drama* and *An Introduction to Literary Forms II: Types and Forms of Poetry*.² The paper proposes the following suggestions for choosing a literary text:

- i) In choosing texts, teachers need to take into account cultural appropriateness, availability of the texts and their prices. It was noticed some teachers find difficulty in teaching texts that contain sexual or religious overtones. This creates disruptive behaviour and negative attitude to the teacher and the prescribed text. It is true literature can be used as a window on other views but if the teacher shows solidarity and ingroupness with his students. Availability and price of the text is another problem. Teachers can, the paper suggests, develop local editions for the texts frequently used as the *Series Of Literature Textbooks*³ that was started at the Department of English, Faculty of Education- Sana'a University.
- ii) European and Arabic classics in English translation (e.g. Tolstoy, Cervantes, Moliere, Ibsen, Mahfouz, *Arabian Nights*) might be used. Many students in the interview were in favour of texts from the native literature.
- iii) Some pieces may be prescribed for self-study at the discretion of the teacher. This helps students develop a reading approach (i.e., skimming, scanning, reading for detail) appropriate to the given text and develop a purpose in reading. However, materials for self-instruction need to be suitable for private study. The tasks should assume a single reader and, as far as possible, involve

questions for discussion, particularly interpretation. If an answer key is provided, it makes it more students-oriented.

- iv) Students can be involved in selecting a text. This makes students feel happy that they are part of making the decision. It helps them to search for more than one alternative. This is one of the ways in which we can "train" students to take responsibility for their own learning and help them develop confidence in their own ideas and in their ability to work independently of a tutor. In a country like Yemen, where the educational system is limited, students need to be encouraged to be critical and independent thinkers and to set their own learning goals. The intended outcome of this is that learners should acquire good learning strategies and so become more autonomous and self-directed. They may be able to: (1) set objectives, (2) plan stages, (3) monitor progression through those stages, and (4) self-assess their achievement.

Part IV Teaching Method

Teachers' responsibility doesn't mean only selecting a good text for students, but applying clear, interesting and useful techniques by which learners can use language authentically. Teacher should create situations and prepare questions for discussions where students feel interested to speak about and express their feelings and thoughts directly or indirectly. Such situations encourage students to communicate with their classmates. It helps them to be aware of their language development or progress. Needless to say that such a teacher has to equip himself with the teaching methods or approaches like Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio-visual Method, Communicative Approach, etc. Such methods are of great help but the teacher of literature needs to tailor them to fit his needs because in literature there are no clear-cut methods. Thus such methods do not fit teaching literature because the aims of teaching literature are not as transparent as they are in language courses. If these methods are used skilfully, students of literature are to have a good deal of enjoyment from their studies. Enjoyment is what distinguishes literature teaching. Pleasure and enjoyment are what we get from many plays, many

novels and many poems. They yield direct pleasure and help students call upon higher order (thinking).

Literature requires a varied number of teaching styles to attend to students' needs while encountering the foreign teaching constraints. It is obvious the area of teaching and learning that students need to undergo certain general objectives. This is what is known in the area of curriculum designing as the process of needs analysis. According to some ELT specialists, these needs can be classified into *felt* and *perceived* needs (Berwick, 1989: 55). The *perceived* needs in his opinion represent the view of curriculum designers, national educational policy and teachers or administrators. *Felt* needs represent the students' point of view of what they want to do or learn in a given course. *Felt* needs then are what should be taken into account in a learner-centred approach, which this paper calls for.

However, the difficulty with teaching literature, using student-centred approach is that some learners may not yet possess the richness and subtlety of vocabulary and structure in which to couch their response in the target language. This hinders the process of teaching that gives a greater share to learners to participate. Since the language of literature is load with hidden meanings, allusions, ellipsis, and subtlety, the role of the teacher becomes more challenging if he wants to give a significance role to his students in a literature course. An example of this subtlety is the employment of politeness responses of characters while they interact with each other. If a student is not aware of such a subtlety, it means there is a breach in both faculties: *competence* and *performance*. Sharyan (2002 b) argues that the richness and subtlety of vocabulary and structure is a feature of politeness in the native speaker's speech. To master the target language like the native speaker is to be able to respond for such a subtlety that is available mainly in dialogues.

