# EFL Teachers' Perceptions Towards the Integration of Literary Texts in EFL Classes

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**Abstract**
Literary texts have been crucial for many years in English language education. Therefore, using literary texts in This study aims to find out EFL teachers' views related to the use of literary texts in English language education. A questionnaire and interview questions were used in this data collection process. The data was collected through Google Forms, online meetings, and phone calls. The result of this study indicates that English teachers' views and attitudes about using literary texts in English language education are quite positive. Most of the participants indicated that they like literary texts and try to use them in their lessons as much as possible according to the interviews. Also, the results of the questionnaire showed EFL teachers believe that the integration of literary texts helps and promotes most of the subjects in English language teaching such as skills, grammar, and vocabulary. In addition to these, it helps not only with language skills but also learning the culture of the target language in accordance with the results. Furthermore, using literature in English language education motivates learners according to the results of the questionnaire. However, most of the participants never or rarely use literary texts in their lessons even if most of them indicate that they like using literary texts in their classes. When the participants were asked the reasons for not using literary texts in their classes, their answers were mainly related to the level of the students and the curriculum. In short, English teachers are aware of the positive effects of integrating literary texts into ELT though they need to be encouraged and promoted to use them more often.
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## Introduction

For many years, various methods and approaches have been used to successfully include literature in the teaching of foreign languages. Numerous studies back up the value of literature in teaching other languages (Kim, 2004; Sage, 1987). Literature has been employed as a suitable source in terms of its language or as a means of comprehending the culture of the target language. Literature makes it simple to observe not only the target language's culture but also the lifestyles, events, and even food and drink preferences of foreigners (Sage, 1987). Additionally, literary texts give language learners the possibility to experience expressions and interactions. As with other foreign languages, literature thus plays a key part in the teaching of English (Babaee & Yahya, 2014).

Literature is defined as ''an ally of language'' by Brumfit and Carter (1986, p.1), accordingly, it is a fact that literature and language are inseparable hence literature can be a tool for language education. As a consequence of providing real-life settings and developing learners' personal growth, literature is irreplaceable in foreign language teaching (Collie & Slater, 1987). Furthermore, integrating age, level and interest-appropriate literary texts makes a significant contribution to the linguistic awareness of target language learners. Thanks to fully and skillfully used language, learners are able to develop their language enrichment (Spack, 1985). Literature provides authentic materials and meaningful input outside the classroom and according to Pugh (1989), literature is also a means of accessing a potentially rich source of the target language. Additionally, literature strengthens communicative competence inasmuch as it motivates learners and prompts the language-learning process (Holten, 1997).

Accordingly, this study investigates English teachers' views and attitudes toward using literature in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes. The study also attempts to investigate how frequently EFL teachers include literary texts in their lessons. Moreover, finding out the advantages and challenges of integration of literature in English language education according to EFL teachers. The findings of this research are expected to highlight the importance of using literature in ELT and show the positive attitudes of EFL teachers to the integration of literature into ELT.

## Literature Review

Literature has been described with different definitions over the years. Moody (1971) described literature as giving information in any field. According to Lazars' book (1993, p.1) literature was described by some teachers as ''feelings'' and ''thoughts'' while some teachers defined it as meeting a lot of people and understanding other different points of view, ideas, thoughts, and minds. Sage (1987, p. 12) asserts that "Literature is inherently

human." which means literary texts describe human concerns and needs. On the other hand, literary texts are described as pieces of human life by Isariyawat, Yenphech, & Intanoo (2020) because the culture and nationality of countries can be easily seen in their literary texts. Literary texts also provide meaningful and memorable contexts in the English language process (Lazar, 1993) and learners have meaningful reasons to learn the target language.

