

INTRODUCTION

1. CHOICE OF THE TOPIC

Since my very early contact with English literature and literary texts, this has occurred when one was a BA student or might be before; I developed a great taste and attachment for literature and literary works. This could also be explained as a natural latent vacation or inclination. Consequently, I became a great fond of literary reading. Reading novels, short stories, poems and drama went a strong hobby for me, and eventually a crucial preoccupation. As a teacher (associate) of English literature for some years I have always been interested in and cared about the methods literature in general and reading literary texts in particular are taught.

As a matter of fact, from the continuous claims and complaints of my students mainly after any piece of literary reading is assigned I noticed that they really have difficulties in reading and probing into literary texts particularly those intended to intensive reading: possibility of having them or questions about them in exams. This hypothesis had been firmly confirmed after the first term examination in English literature. The poor results at English literature module compared to other modules actually showed clear evidence and foster one to conduct and develop a study that would help Biska University teachers and students overcome this problem and possibly all students elsewhere at large.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the past few years, I have been engaged in teaching English literature to second year students (first year literature) who come to university to complete their studies for a BA degree in English language the university offers in Algeria. During this experience, I had some broad goals as to what I wanted to do for my students. The first thing I questioned is the utility as well as the objectives of the insertion of literature in the official syllabus. To clarify this, I had a survey over English literature official programme (see appendix 3)

When surveying the official programme designed for 2nd and 3rd year students, one can easily notice that it is too general and lacking details essential for course planning, thus leaving teachers and learners without any directions.

Given the fact that literature is a reading-centred task, as long as a large number of literary works and extracts are introduced in the syllabus mainly for reading, made me raise the following questions:

- How can teachers and learners work with these literary texts proposed in the syllabus?
- What skills or strategies need to be incorporated in teaching and processing literary texts?
- And what should be done to foster and maintain the learners' interest and success in processing and reading literary material?

3. HYPOTHESES

Assuming that Learners' literary poor achievement may be caused by their incapacity to activate reading skills and strategies we suggest that teachers include literary reading skills and strategies so that they help learners develop efficient and proficient abilities to process and comprehend literary texts.

4. AIM OF THE STUDY

The major aim of our study is to find practical ways and methods to facilitate the task of reading for students at English department in general and processing literary texts in particular. Also, it aims at suggesting some working techniques and procedures to teachers of English literature to help them well handling literary material.

5. METHODOLOGY:

The nature of the study, the population involved, the techniques and tools of data gathering actually play an important role in determining the appropriate method that should be used. The nature of our study that is to investigate the issue of reading comprehension in general and literary reading in particular for English department students actually calls for a descriptive method. All the gathered data obtained from questionnaires will be investigated then described. Opting to interviews to clarify some points is also so useful whenever necessary.

6. DATA GATHERING TOOLS:

Since our subject study touches directly local students at Biskra University, administering questionnaires to gather data and to access to the respondents attitudes and opinions comes to be the most useful and effective technique. Another advantage is our field presence at university as a teacher (associate) the thing which made direct interviews and discussions quite possible most of the time. This actually would enable us to get continuous contact with the respondents in order to strengthen and deepen all sorts of information obtained from the assigned questionnaires.

7. THE POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The population to the present study includes teachers of English literature and 4th year students at Biskra University.

There are only six teachers who have been teaching English literature for the four semesters under study. The other teachers who have not been teaching literature during the four targeted semesters are excluded from the population since they have participated neither in teaching literature nor in evaluating the students' reading abilities.

Since the number of 4th year students is considerably large (more than 300), it seems quite impossible for many reasons to gather them each time for interviews and filling in questionnaires. A sample (a proportion of the

population) thus seems to be a very decent way to obtain the sufficient data for our study.

8. THE SAMPLE:

Random sample of one hundred and six (106) 4th year students at Biskra English department could be reliable to gather the necessary and adequate requirements. One however may inquire about this selected number of subjects. The one hundred and six respondents actually make nearly a section of four groups. So, the respondents are most of the time together, mainly in lectures. This makes continuous access and discussion quite possible in most of the time. Academically speaking, the respondents are supposed to have studied four semesters English literature. Two semesters in their second year BA which is their first year taking English literature course, and two semesters in their 3rd year, i.e., up to the date of the administration of the questionnaire. The reasons of the choice of this sample vis a vis the official syllabus are evidently assumed that four semesters of the module means that more than 70% of English literature course has been accomplished. The second is that 4th year BA students according to the objectives of the official syllabus are expected to have acquired the most essential tools and devices of rhetorical language that would allow them to develop a piece of critique and to have acquired the abilities of literary reading.