Many of the descriptive passages contain also a greater density of unfamiliar words. However, students need to be encouraged to use their limited linguistic repertoire. This can be achieved if students have a reading purpose. For example, they read to follow the development of a specific character in relation to the plot line. Suggestive meanings of words can be used as another purpose. This is

because an important aim of teaching literature is to sensitize students to the underlying meanings of words and implied ideas. The following is an example of involving students in a literature course that helps them to participate and enrich their vocabulary. Students are to be given a clear detailed scheme of work right from the first class. Each student is to prepare the new vocabulary before coming class. While the literature teacher explains the assigned portion, he can check students' preparation by asking a random sample of them. This was found useful in my classes for it ensures students participation, development and efficient learning. Students who fail to attend or prepare they lose some marks every class.

Another problem is the background information that is related to the author's life, scholarly study of the text and the historical data that pertains to the text. Such social, historical, political and cultural constraints hinder understanding of the foreign literary work. Thus background work can be provided only to fill in cultural gaps. Background information is provided to pave the way for personal involvement with the text to express one's feelings, ideas and thoughts, using the target language. The study questions following the selections in a literary text need to frequently suggest topics of dispute and disagreement about the interpretation of a story or a play to sharpen students' views and build up their confidence in the foreign language. The success of the selection, study questions and teaching method depends on whether the teacher is successful or not.

To make the process of learning enjoyable, a successful teacher of literature needs to be considerate, helpful, cooperative, friendly; he lets students do things; he guides them. He is unlike the unsuccessful teacher who is strict, rough, imposing things on students. He has a teaching method that takes into account a detailed lesson plan. He divides to portions the daily, weekly, and monthly work and activities. His plan has clear components (e.g. aims, warm-up activities, presentation, practice, evaluation, and homework) that help both the teacher and the students to arrive to their destination through a short and clear route.

Teaching a Literary Text

Literature is a discourse with its own rules and conventions of language use. Raising students' interest can be achieved by first letting students speculate about the title of the literary work to elicit their attitudes to the central situation in the story, e.g. lifestyles, main character/s, personality traits, relationships, etc. It is fun to raise the listener's expectation, keep him/her suspended and then give a surprise ending. It is suggested that teachers let students speculate about content, characters, title, meaning of words. This process provides explanatory activities about the literary text. Leading or pre-questions as the following are examples of the exploratory activity:

- i) What life is like for a lonely, poor, illiterate person in a small rural village?
- ii) Can it lead to psychological disorder or disturbance?
- iii) Would he be happy to live in a city with unknowns?
- iv) What difference would there be between the life of this person and the life of someone who has been educated?
- v) Would there be some difference of their lives and works in an urban environment?
- vi) What is your impression/s of the main character so far?

For raising and stimulating students' interest, this type of activity can be given before dealing fully with a text like *The Open Window* (for an illustration of warm-up, discussion, and follow-up activities, see Sharyan, 2001). Since this is an exploratory activity, all sorts of suggestions are allowed. This creates suspense, excitement; it makes students use or practice the language they are capable of.

Teachers may need to explain some of the terms needed for comprehension after introducing the text with this kind of leading questions. If students do the intensive vocabulary exercises at home, they can easily follow the teacher's analysis of the text under question. They will be able to interpret the different levels or sheds of meanings. Some activities to vary our teaching in and outside class may be employed, e.g. role-plays, questionnaires, etc. to provide oral practice, writing summaries, reducing those summaries, etc. Varied guidance or pointed questions at the end of every literary work, end-

of-term activities and voluntary activities facilitate, if incorporated, teaching literature. This is because many works of literature suggest controversial issues that can give rise to interesting details in the classroom.