As Khan and Alasmari (2018) state in their article when literary texts are used in English classes for learning purposes, the learners use their creativity more than in regular classroom activities and also they experience real-life situations and simulations in literary texts, consequently, being able to use their creativity and experience real-life situations can attract the learner's attention. Since literary texts are authentic and motivating and they also make learners active in the class, they develop learners' four basic skills and help learners build reading habits (Atmaca & Günday, 2016).

According to Collie and Slater (1987), there are four basic reasons for using literary texts in the field of language teaching:

- Providing authentic materials
- Providing cultural values
- Providing a linguistic variety
- Providing learner's active participation

While using literary texts in their classes, teachers need to encourage learners to talk more and express their opinions about the topic and literary text (Paran, 2008). Unfortunately, English language teachers do not have any training for using literary texts in English language teaching (Hirvela, 1989), therefore they may have difficulty using literary text in their classes. Also, learners need to try to understand literary texts. Even though they do not know all of the words, they need to guess or check the meanings of important words in literary texts to understand them and it will help them to develop their cognitive and linguistic abilities. Also, Duff and Maley (2007) put emphasis on three main benefits of using literary texts in English language teaching. These benefits are listed below:

- Linguistic value
- Cultural value
- Affective value

According to Mckay (1982, p. 530), "literature presents language in discourse" so that the learners can access the parameters of setting and role relationships and it presents a social context. Duff and Maley (1990) categorize criteria for the usage of literature in the language classroom: i) linguistic, ii) methodological, and iii) motivational.

- The linguistic criterion highlights the importance of having real examples of styles, text types, and registers.
- The methodological criterion creates opportunities for different interpretations and opinions.
- The motivational criterion means the learners have a chance to explore their feelings with literary texts that present meaningful contexts.

Besides, Averil (2001) indicates that literary texts help to control emotions. The studies on the usage of literary texts in language education (Langer, 1997, Van, 2009) claim that using literary texts is effective for critical thinking enhancement and contributes to the learners questioning, connecting, interpreting, and exploring. Parkinson and Thomas (2000) indicate two benefits of using literary texts. The first one is that due to the fact that literary texts are difficult, the learners feel achievement by reading "different" literary texts. The second benefit is that literary texts are easy to access and available. Both teachers and learners can access literary texts easily especially nowadays thanks to the internet.

**Valuable Authentic Material**

Thanks to the usage of literary texts in English language teaching, learners are able to learn the target language in a manner similar to how they learn their native tongues by employing songs, nursery rhymes, fairy tales, short novels, etc. Additionally, the learners are able to learn the culture and real-life usage of the target language because using literary texts for English language teaching purposes also means using authentic materials which are very beneficial for the learner's learning process. Learners can be inspired and given the feeling of utilizing the target language via authentic resources.

**Cultural Enrichment**

Literary texts help learners to learn and understand the culture and traditions of the target language, they develop cultural awareness of the learners (Van, 2009). With detailed settings and characters' personalities and lives, the learners access different points of view from different societies and they have a chance to learn more about different societies in the world. Students who read and study literary texts might learn about the writers' cultures by seeing them portrayed in the literature. Understanding a language also requires understanding the cultural

presumptions that are embedded in it. It is not sufficient to understand a text's meaning alone in order to comprehend it. When we say that literary works represent a people's culture, it almost seems to imply that these works are in some sense factual and documented evidence of that culture. But literature does not merely recreate the reality of the culture in which it is written; rather, it constructs its own fictional realities (Widdowson, 1984).

**Language Enrichment**
Learners gain knowledge of the grammar and discourse purposes of sentences, the range of potential structures, and the various ways to connect ideas, all of which help to improve and broaden their own writing abilities thanks to literary texts (Hişmanoğlu, 2005).  The more the learners acquire the target language the more they feel ready to use it. Paesani (2005) indicates grammatical structures are in a meaningful context in literary texts. In addition to these, Ellis and Brewstar (2002) state that with literary texts teachers introduce or revise new grammatical structures and vocabulary. Learners can encounter a large variety of distinct lexical or syntactic elements in literature. Reading a sizable and contextualized body of text helps learners become familiar with many aspects of written language (Hişmanoğlu, 2005).