The text content and form are important angles that are inseparable in analysing a literary text. The text content refers to what the text is about or what is written in the text. Under content we may discuss the story skeleton, theme, imagery, symbolism, etc. The content of the story focuses mainly on interpretation or understanding of the underlying issues. However, readers cannot appreciate fully a short story, a novel, or a play unless they react not only to what has been said but also to how it has been said. They must look for style and structure as well as for content. The text form then refers to how a text is written or how it has been said, i.e. style and structure. Style, as a form, grows out of the writer's own personality and can be seen in the choice of words and phrases, the arrangements of sentences, the rhythms and tones. Structure refers to the architecture of the story, the ways in which the details are selected and arranged to produce the desired effect. The structure of the text provides information about the author's technique in presenting the work. Time, however, should be spent first on content till students get the main bones of the plot, become familiar with the vocabulary, understand characters. Character's motives, actions, conflict, developments are important to be dealt with. A choice of passages as highlights from the set text is effective. It contributes to the development of the story, highlights one or more of the characters, adds to the social pictures drawn by the writer, demonstrates distinctive traits of the author's style (Sharyan, 2001).

Part V **Marking scheme**

Unlike language courses, literature courses are not easy to measure the behavioural objectives (both in the formative and summative evaluation). In language courses, it is easy to check exams whether they are true or not. In literature courses, it is not that easy because the nature of literature courses as seen in the aims and objectives above is not easy to measure the performance of students

(i.e. change in behaviour). Literary language requires creative, expressive, persuasive, argumentative, narrative kind of writing. It needs a good language, understanding, style, etc to present one's views. However, the marking scheme in literature courses remains subjective. If you give an answer-sheet to different teachers to mark, you are bound get different marks for the same candidate. Naturally exams stem from teaching. But to minimise subjectivity in marking exams, the paper suggests the following marking scheme. Usually examiners of a literary text, try to test the following areas:

1. Knowledge of the book (a candidate shows thorough and detailed familiarity with the work.)
2. Essay structure (a candidate organises his/her essay in a systematic and logical way)
3. Language (a candidate's use of language must be accurate, varied and clear.)
4. Illustration (a candidate quotes from the book to amply and relevantly support the arguments he/ she made.)

This takes into account different dimensions. Students reflect their ability to use language, their command of the text, critical thinking, their understanding, etc. In the process of writing they make mistakes in language (grammar, spelling, punctuations, wrong choice of words). Teachers find it hard to mark an answer-sheet. Some argue that this is not a language course. If the candidate knows the subject matter, then there is no need to deduct some marks for language. Others say, it is necessary to look for the overall performance. They deduct some marks for language. This paper suggests that exams should take into account content of the book, language of the candidate, and organisation. Implementing and measuring such concepts in terms of statistics is slippery. However, the following marking scheme for exams of English Literature may be used: 50% of the total marks is to be given for content, 25% for language, and 25% for organisation. These figures may look rigid but it is one way of turning theoretical argument into practice to lessen the amount of chance and variation in checking papers.

Conclusion

The present study was carried out on the basis of classroom teaching experience, interviews with students and teachers in the field as well as reviews of literature. The main concern of the study was to describe the existing condition of teaching literature at the Yemeni universities, prescribe aims and objectives for teaching literature, provide some criteria for selecting literary texts, suggest teaching method and ends by proposing a formula for marking exams of literature courses. The issue that is raised here is that achieving high marks, particularly in literature courses, without having a good command of English demands a serious re-visit to the literature component. This paper goes some way towards providing practical solutions to those problems.

Notes

About the author

Dr. Ayid Sharyan did his B.A. in English (Saudi Arabia), his Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign language (Sana'a University), his M.A. and Ph.D. in English literature (India). He worked as a lecturer in English at Faculty of Education, Hajja, and moved to the Department of English, Faculty of Education- Sana'a, Sana'a University. He taught a large number of courses in language and literature in many places. He has been a referee for a number of theses. He prepared material for students at various Departments of English in Yemen in his *Literature Textbooks Series* that includes more than 20 books till now.

- 1) The researcher interviewed a random sample of students from different levels at the Department of English, Faculty of Education- Sana'a, Sana'a University, to find out:
 - a) their problems with studying literature as they perceive them.
 - b) their needs (aims) of studying English literature in general.
- 2) These books are part of a literature series that started at the Department of English, Faculty of Education, to meet the needs

of university students in Yemen. Besides the exposure for important literary terms, styles, and technique, these books provide explanations of vocabulary, and a wealth of exercises on comprehension and interpretation of each literary text; they also introduce some basic information about schools of thoughts, literary criticism and the way to approach a literary text. The following points can be considered to enhance and improve teaching literature.

- 3) Literature Textbooks Series aims at providing Yemeni students with local editions of texts in English literature. More than twenty titles have been issued in this serious till now.

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ملخص للبحث المقدم للنشر من الدكتور عايض شريان
(جامعة صنعاء- كلية التربية- قسم اللغة الإنجليزية) بعنوان:

Literature and Language Teaching: A Classroom-Centred Study to Improve the Literature Courses

طرق تدريس الأدب واللغة: دراسة صفية لتطوير المواد الأدبية

موضوع هذا البحث هو مناقشة مشاكل تدريس المواد الأدبية في اقتسام اللغة الإنجليزية بالجامعات اليمنية*. يقدم البحث مقترحات كحلول لهذه المشاكل بناء على خبرة الباحث في تدريس المواد الأدبية بالجامعات اليمنية. ينقسم هذا البحث بعد الملخص والمقدمة إلى:

١. الوضع الحالي: مناقشة الوضع الحالي لتدريس المواد الأدبية في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية بالجامعات اليمنية. ويرى الباحث بأن هذا الوضع لا يحقق الآمال المرجوة منه.
٢. الأهداف: يقترح البحث أهدافاً لتدريس هذه المواد للطلاب اليمني حيث أن عدم وضوح هذه الأهداف هو نقطة الضعف في المناهج الحالية.
٣. إختيار النصوص: يرى الباحث بأن العملية التعليمية مبنية على محاور تبدأ بتحديد الأهداف ثم إختيار المادة التعليمية التي تحقق هذه الأهداف. كما يحدد البحث شروط الإختيار المادة التعليمية مثل توفرها بسعر مناسب، شمولها للتحقيق الأهداف،

* قدم هذا البحث في الندوة التي اقامتها كلية اللغات بعنوان *ندوة حول البحث الصفّي في الإنجليزية* (في ٢٨-٢٩-٢٠٠٢).

مستواها اللغوي من حيث الصعوبة والسهولة، تناسبها الثقافي مع خلفية الطالب اليميني، وتحقيقها لأهداف الطالب والمدرس والإدارة .

٤. طرق التدريس : يقدم البحث مقترح لطرق تدريس المواد الأدبية حيث أنه لا يوجد طرق واضحة مثل الطرق الموجودة في تدريس المواد اللغوية، والطرق المقترحة تأخذ بعين الاعتبار الأهداف، المادة التعليمية، مشاركة الطالب والتركيز عليه كونه المحور الأساسي الذي تدور حوله العملية التعليمية.

٥. طرق التصحيح : نظراً لعدم وجود طرق واضحة في تصحيح المواد الأدبية يقترح هذا البحث طريقة تأخذ بعين الاعتبار الأهداف الموضوعية ومدى تحقيقها ويرى الباحث بأنه يمكن توزيع الدرجات على النحو التالي : ٥٠% للمحتوى والمادة التعليمية، ٢٥% لشكل الإجابة ومدى تطبيق نظام اللغة الإنجليزية من حيث الترتيب والتنسيق وتنظيم الأفكار بشكل منطقي، ثم ٢٥% للمشاكل اللغوية مثل القواعد، الإملاء، وإختيار الكلمات المناسبة .