**Personal Involvement**
Literature can aid in language learning since it encourages the reader's direct involvement. After reading a literary work, the learner starts to experience it. He becomes absorbed in the text. It becomes less important to understand the meanings of lexical terms or phrases than to focus on the story's progression. The learner becomes eager to know what occurs as the climax of the story unfolds; he feels a connection to particular characters and shares their emotional reactions (Hişmanoğlu, 2005).

Some virtues of using literature in language education are specified by Maley (1989). These are: i) universality, ii) non-triviality, iii) personal relevance, iv) variety, v) interest, vi) economy and suggestive power, and vii) ambiguity.

1) Universality: Common topics in every culture like love, friendship, death, etc.
2) Non-triviality: Presenting genuine and authentic information and context to learners
3) Personal relevance: Feelings and events are topics of literary texts and the learners can find relevance with themselves thanks to feelings and events in literary texts.
4) Variety: Variety of language and topics.
5) Interest: Appealing to global themes attracts learners' attention.
6) Economy and suggestive power: Ideas and feelings can be understood and experienced with few words by learners.
7) Ambiguity: Everyone can deduce different meanings from literary texts and it is totally normal.

Along with the many advantages of using literary texts in English language teaching, there are some challenges. The first challenge is that selecting appropriate texts require further attention in terms of cultural issues and the language of the literary text (Savvidou, 2004). In some literary texts, vocabulary and grammatical syntax can be too complicated and demanding for learners' level (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014). As a result, all literary texts are not appropriate for different levels of learners. Another challenge is that literary language may not reflect common usage and use different ways to express feelings or emotions (Lazar, 1993).  Also, Lima (2005) emphasizes literary texts may break off grammatical rules. According to Widdowson (1982), using literature in language education may present a misleading model and cause learners to confuse. The length of the text also can be a challenge (Bobkina & Dominguez, 2014). Learners may feel bored or scared because of too long texts and if these texts are difficult to handle learners may feel frustrated. Besides, short texts are found difficult to understand and catch all of the details by some learners. Therefore, it is not easy to select appropriate length texts for teachers. According to Collie and Slater (1987), literary texts do not always provide the kind of vocabulary which they need to learn, and the language of literary works is not the same as daily life language. In other words, using literature in English language education does not always provide necessary information to learners or the language which they use in their daily lives. Also, Lazar (1993) indicates that literary language sometimes differs from common or daily usage. Moreover, cultural issues can be problematic in literary texts inasmuch as learners may have difficulty in understanding specific cultural issues (Khatib & Rahimi, 2012). Another restriction is that with literary texts learners may not achieve their academic or occupational goals because literary texts are not written with these aims (Khatib & Rahimi, 2012). Teachers' lack of training in using literature in language education can be another challenge in this field since they may not know the necessary techniques or ways to adapt literature to their classes (Hirvela, 1989).

The research questions of this study are given below:

1. What are the perceptions of EFL teachers towards the integration of literary texts in EFL classes?

a) What are the perceptions of EFL teachers towards the integration of literary texts to focus on language skills?

b)          What are the perceptions of EFL teachers towards the integration of digital literary texts in EFL classes?
2)           What are the implications of EFL teachers towards the integration of literary texts in EFL classes?

## Methods
### Participants
The participants of this study were pre, primary, secondary, and high school EFL teachers. The online questionnaire was applied to 250 EFL teachers. EFL teachers were selected randomly to obtain more realistic results. Then, interview questions were asked to 12 EFL teachers through face-to-face or online interviews. The study's participants might be regarded as being typical of all Turkish EFL teachers employed in educational institutions.

### Instruments
In conducting this study, a questionnaire was used, which the researcher customized for the study. This questionnaire was created initially for prospective English teachers and was adapted for use by in-service EFL teachers. The authors' consent was obtained for use. The questionnaire was adapted from ''Prospective English language teachers' views on literary texts in their teacher education curriculum and its potential value'' which was developed by Arda Arıkan and Hülya Küçükoğlu in 2011. The items of this questionnaire are divided into three sections. The first section is related to the views of EFL teachers on literary texts in general. The second section is related to the integration of literary texts in EFL classes. Lastly, the third section is related to the integration of digitalized literary texts in English language education. This questionnaire consists of 21 items. A five-point Likert-type scale was used to gather the participants' answers. For reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated and the result is 0.77 which means this questionnaire is reliable. Expert and colleague reviews were utilized during the adaptation process of the questionnaire.

The researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews with EFL teachers as part of the second round of data collecting for this study. In the semi-structured interviews, the time and the place were organized beforehand. The process of gathering the data included face-to-face meetings, phone calls, and online meetings. 7 questions were asked to English teachers in this process. The questions are about participants' teaching experience, type of the schools, and school level they work at, their views about integrating literary texts in their classes, the frequency of integrating literary texts in their classes, advantages, and challenges of integrating literary texts in ELT, and finally the use of digital literary texts. In other words, the interview questions are about the integration of literary texts in EFL classes and the participant's personal experience as EFL teachers.

### Procedure
The answers of the participants to the questionnaire were gathered online through Google Forms. The questionnaire was applied in 6 weeks in Spring Semester in the Academic Year 2021-2022. The interviews were held via online meetings, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings. The interviews were made in English since all of the interviewees were English teachers. The interviews were applied in 8 weeks in the Spring Semester in the Academic Year 2021-2022.

### Analysis
The answers of 250 EFL teacher participants to the online questionnaire were analyzed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 to get the frequencies and percentages of the items and information of the participants. The Constant Comparative Method was used to analyze SPSS data in this study. This method aims to analyze the data in order to develop a grounded theory that helps determine concepts and principles. Also, grounded theory was used by the researcher to determine the themes of the qualitative data. In other words, themes and theories related to the integration of literary texts in English language teaching were discovered by English teachers' interviews and their answers to the questionnaire (Noble & Mitchell, 2016). Thereafter, the recordings of 12 online and face-to-face interviews with EFL teachers were transcribed by the researcher. Transcripts were analyzed and interpreted by the researcher. For interview transcriptions, verbatim transcription was used. The old-school technique was used to detect how many times the main themes were used by the interviewees.

### Results
First of all, when the participants were asked if they like using literary texts in their lessons or not. Most of them indicated that they liked literary texts and tried to use them as much as possible. Moreover, some of the participants stated that they do not use literary texts in their classes often. According to the interviews, most of the participants never or rarely use literary texts in their lessons even if most of them indicate that they like using

literary texts in their classes. Afterward, the participants were asked the reasons for not using literary texts in their classes. The answers are mainly related to the level of the students and the curriculum. The level was used 12 times by the teachers. The curriculum was used 9 times while age was used 2 times in the interviews. The participants were also asked about the ways of literary texts that they use in their lessons. Most of them said that they use literary texts related to their topic or interesting texts to attract the students' attention. The advantages of integrating literary texts into English classes were also discussed in the interviews. Some of the teachers think that it increases the student's motivation and interest. Also, most of the participants indicated that integrating literary texts into English lessons develops four language skills, grammar, and vocabulary knowledge while some of them support that it enhances the students' cultural knowledge of the second language. The main answers were analyzed and according to the results, motivation, and interest were used 8 times. Skills, grammar, and vocabulary were used 10 times and culture was used 4 times by the interviewees. Furthermore, the participants were asked about the challenges of integrating literary texts in their classes. Some participants emphasized that the low level of the students is a burden for this issue. Besides, the participants were asked if they had any suggestions or expectations to improve the use of literary texts in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. Most of the participants suggested that literature should be added to the curriculum or need to have more lesson time for using literary texts in their lessons. The other participants also offer different suggestions. Using adapted versions of literary texts, using literary texts in language classes in high schools, cooperation between literature teachers and English teachers, providing teacher training on how to integrate literature into English classes, and involving the students to choose the topics of literature are the other participants' suggestions.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of all items in the questionnaire

| Item | Statements | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I enjoy literary texts. | 247 | 3.93 | 0.96 |
| 2 | Studying literary texts is boring. | 248 | 2.09 | 0.99 |
| 3 | I think reading literary texts is a free time activity. | 248 | 3.02 | 1.17 |
| 4 | I have difficulty in understanding literary texts. | 248 | 2.21 | 0.86 |
| 5 | I learn the target language better with literary texts. | 248 | 3.65 | 0.98 |
| 6 | Teaching reading would be easier if I use literary texts. | 248 | 3.69 | 0.93 |
| 7 | Literary texts help learning about the target culture. | 248 | 4.12 | 0.79 |
| 8 | Literary texts educate the whole person psychologically, morally, and culturally. | 247 | 4.20 | 0.81 |
| 9 | Literary texts help teaching grammar in an indirect manner. | 248 | 3.91 | 0.86 |
| 10 | I think literary texts are great for teaching and learning vocabulary. | 247 | 4.24 | 0.78 |
| 11 | Teaching integrated skills would be easier if I use genres of literary texts. | 248 | 3.82 | 0.78 |
| 12 | Teaching speaking would be easier if I use genres of literary texts. | 248 | 3.59 | 0.89 |
| 13 | Teaching listening would be easier if I use genres of literary texts. | 247 | 3.52 | 0.91 |
| 14 | Using literary texts will help the students develop better personalities. | 248 | 3.85 | 0.86 |
| 15 | Teaching writing would be easier if I use genres of literary texts. | 248 | 3.93 | 0.81 |
| 16 | Literary texts in EFL classes will motivate students. | 246 | 3.80 | 0.78 |
| 17 | Literary texts can be confusing for students. | 247 | 3.15 | 0.95 |
| 18 | Thanks to digital tools accessing literary texts is easier. | 247 | 4.22 | 0.72 |
| 19 | Digitalized literary texts make learning more enjoyable. | 247 | 3.95 | 0.83 |

According to the findings, item 10 which is "*I think literary texts are great for teaching and learning vocabulary.*" has the highest mean value (4.24). On the other hand, item 2 which is "*Studying literary texts is boring.''* has the lowest mean value (2.09). Therefore, it can be concluded that participants think that literature helps learners develop their vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, the participants do not believe that studying literary texts is boring as the results indicated.

**Discussion**
The results of this study demonstrated that EFL teachers are aware of the positive effects of the integration of literary texts in EFL classes. They contend that the possible advantages of the integration of literary texts are raising motivation or interest, fostering four language skills, grammar, and vocabulary knowledge, and enhancing cultural knowledge of the target language. However, they sometimes abstain from it for a variety of reasons such as the student's level, the curriculum, insufficient classroom time, and the age or level of the learners.

Choosing appropriate literary texts for learners is one of the most important factors for the integration of literary texts in language education. Also, teacher training related to the ways of integrating literary texts into

lessons and possible activities may be given to English teachers regularly. Literary texts which are suitable for the topics and objectives of the lesson may be added to the curriculum in order to increase their integration, with this way EFL teachers do not have difficulty or spend time to appropriate literary texts to their classes. Some of the participants suggested promoting cooperation between literature teachers and foreign language teachers, involving the students in choosing the topics of literary texts, using literary texts in language classes in high schools, and using adapted versions of literary texts to increase the integration of literary texts in EFL classes. In conclusion, it may be put more emphasis on integrating literary texts in EFL classrooms and EFL teachers may receive the required guidance and resources in this field.

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